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AL-SHARĪF AL-RADĪ
HIS LIFE AND POETRY

by

‘IṢĀM ‘ABD ‘ALĪ

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Arts in the University of Durham for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 1974

School of Oriental Studies
Elvet Hill
Durham

TO

MY WIFE KHADĪJAH

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this work is to study al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, his life and poetry. The first part deals with the poet's environment and life; the second with his poetry.

Chapter I deals with the political conditions under which the poet lived. The purpose of the second chapter is to portray al-Raḍī's social environment and its reflection in contemporary poetry. The third chapter describes the literary environment of al-Raḍī's age at some length.

The fourth chapter aims to study al-Raḍī's life in detail. The factors which influenced his outlook and personality are discussed. An attempt is made to discern how far these factors affected his poetry.

The second part of this work deals with al-Raḍī's poetry itself. In Chapter V historical observations are made on al-Raḍī's Dīwān, in both manuscript and published forms. Chapter VI deals with his panegyrics. General remarks are made on eulogy in Arabic poetry. The content, form and development of al-Raḍī's panegyrical odes are analysed. His Ikhwāniyyāt receive special attention. Chapter VII deals with al-Raḍī's self-praise, its content and form. An endeavour is made to explore the Utopian world which the poet tried to portray. Al-Raḍī's elegies (Ch. VIII), their content, form and characteristics are reviewed. In addition, his dirges on women receive attention. Shī'ism in al-Raḍī's poetry is discussed in Chapter IX.

Al-Raḍī's love-poetry (Ch. X) is discussed. His Hijāziyyāt receive particular attention. It is claimed that al-Raḍī produced in his Hijāziyyāt a poetical amalgam which contains some aspects of 'Udhrite and 'Umarite poetry. Chapter XI deals with al-Raḍī's poetical technique. His theories of poetical composition and his comments on other poets are examined. A comparison is made between al-Raḍī and other poets both previous and contemporary. Special attention is paid to al-Mutanabbī's influence. In Chapter XII there is a broad re-assessment of al-Raḍī's place in the history of Arabic poetry.

PREFACE

Though al-Radi has been highly esteemed by past and present scholars and others conversant with Arabic literature, there is still the need for a comprehensive academic study of this poet. The present work is an attempt to fill that gap.

In this study I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Mr. J. A. Haywood, for his guidance throughout all stages of my research during which he provided me with his unfailing advice and valuable comments. The responsibility for any errors is entirely mine.

I would like to thank my friend Miss Theresa Brown for her constant help and encouragement. My thanks are also due to Mr. A. M. T. al-Farouki for his help. A special debt of gratitude is owed to the staff of the Oriental Section of Durham University Library, particularly to Miss D. Grimwood-Jones who helped me in many ways. I should like to record my thanks to the Iraqi Government and Baghdad University for the scholarship I was awarded to enable me to carry out my academic research abroad.

My thanks are also due to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for its financial support. Last, but not least, I wish to give my sincere thanks to my wife for enduring my three years of academic abstraction during which this work has been done. She has stretched her tolerance to the utmost in spite of her poor health condition.

NOTES

1 - Transliteration of Arabic

hamzah

not shown, when initial,
otherwise, 'h

ب b		غ gh
ت t		ف f
ث th		ق q
ج j		ك k
ح h		ل l
خ kh		م m
د d		ن n
ذ dh		ه h
ر r	(consonant)	و w
ز z		ي y
س s	vowels:	
ش sh		
ص s	Short dammah	ُ u
ض d	Fathah	َ a
ط t	Kasrah	ِ i
ظ z	Long	ُو ū
ع 'e		َا ā
		ِī
	Diphthongs	َو aw or au
		ِī ay or ai

2 - When two dates are given thus: 366/976, the first is the Hijrah date.

When Christian era dates alone are given, nothing normally added.

ABBREVIATIONS

Authors and Books:

- Ath. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, Cairo, Vols. VI-VIII.
- Aghānī Abū al-Faraj al-Aṣbahānī, Kitāb al-Aghānī, Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, 1927-1959.
- Bāqillānī al-Bāqillānī, I'jāz al-Qur'an, 1st edn. Cairo, 1951.
- B.D.C.R.I. Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute.
- B.S.O.A.S. Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.
- D. B. Dīwān of al-Buhturī, Cairo 1911.
- Dhayl Abū Shujā', Dhayl Tajārib al-Umam, Vol. III, of "The Eclipse of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate", G.M.S. Oxford 1921.
- Dīwān al-Ma'ānī Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, Cairo 1352/1933.
- D. J. Dīwān of Jamāl Buthaynah, ed. Husayn Naṣṣār, Cairo 1958.
- D. M. Dīwān of al-Mutanabbī, 4 vols., ed. by al-Barqūqī, Cairo 1938.
- D. R. Dīwān of al-Radī, 2 vols., Tehran 1964, published by Dār al-Bayān, Baghdad.
- D. T. Dīwān of al-Murtaḍā, ed. al-Ṣaffār, Cairo 1958.
- D. Tm. Dīwān of Abū Tammām with al-Tabrīzī's commentary, 3 vols., Cairo 1951-1957.
- D. U. Dīwān of 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah, ed. Ibrāhīm al-A'rābī, Beirut 1952.
- Duhā Ahmad Amīn, Duhā al-Islām, 3 vols., Cairo 1935-1938.
- D. Y. Dīwān of Mihyār, 4 vols., Cairo 1925-1931.
- E. I. Encyclopaedia of Islam.
- Hilāl Hilāl al-Ṣābī, part VIII of the Chronicle published with Vol. III of "The Eclipse".

- Ibn Kh. Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-A'yān, 4 vols., tr. De Slane, Paris 1848-1871.
- I. C. Islamic Culture, the Hayderabad Quarterly Review.
- J.A.O.S. Journal of American Oriental Society.
- Jaw. Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntazam, Vols. V-X. Hayderabad 1357-1359/1938-1940.
- Jurjānī al-Jurjānī, al-Wasāṭah, Cairo 1948.
- Majāzāt al-Radī, al-Majāzāt al-Nabawīyyah, ed. Ṭāhā al-Zaynī, Cairo 1967.
- Mez Renaissance of Islam, tr. Khuda Bukhsh, London 1937.
- Misk Tajārib al-Umam, Miskawayh, published by Amedroz and Margaliouth "The Eclipse" series, Oxford 1921.
- Mu'allagāt Al-Mu'allagāt with al-Shinqitī's commentary, Cairo 1934.
- Rasā'il Rasā'il al-Sābī wa al-Sharīf, ed. Muhammad Yūsuf Najm, Kuwait 1961.
- Sinā'atayn Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, Kitāb al-Sinā'atayn, Cairo 1952.
- Talkhis al-Sharīf al-Radī, Talkhis al-Bayān.
- Tārīkh al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Tārīkh Baghdād, 14 vols., Cairo 1931.
- 'Umdah Ibn Rashīq, al-'Umdah, 2 vols., Cairo 1925.
- al-Wāfī al-Ṣafadī, Kitāb al-Wāfī bī al-wafayāt.
- Yāqūt Mu'jam al-Udabā', G.M.S.
- Yatimah al-Tha'libī, Yatimat al-Dahr, 4 vols., ed. M. M. 'Abd al-Hamīd, Cairo 1956-1958.
- Zuhr Ahmad Amīn, Zuhr al-Islām, Vol. I, II, Cairo 1946-1952.

PART I

AL-RADĪ'S LIFE AND TIMES

CHAPTER I

THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The poet al-Sharīf al-Raḍī lived in the fourth Islamic century (359-406/969-1015).¹ He led his political and literary life under the rule of the Būwayhid dynasty. He witnessed its rise and the early signs of its fall till the beginning of the fifth century.² It is hoped that through the description of the Būwayhid era, we can portray the political atmosphere around the poet. Meanwhile, particular attention will be paid to trace the impact of this political period on his life and poetry. However, the aim of this review is not to give a complete picture from the historical point of view, about which a great deal has already been written. Our purpose is to deal with the important events in so far as they influenced the literary and social life of this period.

It is a well-known historical fact that the eclipse of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate was virtually complete by the year 324/939. Fāris went to 'Alī b. Būwayh 320-338/932-949, Rayy and Aqfahān to Ḥasan b. Būwayh 320-366/932-976, the Jazīrah, Mosul and Aleppo to the Ḥamdānids 317-394/929-1003, Egypt and Syria to the Ikhshīdids 323-358/935-969, and after that to the Fāṭimids, Andalus was declared independent of the 'Abbāsid caliphs by 'Abd al-Raḥmān III 300-350/911-961, Khurāsān went to the Sāmānids 261-389/874-999, Tabaristān and Daylam to the Daylamites 316-434/928-1042. Only Madīnat

1. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 121. See Tārīkh Vol. II, p. 246.

2. The Būwayhid rule began in Baghdad in 334/945 and lasted until 447/1055. See Ath. Vol. VI, p. 314; Vol. VIII, p. 8. Lane-Poole, The Mohammadan Dynasties, London, 1894, pp. 140, 151.

al-Salām Baghdad remained in the hands of the Caliph.¹

Ibn al-Athīr said, with regret, that the caliph was nothing but a figurehead under the Turkish leaders.²

Soon after the Būwayhids had swept away many tottering states throughout Fāris, they turned their ambitions toward Baghdad. The capital of Islam was at that time in anarchy and disorder. Its political and economic condition had made it ripe for foreign conquest. The Būwayhid columns began hovering about the capital as vultures over prey. The Caliph al-Mustakfī was destined to pass into new foreign hands' rulers who had made their way to power rapidly. He found no alternative but to greet the new triumphant leader Ahmad b. Būwayh who entered Baghdad at the head of the Daylamites and Turkish troops in 334/945. The Caliph bestowed upon him the title Mu'izz al-Dawlah. Simultaneously, the conqueror's two brothers, 'Alī and Hasan were given the titles 'Imād al-Dawlah and Rukn al-Dawlah. Orders were issued that all their titles should be included on the coinage.³

Concerning the Būwayhid family, it is said that the founder Abū Shujā' was descended from the ancient Sāmānids.⁴ On the other hand, it may be that their descent from Persian kings is merely a later attempt to magnify the

1. Misk. Vol. I, p. 413; Jaw. Vol. VI, p. 288.

2. Ath. Vol. VI, p. 255.

3. Ath. Vol. VI, p. 314; Jaw. Vol. VI, p. 340.

4. Ibn Kh. Vol. I, p. 155.

dynasty.¹ It is safe to form an opinion that "the question of the relations between Būwayhids and caliphs is moreover bound up with that of their religious adherence".² Their unsympathetic attitude towards the caliphate was due, in part, to the fact that they were Shī'ites while the 'Abbāsids were Sunnites. They may first have supported the Zaydī sect. But, nevertheless, at the time of their seizure of Baghdad they appear to have been Twelvers.³

It was not long after Mu'izz al-Dawlah had established himself as a ruler of Baghdad that he ordered the Caliph to be blinded. The former was alarmed by rumours of a coup against him that had been plotted by the latter. Immediately the Caliph was deposed in barbaric circumstances, and the palace was plundered till nothing remained.⁴ Probably, under the influences of the Imāmite belief, Mu'izz al-Dawlah rashly decided to abolish the 'Abbāsīd caliphate. He planned to replace a member of the 'Alid family in this position. But his faithful friends persuaded him that such a step would jeopardise the Būwayhid rule.⁵ However, many encroachments were made on the caliph's prerogatives. The Būwayhid prince 'Adud al-Dawlah compelled the Caliph al-Ta'i to order that the drum should be sounded at the gate of the ruler's palace. Furthermore, he demanded that the name of the Būwayhid ruler

1. Lane-Poole, op. cit., p. 139.

2. B. I. 2nd edn. art. "Būwayh" by C. L. Cahen.

3. B. I. 2nd edn. art. "Būwayh".

4. Misk. Vol. II, p. 90; see Ath. Vol. VI, p. 315, also al-Hamadānī, Takmilat Tārīkh al-Tabarī, Beirut, 1961. Vol. I, p. 149.

5. Al-Birūnī, al-Jamāhir fī Ma'rīfat al-Jawāhir, Hyderabad, 1936, pp. 22-23.

should be mentioned from the pulpits after the name of the Caliph.¹ Yet the Būwayhids used to feign exaggerated respect for the Commander of the Faithful, when they felt the necessity to legalise their authority in the sight of the populace or of rival states.²

In the fourth Islamic century the legitimacy of the 'Abbāsid caliphate was threatened by a new rapidly sweeping wave that came from the west under the name of the Fātimids. It made its appearance in the political and religious field.³ This ruling family pretended to be descended from Fāṭimah the daughter of the Prophet and denied the 'Abbāsid right in the caliphate. The Fātimids represented a shī'ī sect called Ismā'īlism, forming a great challenge and jeopardy to the caliphate's existence.⁴ Unlike other independent rulers who paid apparent respect to the caliph, "they raised the claim of being the sole rightful heirs of the caliphate".⁵ The nominal religious position of the 'Abbāsid caliph faced a great threat in Baghdad. Qirwāsh the Shī'ite ruler of Mosul ordered that the Khutbah should be preached in Kūfa, Madā'in and Mosul from the pulpit in the name of the Fātimid caliph.⁶ Mecca in the season of

1. Misk. Vol. II, p. 435; Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 92.

2. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 99.

3. Ath. Vol. VII, pp. 30-32, 105. For further information see Do Lacy O'Leary, A short history of the Fātimid Khalifate, London 1923, pp. 67 ff.

4. Philip Hitti, History of the Arabs, London 1953, p. 617.

5. Carl Brockelmann, History of the Islamic peoples, London 1949, p. 158.

6. Ath. Vol. VII, p. 253; Jaw. Vol. VII, pp. 248-249.

pilgrimage became an arena of political and religious struggle between those two caliphs. The Khutbah was preached there many times in the name of the Fāṭimid caliph.¹ In this situation leading 'Alid personalities enjoyed a great measure of influence and prestige in Baghdad and Cairo. Our poet's father sometimes took part in easing the tension and settling the disputes when he was at Mecca as a leader of pilgrimage caravans.²

Broadly speaking, the Fāṭimids found sympathy amongst the shī'ites. The claim of this dynasty "could not fail to excite interest among all shī'ites".³ Al-Radī himself, expressed his leanings towards this family many times in his poetry. He considered it as his powerful backing when he felt wronged or oppressed in Baghdad.⁴ In one of his odes he indicated that he had intended to take refuge in Cairo.⁵ In another he confirmed the genealogical tree of the Fāṭimid family's descent from 'Alī, and accredited them as his paternal brothers.⁶

Unfortunately, we have no historical information concerning the relationships between our poet and the Fāṭimid family. It is difficult to consider whether these links had a political background or were merely personal

1. Jaw. Vol. VII, pp. 53, 80; Ath. Vol. VII, p. 79.

2. Ath. Vol. VII, p. 40.

3. B. I. art. "Eūwayh".

4. D. R. Vol. I, p. 238.

5. Ibid., p. 301.

6. D. R. Vol. II, p. 972.

and religious sympathies. Nevertheless, al-Radī used to challenge the caliph of Baghdad and place himself on a footing of equality with him. He may have used such references to "tread on the caliph's toes". It is apparent that this tendency came to an end in 402/1011. In this year a manifesto was made in response to al-Qādir's request. He felt strong enough at that time to assert his demands. It denounced the falsehood of Fāṭimid descent from the house of the Prophet.¹ Great personalities of different sects put their signature on it.² Our poet found himself compelled to do so. He did not refer to this event in his poetry. It is probable that he took this attitude in accordance with his political plan to maintain his relationships with both the Caliph and his friend Bahā' al-Dawlah, the ruler of Baghdad as well.

Returning to the Būwayhids' relations with the caliphs, it is evident that, in line with their beliefs, they installed and removed them at will. When political or even economic conditions called for such actions, they did not hesitate to humiliate them or encroach upon their prerogatives.³ The unfortunate Caliph al-Ta'ī suffered a great deal of abasement at the hands of Bahā' al-Dawlah, who succeeded his father 'Aḍud al-Dawlah in 379/989. It happened that the soldiers mutinied against him because they had not been paid. The Būwayhid prince first seized his

1. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 255; see Ath. Vol. VII, p. 263.

2. Ath. Vol. VII, p. 363. See Mez, Renaissance of Islam, tr. Khuda Bukhsh, London, 1937, pp. 153-154.

3. Jaw. Vol. VI, pp. 342-343; Ath. Vol. VII, p. 147.

vizier, then deprived him of all his property, but he found that this money was not as much as he had expected. One of his chancellors advised him to confiscate the caliph's property too. The plan was carried out; the caliph's treasury was sacked, and the people also began to plunder each other.¹ 'Abū Shujā' relates that al-Raḍī was one of those present. When he perceived that trouble was coming, he discreetly left the palace. Those who remained were subjected to many indignities. The poet described his escape while the multitude was attacking the caliph and insulting the nobles and judges.² His lines run as follows:

How wonderful that I should retain my life after
it has been attacked by disasters virgin and
matron.

And that I should have escaped on the day of
the palace when others succumbed;
I however, retained some discretion which saved me.
I darted thence swooping like a shooting-star.
just as the doors of destruction were closing on me.
After the master of the realm had been smiling
upon me, each of us affable to the other, I
found myself pitying him whom I had envied;
truly honour and disgrace are near neighbours.
Never shall I be deceived by a sovereign again;
fools are those who enter sovereign's doors. 3

أعجب لمكة نفسي بعد ما رصيت	من النوائب بالابكار والصون
ومن فجا لي يوم الدار حين هوى	غيري ولم اخل من عزم ينجيني
فرقت فها مروق النجم فلكاً	وقد تلاقت صاريع الردى دوي
من بعد ما كان رب الملك مبتماً	الي اذ نوه في الجوى ويدني
اصيت ارحم من اصبت انجته	لقد تقارب بين الفر والهون
هيات اغتر باللعان ثانية	قد ضل ولا ج ابواب السلاطين

1. Abū al-fidā, al-Mukhtasar fī Akhbār al-Baḥar. 1st edn. Cairo 1325/1907. p.127; see Ath. Vol. VII. pp. 147-148.

2. Yatimah. Vol. III. p. 141. See Dhayl. p. 213.

3. Dhayl. pp. 213-214; D. R. Vol. II. p. 867.

Bahā' al-Dawlah was the master of Baghdad for almost a quarter of a century, 379-403/989-1012. His tyrannical policy affected the caliphs, as we have seen above, and also viziers, other officers and the populace in general. He dealt cruelly with his followers in much the same way as his predecessors had done.¹ His long reign was characterized by many dangerous actions against the Baghdad society. The ruling classes were exposed to deprivation of property, execution and imprisonment. Even their heirs suffered the same fate.² The poet Mihyār al-Daylamī, in one of his odes, described the fate of the viziers as follows:

You were imprisoned, and thus (are) the days of the kings in which sometimes enjoy freedom and sometimes suffer captivity.

هَبْتِ دِيَامُ الْمُلُوكِ كَذَا تَكُونُ إِسَارًا مَرَّةً وَفَطَا كَا 3

Mihyār once again described the Ministry as follows:

Even the bankrupt bargained for it, but none would buy it for one falṣ.

دَا اسْقَاطَا الْفُلْصُ لَا غَدَتْ تَبَاعُ بِالْفُلْصِ وَلَا تُشْرَى 4

Al-Radī described the rulers of his age as follows:

Some kings consider killing as booty, but had they been content, they have found a ransom in wealth.

1. Mafizullah Kabir, The Būwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad. Calcutta, 1964, p. 90.

2. Ath. Vol. VII, pp. 155, 182, 267; Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 264.

3. D. Y. Vol. II, p. 370.

4. Ibid., p. 47.

وَأَمَّا لَكُمْ، يَرْوُونَ الْقَتْلَ غَضًا
 دَنِي الدِّمَالِ لَوْ قَضُوا فِدَاءً¹

In spite of this rough policy, the Būwayhids made contributions to cultural activities. They appointed many learned viziers and other figures who took part in intellectual fields. Al-Tha'ālibī stated that the leading writers of those days were four: al-Sāhib b. 'Abbād, Ibn al-'Amīd, Ibrāhīm b. Hilāl al-Sābī and 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Yū'uf.² The first two were viziers of the Būwayhid dynasty of Rayy, the other two were in the service of 'Aḍud al-Dawlah.³ It is related also that the al-Sāhib's 'salon' was a gathering place of many poets, writers and scientists of that age.⁴ The list of famous viziers during this period includes Sābūr b. Ardashīr, who played an important part in encouraging literary life in Baghdad. "He was equally remarkable for his abilities and learning. His palace was the constant resort of the poets of the day."⁵ He founded a "house of learning in the capital, to the library of which he had himself presented 10,000 volumes."⁶ 'Abū al-'Alā' the famous poet visited it. He referred to it in his poetry:

1. D.R. Vol. I, p. 26.

2. Yatimah, Vol. II, p. 246.

3. Kabir, The Būwayhid, p. 175.

4. Yatimah, Vol. III, pp. 192-193.

5. C. H. Shaikh, art. Some important personalities of Baghdad, B.D.C.R.I. 1939-40, Vol. I, pp. 205-227.

6. Ibid.,

وَفُتِّ لَنَا فِي دَارِ سَابُورِ قَيْنَةٌ
مِنَ الْوَرَقِ مَطْرَابُ الرِّصَالِ كَسْبَابِ

And in the house of Sābūr, a sprightly songstress
enlivened our evening with a voice melodious as the
dove's. 1

Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī founded another centre in the same city,
also called "a house of learning". He supported the
students during their studies there.² As for Sābūr,
al-Tha'ālibī devoted in the Yatimah a special chapter in
which he praised him mentioning those poets who celebrated
his deeds and glory.³ Another famous vizier worthy of
mention is Fakhr al-Mulk. He was a vizier of Bahā' al-
Dawlah. "He was gifted, in addition to his abilities as
the great vizier, with a fine literary taste which attracted
a number of poets and men of learning to his patronage."⁴
He was well-known for his wide-spread charities and sponsor-
ship of poets.⁵ Al-Raḍī was on familiar terms with him,⁶
and the poet Mihyār called the vizier, in one of his praising
odes, a protection and refuge of the people from misfortunes.⁷

Politically, the Būwayhid princes plunged into continuous
disputes and wars among themselves, and simultaneously
against many powerful states. They suffered precarious and
hard conditions in Baghdad. Nevertheless, it is arguable

1. Ibn Kh., Vol. I, pp. 554-555.

2. Jamāl al-Millāh 'Umdat al-Tālib, Bombay, 1318/1900, p.185.

3. Yatimah, Vol. III, pp. 129-138.

4. C. H. Shaikh, Some Important Personalities of Baghdad,
B.D.C.R.I., 1939-40, Vol. I, pp. 74-78.

5. Ath. Vol. VII, p. 279 n.

6. D. R. Vol. I, p. 322.

7. D. Y. Vol. I, p. 358.

that they did their best in patronising intellectual life when they had the opportunity to do so. Among them 'Adud al-Dawlah was highly esteemed by Arab annalists as a patron of science and literature. He was fond of both learning and gifted men.¹ Under his wing ample allowances were allocated to jurists, Qur'ānic commentators, theologians, poets and grammarians. "The young were encouraged to study and the old to instruct, talent had free scope, and there was a brisk market for ability."² It is said that he possessed a degree of knowledge of various sciences.³ He was versifier and critic as well. Al-Tha'ālibī related that 'Adud al-Dawlah used to take part in the discussions of poetry which was recited in his house when the poets assembled there.⁴ The leading poet of this period al-Mutanabbī was attracted to his court. On his visit he composed a number of odes in the prince's praise. He referred to the Būwayhid ruler as follows:

Having seen all (other) kings,
I journeyed on till I saw their master. 5

رَقْدَ رَأَيْتُ الْمَلُوكَ قَاطِبَةً " وَرَسَتْ حَتَّى رَأَيْتُ مَوْلَاهَا

This cultural and scientific activity was continued under the patronage of 'Adud al-Dawlah's sons Sharaf al-Dawlah and Bahā' al-Dawlah, who appointed the vizier Sābūr as we have seen before.

1. Ath. Vol. VII, pp. 113-114.

2. Misk. Vol. II, p. 447.

3. Ibn Kh. Vol. II, p. 481.

4. Yatimah, Vol. II, p. 217.

5. Ibn Kh. Vol. II, p. 481. See D. M. Vol. IV, p. 519.

Many reasons may be suggested for the Būwayhids' encouragement of intellectual and literary life. One of these was that the political condition gave growth to challenge and rivalry in various fields. A number of states raised their heads and established themselves here and there. The Fātimids, as we have seen, stretched their influence as far as Syria and Palestine in the second part of the fourth century. All these states took interest in creating rallying-points in their courts for poets, scientists and other men of learning. In the eastern Islamic empire, Bukhārā and Khawārizm flourished under the Persian family of the Sāmānids. These two cities were reckoned by al-Tha'ālibī as splendid centres of Arab culture and literature.¹ The Sāmānids were ousted by the Turkish family of the Ghaznawids. This dynasty behaved similarly in almost all activities.² In the western Islamic lands, the famous Hamdānid dynasty established itself in Aleppo, playing a fairly important rôle in the fourth century. Sayf al-Dawlah made his court an attractive centre of Arabic culture maintaining the remains of the spirit of Arab nationalism. It is said that al-Mutanabbī's poetry represented it.³ The literary glory of this prince's court was so well known that al-Tha'ālibī devoted a large part of his work the Yatimah to it.⁴

1. Yatimah. Vol. IV, pp. 101-193, 194-302.

2. Ath. Vol. VII, pp. 341-348; Jaw. Vol. VIII, p. 52.

3. R. A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 269-270.

4. Yatimah. Vol. I, pp. 24-300.

It is worth mentioning another family that was prominent in the political and literary fields. This tribal dynasty was called Banū 'Uqayl - 386-489/996-1096. The Būwayhids had a high regard for it. The 'Uqaylids occupied Diyār Bakr, al-Jazīrah and a part of Iraq.¹ Ahmad Amīn suggests that they maintained nomadic principles throughout their lives.² The remarkable leader of this family, al-Muqallad, was devoted to literature.³ Our poet was on familiar footing with him. On his death he composed two dirges.⁴ In the west the Fāṭimids paid constant attention to scientific and intellectual activities. They founded in Cairo an academy on the lines of similar institutions already existing in Baghdad. It was called 'The house of Wisdom'.⁵ Their encouragement and patronage extended as far as Baghdad and Basrah. The famous mathematician and physicist, al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥaytham, was summoned from Basrah to Egypt.⁶ Hilāl relates that for a single eulogy composed by the poet Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, the ruler of Egypt delivered to him a thousand dinars as a gift.⁷ It is of interest to note that this western cultural centre became a refuge to men of learning who failed to establish themselves in Baghdad or faced hardship

1. Lane-Poole, op. cit., pp. 116-117.

2. Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 58.

3. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 416.

4. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 285, 482.

5. O'Leary, op. cit., p. 139.

6. Brocklemann, History, p. 160.

7. Hilāl, p. 431.

of living there.¹

From this review it will be seen that literature flourished under the protection of princes, viziers and other governors. In consequence of that, the poets being concerned, above all, with praising their masters, had little opportunity to reveal their own tastes and personalities. Moreover, it became customary for the poets to approach the patrons so as to display "their goods". They used to wander from one court to another seeking great rewards. Consequently, patronage considerably restricted the freedom of the poets. It is difficult to find clear exceptions in looking through many Diwāns composed in this period. Even al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, despite his high position and overwhelming ambition, fell under this influence. Eulogies formed a large and important part of his poetical collection.

As for the Būwayhids' religious policy towards Shī'ites, it gave them the opportunity to practise a great measure of tolerance. Meanwhile, political development, in general, seems to have turned against the 'Abbāsids and the Sunnites as a whole. Mu'izz al-Dawlah, in favour of the 'Alid family, decided to separate them from the jurisdiction of the 'Abbāsīd head man, naqīb.² and put them under a naqīb

1. Ibn Kh. Vol. II, p. 165.

2. The duties of naqīb were to keep a register of nobility, enter births and deaths in it and to examine the validity of 'Alid genealogies. He had also to restrain them from excesses. He had other special duties including certain judicial powers. For further information see E. I. art. Sharīf by C. van Arendonk. See also al-Māwardī, al-Ahkām al-Sultāniyyah. Bonn, 1853, pp. 164-171.

of their own called the head of the 'Alids.¹ As we shall learn later, this religious position was occupied by the poet's father many times. Al-Radī and his brother, al-Murtadā became a naqīb as well. These three figures took an important part in the political field under the Būwayhids. It is possible that al-Radī's family throughout this reign had been acting as intermediary between the Būwayhids, the caliphs and the populace. Moreover, the rulers depended on the 'Alids, including al-Radī's family, in their relations with the local population and many other states at this time.² Al-Radī tells us in one of his odes that his father played a remarkable rôle in bringing peace to the Sunnites and the Shī'ites after long violent struggles. He says:

Misfortune, huge and dark-sided, befell al-Zawrā'.
Against it you drew decision to clear up, and so
to be withdrawn like false clouds.
You saved Baghdad from such a day, the thunder
of which is still echoed by the ~~north~~ ^{east} and
south winds.

و خطب على الزوراء القاجرانة مديح النواحي قدسهم الجوانب
سكنت عليه الحزم حتى جلوته كما انجاب غيم الصاخي المزكيب
راحت عن بغداد يوماً دوية الى الان باق في الباطن الجائب
3

In 'Izz al-Dawlah's reign al-Radī's father apparently held so distinguished a position that the prince sent him with a letter to the Hamdānids in Mosul, concerning the disputes between the two dynasties.⁴ More than that, while

1. al-Hamadānī, op. cit., pp. 170, 179.

2. B. I. art. "Būwayh", see also Mez, pp. 152-153.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 71.

4. Ath. Vol. VII, p. 50.

war was raging between 'Izz al-Dawlah and 'Adud al-Dawlah. a Turkish slave boy of the former was captured in battle. 'Izz al-Dawlah appointed Abū Ahmad, al-Radī's father as an envoy to 'Adud al-Dawlah to discuss this slave's release.¹ Probably, because of these cordial relations between Abū Ahmad and the prince, 'Adud al-Dawlah suspected his attitude. He sent him to Fāris as a prisoner, depriving him of his properties.² A bitter and distressing period began for al-Radī's family. It started early in 'Adud al-Dawlah's rule extending to his death as the poet tells us in his Dīwān.³

On the accession of Bahā' al-Dawlah, al-Radī's family enjoyed a prosperous time. This ruler assigned Abū Ahmad as a chief of judges, and president of the court of appeal Dīwān al-Mazālim, beside his normal position as the head man of the 'Alide. The caliph remonstrated against this decision and the prince had to retract his order. He reinstated al-Mūsawī in all his posts except that of the chief of the judges.⁴ However, Bahā' al-Dawlah had a great confidence in Al-Radī's father. He appointed him as an envoy to settle the disputes between himself and Banū 'Uqayl.⁵ On other occasions the poet's father appears to have been intermediary during the struggle between Šamṣām

1. Misk. Vol. II. p. 408; al-Hamadānī. Vol. I. pp. 233-234.

2. Jaw. Vol. VII. p. 98; Ath. Vol. VII. p. 103.

3. D. R. Vol. I. pp. 236-240; Vol. II. p. 800.

4. Jaw. Vol. VII. pp. 227-228; Ath. Vol. VII. p. 294.

5. Ath. Vol. VII. p. 157.

al-Dawlah and Bahā' al-Dawlah.¹ As for al-Sharīf al-Raḍī himself, he undertook the responsibility of naqābah on behalf of his father when the latter was still alive.²

In regard to the Būwayhids' sectarian policy, one would observe that the first step, in favour of the Shi'ite sect, had been taken by Mu'izz al-Dawlah. It is related that this ruler introduced two ceremonies. The first was a public mourning which was made to commemorate the Martyrdom of al-Husayn on the 10th of Muharram ('Ashūrā'). The second was the festival day which is called 'Id al-Ghadir' in memory of the supposed nomination of 'Ali by the Prophet as his rightful successor. These public celebrations, which were performed by the Shi'ites, often led to riots, upheavals and struggles between the Sunnah and Shi'ah. As a result of these continued troubles throughout Baghdad, many inhabitants were killed or wounded, mosques were destroyed and properties were plundered.³ The Sunnites were too weak to react. However, when they recovered some of their power, with the beginning of the Būwayhids' decline, their reaction was much the same. They created two other religious ceremonies. The first was called the day of "Muṣ'ab's Death".⁴ eight days after ''Ashūrā'' and the second was the "Day of the cave - 'Yawm

1. D. R. Vol. I. p. 189; Ath. Vol. VII. p. 198.

2. Ath. Vol. VII. p. 165.

3. Jaw. Vol. VII. pp. 15, 16, 19, 23, 33; Ath. Vol. VII. p. 35.

4. Muṣ'ab b. al-Zubayr, is a son of famous Hawārī of the Prophet, al-Zubayr b. al-'Awwām. He died in 71/690 fighting against the Umayyads.

al-Ghār" , the day on which the Prophet had entered the cave with Abū Bakr. The Sunnites celebrated it eight days after 'Id al-Ghadīr.¹

These sectarian struggles dragged on almost throughout the Būwayhid régime. Baghdad and its inhabitants suffered from riots and plundering. Consequently, people had to save themselves by migrating from the scenes of danger.² The riots and mob activities interfered with the daily life of the various classes of society. Even the preachers, jurists and theologians, who sometimes incited the populace, endured misfortunes and insults.³ Hilāl mentioned that the upper classes suffered seriously at the hands of robbers and insurgent elements.⁴ When Bahā' al-Dawlah realised his religious policy was beginning to jeopardise his position, he appointed the severe vizier, 'Amīd al-Jūyūsh to control the capital. The latter began by stopping the ceremonies of the rival sects. Then he ordered that robbers and mischief-makers should be indiscriminately drowned in the sight of the people of Baghdad.⁵ The inhabitants enjoyed a measure of security for a while, but soon after the death of this vizier they were to face danger again.⁶

1. Hilāl, pp. 364-365; Ath. Vol. VII, p. 200.

2. Hilāl, pp. 439-440.

3. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 237.

4. Hilāl, p. 465.

5. Hilāl, p. 467; see Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 220.

6. Ath. Vol. VII, p. 254.

Generally speaking, a growing Shī'ite rise in the political field became apparent in the fourth Islamic century. The 'Alids and their followers were able to take advantage of conditions of this period. Perhaps they made up for lost time. Numerous books about Shī'ism were first written during this era.¹ The sectarian struggles between the Shī'ah and Sunnah found its way of expression in poetry. Shī'ite poets used to compose odes on the occasion of the 'Ashūrā', in memory of al-Husayn's martyrdom.² Some of them directed seething attacks on Sunnite champions and defended the Shī'ite cause enthusiastically.³

The foregoing review will have given some idea of the interaction between political conditions and literary life during the period in which our poet lived. It is hoped that this introduction will form a fitting prelude to the next chapter on al-Radī's social environment.

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1. D. M. Donaldson, The Shī'ite Religion, London, 1933, pp. 284-290.
 2. D. T. Vol. I, pp. 68, 145; Vol. II, p. 53; see D. R. Vol. I, p. 33.
 3. D. Y. Vol. II, pp. 261-262; Vol. III, pp. 50, 112, 113. This point will be discussed at length later.

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The purpose of this chapter is to give a picture of al-Radī's social environment. Emphasis will be laid on the main factors which affected social life in general, and our poet in particular. But first, social conditions must be traced back to the 'Abbāsid era prior to the Būwayhids' rise to power.

It is well known that the 'Abbāsids owed their rise to power to Persian, rather than Arab arms. On account of that, Persian elements held a preponderant influential position from the very beginning of the era. Their cultural heritage, customs and style of life became more apparent. Evidently, under the 'Abbāsid era, as Hitti put it, "Arabianism fell but Islam continued, and under the guise of Islam, Iranianism marched triumphantly on".¹ Though Arabs, in general, lost their important strongholds, they still played some part in the 'Abbāsid administration machinery. On al-Mu'taṣim's accession (218/833) Turkish elements appeared on the scene. On account of rivalry between the Arabs and Persians he found himself impelled "to trust his personal security to a corps of slaves, some of them Berbers, but principally Turks".² Consequently they gained influence in the military and government and began to take their part in the 'Abbāsid life in general.³ This condition provided a fertile soil for fusion of Arabians with those foreign elements.

1. Hitti, op. cit., p. 287.

2. Brocklemann, History, p. 129; see Zuhr, Vol. I, pp. 3-4.

3. Zuhr, Vol. I, pp. 8-11.

The Būwayhids' invasion of Baghdad in 334/945 marked a new epoch at the social and economic levels at that time. They were foreign military leaders who came from unsophisticated backgrounds, and whose troops were Daylamites and Turks. Their appearance further complicated the racial elements of Baghdad and Iraqi society. Moreover, this situation formed a breeding-ground for mischief and riots which were difficult to control. The Turks represented the Sunnite sect while the Daylamites took up the Shī'ite cause. Lack of security and control gave birth to a variety of activities and conflicts. The various ethnic groups demonstrated their existence in different ways.¹

It is of interest to survey the Arab elements and their position and influence in the fourth Islamic century. The Arab tribes began to raise their heads, standing firm against a stormy tide of people representing different tongues, colours, temperaments and religion. Not only did they withstand the surge of foreign influence, but they also managed to maintain their entity, trying to retain the tribal system as a basic pattern of their social life.² In a town like Basrah the tribal feud still persisted, and the Būwayhid prince, 'Adud al-Dawlah found himself compelled to reconcile the Rabi'ah and Mudar tribes which had been in strife for a hundred years.³ Among many tribes which

1. Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 87.

2. Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 58; Ihsān 'Abbās, Al-Sharīf al-Radī Beirut, 1959, p. 13; I. A. 'Alī, Mihyār al-Daylamī, M. A. thesis, Baghdad University, 1967, pp. 6-7.

3. al-Dūrī, Economic History of Mesopotamia in the tenth century, Ph. D. thesis, London University, 1942, p. 16.

made themselves felt at that time were Banū Tamīm in the desert west of Basrah and Banū Khafājah which endangered many cities of Iraq and played a great part in its affairs.¹ In addition, other important tribes formed semi-dynasties here and there at that time.²

The various elements of society in Iraq in general, and Baghdad in particular, made their presence felt in different ways, of which poetry was one. Non-Arab poets of Persian and Turkish origin raised their voice. They enjoyed somewhat limited successes under this foreign rule. Their challenge to Arab pretentious pride became loud and sharp. Mihyār, a poet of Persian origin, in praising his national heritage, claimed that there was no ground to compare Arabs' and Persians' glory. His line runs as follows:

There is a difference between a head in which a crown takes pride and heads that take pride in Turbans.

3

شَتَانُ رَأْسٍ يَفْخَرُ السَّاجِدَ بِهِ
وَأَرُوسٌ تَفْخَرُ بِالْعَائِمِ

4

In Mihyār's eyes the Arabs broke a promise in respect of the Prophet's family. Consequently, they deviated from the right Path. He addressed them as follows:

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1. Ibid., p. 17; see also Ath. Vol. VII, p. 216.
 2. Lane-Poole, op. cit., pp. 116, 119; See Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 58.
 3. Arberry, Arabic Poetry, Cambridge, 1965, p. 108.
 4. D. Y. Vol. IV, p. 335.

You broke his covenants regarding his family,
and swerved from the highway of (his) ordinances. 1

نَفَضْتُ عُرْدَهُ فِي أَصْلِهِ
رُطِمْتُ عَنْ سِنِّ الْمُرَاسِمِ 2

At the expense of the Arabs, the poets of foreign origin were proud of their nationalities. They went to the length of directing scathing comments on the Arabs and their pride of being the masters of the world. They called on them to boast of being shepherds and camel-drivers.³

In contrast to this trend, poets of Arab origin reacted and rebelled. Al-Mutanabbī, and after him al-Raḍī, became aware of the racial conflicts. These two ambitious poets found themselves in an atmosphere in which the superiority passed into the hands of foreigners. It is probable that the impact of this development led al-Mutanabbī to express his indignation and become rebellious in the early stages of his life. He first joined the notorious Carmathian movement. It is said that he pretended to be a prophet and tried to win a certain Arab tribe's confidence, but his efforts came to grief.⁴ Al-Raḍī had another sort of ambition. He did not claim to be

1. Arberry, Arabic Poetry, p. 110.

2. D. Y. Vol. IV, pp. 335-336.

3. Gustave E. von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam, Chicago, 1947.

4. D. M. Vol. I, see intro. by al-Barqūqī; Shawqī Dayf, Al-Fann wa Madhāhibuhu fī al-Shi'r al-'Arabī, 4th edn. Cairo, 1960, p. 304.

a prophet but dreamed of assuming the Caliph's position.¹ He directed his attention to those Arab tribal leaders as his poetry reveals in many odes.² There was a likelihood that he considered them and other Arab tribes as potentially powerful backing to fulfill his dream. Unfortunately his dream did not come true. Consequently, a sense of indignation, pain, frustration and pique could be traced in al-Raḍī's and al-Mutanabbī's diwāns.³ Al-Sharīf in his rebellion and indignation went to the point of adopting the Jāhilite qualities and tribalism.⁴ while al-Mutanabbī lamented the decline of Arab glory. He says:

Men gain their value through their rulers, but
there is no well-being for Arabs ruled by non-
Arab. They have neither education nor glory
neither protective allegiance nor faith. 5

وإنما الناس بالملك وما
لأدب عندهم ولا حجة
تفاح عرب ملوكنا عجم
ولا عهد لهم ولا ذمم

It is safe to assume that though the foreign presence marked the life of al-Raḍī's time, many Arab values and even Bedouin qualities could still be sensed and traced. It is interesting to note that a poet of Persian origin, Miḥyār, was influenced by Arab principles. In his praising odes he made it customary to lavish a variety of tribal virtues on his patrons of Arab lineage. When he praised the Persians he added others derived from the "modern"

1. This point will be discussed in some detail later.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 174, 182, 378, 482.

3. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 89, 100, 105, 177, 375, 393; see D. M. Vol. II, pp. 52-57, 303.

4. D. R. Vol. II, p. 714.

5. The two lines are quoted from Ignaz Goldziher, Muslim Studies, tr. by C.R. Barber and S. M. Stern, London, 1967, Vol. I, p. 142; see D. M. Vol. IV, p. 230.

life of that time, and spoke appreciatively of their glorious descent.¹ In al-Raḍī's Diwān, the spirit of the desert which the poet breathed, is an important feature of his poetry as a whole.²

As for the strata of society, the Būwayhids inherited the social system which had taken its shape during three centuries of 'Abbāsid rule. At the Būwayhids' hands it underwent limited changes. However, the structure in general retained its main features. To portray the community's form and its combination, it would be convenient to present its general picture which was presented by the historian Ibn al-Faḡīh. The description runs as follows:

Mankind was divided into four classes: the ruler whom merit has placed in the foremost rank; the vizier, distinguished by wisdom and discrimination; the high placed ones, whom wealth has raised aloft; the middle class Awsāt who were attached to the other three classes by their culture. The rest of mankind was described as mere scum, a marshy brook and lower animals who know of nothing save food and sleep. 3

Under the Būwayhids, some aspects of this picture were altered. The military feudal system was intensified and a new class of Daylamite and Turkish leaders became the more powerful aristocracy. They gained ascendancy over other classes and played a remarkable part in all

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1. D.Y. Vol. I, pp. 99-100, 101, 396; 'Alī. Mihyār, p. 113.
 2. D.R. Vol. II, pp. 541-544, 565-571, 596-598.
 3. Ibn al-Faḡīh. Mukhtasar Kitāb al-Buldān, ed. M.J. De Goeje, Leiden, 1967; see I.C. art. "Nobility" a tr. chapter from Mez's work, "Renaissance of Islam" tr. by Khuda Bukhsh, Vol. III, 1929, pp. 583-584.

walks of life.¹ From an economic standpoint, as al-Dūrī put it, "the land had passed into their hands, and the resources of the country were exploited to the advantages of those outsiders who had little connection with local economy".² The other characteristic features of the 'Abbāsid society were still as they had been before, except that those foreign rulers brought foreigners to the most lucrative positions and offices.

Aristocracy of blood was still recognised and highly respected.³ At the head of this were the kinsmen of the Prophet, Banū Hāshim, made up of the 'Alids and the 'Abbāsids. This clan had its own privileges. As relatives of the Prophet, they received a salary from the government. In addition, they had their own court. Above them there was a religious leader called the naqīb, who was appointed by the caliph.⁴ Both the 'Alids and the 'Abbāsids were addressed as "al-Sharīf", the noble.⁵ As we have seen before, in the fourth Islamic century the two opposing offshoots of Banū Hāshim were separated and every branch had its own chief. Concerning their living standard, the 'Alid leaders had their monthly salary as the budget of that time indicates.⁶ They seemed to be well-to-do, while

1. E. I. art. "Būwayh".

2. Dūrī, Economic History, pp. 263-264.

3. Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 122.

4. Mez, p. 138.

5. D. R. Vol. I, p. 114; Al-Tanūkhī, al-Faraj Ba'd al-Shiddah, Cairo, 1938, Vol. II, p. 47.

6. Hilāl al-Sābī, Kitāb al-wuzarā', ed. Amedroz, Beirut, 1904, p. 20.

the rest of their followers faced hardship and, to some extent, poverty.¹ Consequently, a large number of 'Alids and 'Abbāsids were found among the people who engaged in riots, plunders and other destructive actions in Baghdad.²

Broadly speaking, al-Raḍī's family had an important position at the religious and political levels. It was regarded with high respect, and belonged to the aristocratic class as well. Our poet was proud of being a descendent of the Prophet's household.³ Though he did not regard the position of naqīb as his ultimate aim,⁴ he boasted of being a chief of 'Alids and the son and grandson of a naqīb:

My mother's maternal uncle had assumed the position of naqīb previously.
Then my grandfather and father as well.
I became in charge of it (naqābah) in my youth;
so is there a glory to be regarded as mine? 5

وَلِيَّ النِّقَابَةِ خَالُ أُمِّي قَبْلُ ثُمَّ أَبِي وَجَدِّي
وَلَيْتُنَا هَذَا فَضْلٌ مَجْدٌ يَعْدُدُّ شُلَّ مَجْدِي

The private life of the ruling classes and aristocracy at that time, were characterized by a general decline and mannerisms, futility and lack of stability. Fortunately, many details in respect of the court-life and ruling classes are available in historical sources. Poetical

1. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 213; Mez, p. 151.

2. Hilāl, p. 465.

3. D. R. Vol. II, p. 654.

4. Ibid.

5. D. R. Vol. I, p. 277.

collections contributed to give us a vivid picture of this life despite the poets' exaggerations and falsehoods.

First of all, those foreign rulers (the Būwayhids) who came from primitive backgrounds adapted themselves to the civilised life of Baghdad. Moreover, they exceeded the 'Abbāsids in their court-life and display of wealth.

They adopted new fashions, probably of Persian origin, which were filled with extravagances and the extremity of ostentatious parade.¹ The other main concern of these rulers was to collect money by extortion or any other means. They went to any length to satisfy their wishes and interests at the peoples' expense.

A close examination of historical sources gives us a real picture of the ruling class's life in its decline and corruption and shows us the gap between the aristocracy and the suffering majority as well. Miskawayh relates that the first Būwayhid ruler built a palace in the north of Baghdad. He spent 13 million dirhams which he mercilessly extracted from his supporters.² His successor, 'Izz al-Dawlah wasted his time hunting, drinking and joking with loose women. When he was in need of money, he deposed his vizier and deprived him of his property.³ Even 'Aḍud al-Dawlah, who was well-known as a reformer

1. Al-Bīrūnī, al-Athār al-Bāqiyah 'an al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah, ed. Eduard Sachau, Leipzig, 1923, pp. 133-135; see Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 62.

2. Misk. Vol. II, p. 199; see al-Hamadānī op. cit., Vol. I, p. 179; G. Le Strange, Baghdad During the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, Oxford, 1900, pp. 233, 319-320.

3. al-Hamadānī, op. cit., p. 234.

and took interest in social service, did much the same. As a foreigner, he was not the father of the people. In Baghdad he erected a garden beside his palace which cost him five million dirhams. To find a place for it, he destroyed numerous houses.¹ Bahā' al-Dawlah, al-Radī's patron and friend was described by our historians as a cruel and ill-tempered ruler. His lust for money and tendency to confiscate the property of viziers, other officials and wealthy men was beyond limit. He gathered a great deal of money from many illegal sources.²

In the manner of their rulers, viziers and officials made no bones about acquiring money and estates whenever the opportunity arose. They realised that their power would be short-lived and they always paid for it in full. Insecurity of property and lack of stability became common. Everyone ran the risk of imprisonment and deprivation of property or even violent death.³ Court intrigues and corruption among the high-ranking classes became the order of the day.⁴ Money and capricious whims of the rulers determined the fate of anyone.⁵ Our poet well realised this fact. On one occasion somebody mentioned at al-Radī's assembly that a vizier had offered a great deal of money to gain the minister's position. The poet improvised five

1. Tārīkh, Vol. I, p. 107.

2. Ath. Vol. VII, p. 268 n; Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 264.

3. Ath. Vol. VII, pp. 6, 170; Zuhr. Vol. I, p. 115.

4. Zuhr. Vol. I, p. 120; Tāhā Ḥusayn, Tajdīd Dhikrā Abī al-'Alā', 3rd edn. Cairo, 1937, p. 79.

5. Mahmūd Ghannāwī, al-Adab fī zill Banī Būwayh, Cairo, 1949, p. 53.

verses in which he called on people to purchase a high rank.¹ Al-Radī used more sarcastic comments on the decline of moral principle and the corruption of political life in his time.²

The danger of deprivation, imprisonment and corruption began to threaten the families of those who held religious positions. Neither judges nor naqibs escaped these practices.³ Muhammad b. 'Umar, a head of the 'Alids, was arrested many times; his property and estates were confiscated as well.⁴ Al-Radī's family suffered the same fate at the hands of 'Adud al-Dawlah.⁵ Days of suffering and poverty left deep marks on our poet's life and poetry as we shall learn later on. It is worth noting that the office of judge at Baghdad was auctioned at that time for 200,000 dirhams a year paid to the prince's treasury. Consequently, a man of bad reputation and licentious conduct became a judge.⁶ The position of naqib was put up for auction as well. A certain 'Alid paid money and became the chief of the 'Alids. On account of this, al-Radī was dismissed. He was upset and angry. He poured bitter comments on this 'Alid personality who took over the post and deplored his behaviour. He addressed him as follows:

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 703.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 190, 230.

3. D. R. Vol. II, p. 701.

4. Jaw. Vol. VII, pp. 211, 212, 213.

5. Ath. Vol. VII, p. 103.

6. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 2; see Mez. p. 223.

You gained it (al-naqābah) by your money,
and that was shameful enough.
Should not you possess it by your glory? 1

بِمَالِكَ نَلَيْتَ وَكَفَاكَ عَارًا فَأَلَّا نَلَيْتَ بِالْمَجْدِ أَلَّا

It is of interest to note al-Raḍī's reaction to the ruling-classes' life with its moral decline and corruption. At first glance, he seems to have taken dual attitudes. As a member of the aristocratic circle and a politician, he found his fate linked with the Būwayhid ruler. Like the others he seized any opportunity and turned it to his own advantage. He carried out his obligations to justify the Būwayhid rule. In his poetry he took pains to conceal the regime's ugly side. He always tried to present it as fair and just.² However, he did not indulge in corruption. On the contrary, al-Raḍī had other attitudes which show him as a man of principles who had a mission and ambition in life. Accordingly, he expressed his reservations and refusal to condone such a corrupt life. It is probable that he found it hard to maintain a balance between those two conflicting tendencies. He was not always able to do so. Consequently, conflicts and inconsistencies were apparent in his political life.

In al-Raḍī's poetry this contradiction is clearly recognizable. In one of his odes in which he addressed Bahā' al-Dawlah, he described him as follows:

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 701; Ath. Vol. VII, p. 165.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 214, 309, 320.

Nothing established kingdoms like a cutting sword
(Bahā' al-Dawlah).

Which can put an end to decreed fate. 1

ولا انتظم الممالك مثل ماضي. يتم له القضاء على القضاء

In another ode he directed oblique criticisms and biting comments on the régime. He described the rulers as follows:

They encompass the noble men among us.
just as the bark dominates the twig. 2

هم استولوا على النبلاء ضا كما استولى على السود الغمام

Sometimes he condemned the ruling-classes of that time openly. He said:

We are in the midst of a band which regards oppression as justice, and which calls error a home of guidance. 3

نحن في غيبة ترى الجور عدلا
وتسمي الضلال دار رشاد

The artificiality and the extravagance of the ruling-classes was well illustrated by their love of titles. The famous writer and poet, al-Khawārizmī, who died in 383/993, poured sarcastic remarks on ruling-classes and caliphs for their craving for titles. His lines run as follows:

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1. D. R. p. 8.
 2. Ibid., p. 26.
 3. Ibid., p. 230.

What matters to me if the 'Abbāsid have thrown open the gates of honours and surnames, though plentiful the titles, few are the Dirhams in the hands of this our caliph. 1

ما لي رأيتُ بني العباس قد فتحوا من الكلى رضى القباب أبوابا
حلّ الدراهم في كفيّ خيلتنا هذا فأنتق في التروم القباب

Al-Birūnī (d. 477/1055) shares this poet's opinion. He says that "When the 'Abbāsids had decorated their assistants, friends, enemies indiscriminately, with vain titles compounded with the word "Dawlah", their empire perished".² In the Būwayhid régime the titles were doubled. 'Adud al-Dawlah became Tāj al-Millāh "Crown of religion". Al-Raḍī's friend Bahā' al-Dawlah had two other titles. He was called Diya' al-Millāh "light of religion" and Ghiyāth al-Ummah. Al-Birūnī adds that the Būwayhids were the first to bestow on their viziers and other personalities titles which really belonged to God. They made it the custom to call their supporters "the only one" al-Awḥad, "the most excellent of excellents", Kāfi al-Kufāt, and so forth.³

Many honorary titles were conferred on Abū Aḥmad and his sons, al-Raḍī and al-Murtadā. The list is too long to be enumerated. It was liable to be increased day by day. The Diwān of al-Raḍī and that of his brother al-Murtadā are abundant with occasional odes in which they celebrated

1. Mez, p. 87; Cf. Yatimah, Vol. IV, p. 230.

2. al-Birūnī, Athār, p. 132; Von Grunebaum, Medieval, p. 212.

3. al-Birūnī, Athār, p. 134.

these glorious days.¹ Our poet was pleased with these official honours. He seemed to take pride in them. Meanwhile, when those artificial titles were bestowed on unsuitable persons he became angry, lamenting the lack of merit. He denigrated them, exposing the wide gap between these titles and their true significance. He described them as follows:

And titles of people which if you tested them
you would find disparity between their
pretentious words and real meanings. 2

وَأَلْقَابُ نَوْمٍ إِذَا بُرْتُهَا
تَبَايُنُ الْفَاظِ وَالْمَعْنَى

The upper classes of that time seem to have lived extremely luxurious and sensual lives. They seized their opportunity in days of political and social instability. They led dual lives, private and public. As ruling classes in an Islamic community apparently still adhering to religious principles, they pretended to be righteous, fair and honest patrons. Poets who attached themselves to them, played their part in presenting this false and artificial picture. But, the private lives of the upper-classes took an opposite path. Accordingly, men of learning and poets had another task in this aristocratic circle. They had to become courtiers and entertainers in assemblies held by their lords. Fortunately, they indirectly betrayed the shortcomings of this private life.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 39, Vol. II, pp. 742, 752, 884; see D. T. Vol. I, p. 257.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 905.

with its joys, frivolity and merry-makings, disregarding the wishes of their masters. Abū Hayyān al-Tawhīdī, one of the leading writers in the fourth Islamic century, (d. 413/1023) wrote a book called al-Imtā' wa al-Mu'ānaṣah. It contains intellectual and literary conversations which were carried on in the presence of the Būwayhid vizier, Ibn Sa'dān. The author devoted a special chapter, called al-Laylah al-Mujūniyyah - the obscene night. It is abundant with filthy and outspoken sensual descriptions.¹ From a literary point of view these evening assemblies and gatherings for drinking and conversations provided a natural hot-bed for short poems (al-Maqtū'āt) which became an independent artistic trend. This society-verse was concerned with light-hearted and filthy remarks. In addition, it concentrated on describing the material aspects of the affluent life at that time.²

A vivid picture of the private life of the ruling classes in al-Raḍī's age is formed in the Yatimah. Al-Tha'ālibī relates that at the residence of the Būwayhid vizier, al-Muhallabī, the judge Ibn Ma'rūf and the qādī al-Tanūkhī among the judges, and others met twice a week. He states that these qadis all had long gray beards. He

1. Abū Hayyān al-Tawhīdī, Kitāb al-Imtā' wa al-Mu'ānaṣah, ed. Ahmad Amin and Ahmad al-Zayn, Cairo, 1942, Vol. II, pp. 50-60.

2. Yatimah, Vol. II, pp. 229, 264, 397, 398, 404, Vol. III, pp. 202, 251, 272.

Note: It is of interest to note that when Abū 'Isā al-Munajjim's donkey passed away, eleven poets lamented on its death at al-Sāhib b. 'Abbād's request. This account shows how far the assemblies and gatherings affected poetry and broadened poets' horizons at that time. See Yatimah, Vol. III, pp. 218-233.

continues that at the summit of merry-making each man holding in his hand a golden cup filled with Qaṭṭabul and 'Ukbarah wine would dip his beard into it. They would sprinkle each other with it and dance. In the morning they returned to dignity and sedateness.¹

Corruption had infiltrated official religious circles.

Judges were accused of bribery and even immoral behaviour.²

It is clear that irreligion at that time became widely

tolerated; moral deviation was frequent.³ Poets addressed

their verses to boys as well as to girls.⁴ Judging by

al-Tha'ālibī's narratives one would presume that debauchery was acceptable in high and low circles.⁵

Al-Radī's poetry was slightly influenced by this social phenomenon. Apparently he himself led a spotless life. He used to state that his social life and private life were of high moral standard. Accordingly, his evening assembly was of different kind. "limited and unstained by evil" as he tells us.⁶ Despite this fact, references to "lads" and wine are made in his poetry. Al-Radī seems to be cautious and aware of being accused of leading a gay life, so he put explanatory prefaces to these odes to excuse himself. In one of these odes he confirms that his

1. Yatīmah, Vol. II, pp. 336-337; Mez. 397.

2. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 186; Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah, Cairo, 1932, Vol. XI, p. 237.

3. Ghannāwī, op. cit., p. 248; Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 121.

4. Yatīmah, Vol. II, pp. 345, 365, among others.

5. Ibid., pp. 226, 238, 345.

6. D. R. Vol. II, p. 724.

friend requested him to describe a Persian "lad". In another he describes a black girl at the request of his companion.¹ He also has an ode in which he depicts an assembly of drinking.² Broadly speaking, al-Radī had no real connection with these tendencies. He may have paraded his originality in dealing with a subject which had become fashionable in those days.

The luxurious life of the upper classes was carried on at the expense of the majority of the population. Rulers and their supporters missed no opportunity to exploit the populace. Moreover, the violence which became current on account of sectarian struggles made the situation much worse. Financial corruption, reckless economic policy and even natural disasters contributed to create the wretched conditions in which the population lived.³ Consequently, in the words of al-Dūrī, "the social currents were stirring underneath the exuberant luxury of the wealthy class".⁴ The masses became aware of their own misery. They tried to assert themselves by street-riots and defended their interest in many destructive ways, especially in Baghdad.

Our historical sources contain many accounts in respect of the above-mentioned point. They indicate that the heavy tax on the sale of goods became general practice

1. Ibid., p. 722.

2. Ibid., pp. 755, 786, 913.

3. Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 120; Tāhā Husayn, Tajdid, p. 70.

4. Dūrī, Economic History, p. 99.

in the fourth Islamic century. It coincided with famine which seriously harmed the populace. Tax increased according to the ruling classes' need for money. Ibn al-Jawzī relates that in the year 375/985 Saḥām al-Dawlah endeavoured to impose a tax upon cloths of silk and cotton woven in Baghdad owing to his need of money. People assembled in the mosque of al-Manṣūr. They determined to prevent the Friday service. They compelled the withdrawal of this measure.¹ On another occasion, 389/998, this measure was reinforced and as before it resulted in rebellion. The populace stormed the Dār al-Hamūlī where the tax rolls were kept, setting fire to it. Afterwards the dispute was settled and the tax was reduced.² Baghdad became an arena of sectarian and social conflicts, authority was suspended and security was beyond hope of inhabitants. There were numerous riots and property was repeatedly looted by both bandits and officials.³ Famines became current events and death hovered over the downtrodden populace's heads as a result of epidemics and hunger.⁴

In regard to our poet's attitude towards the lower classes' misery and their horrible condition, there is no trace of sympathy in his poetry. On the contrary, he justified the severe measures taken by the cruel vizier.

1. Jaw. Vol. VII. p. 127; Dhayl, pp. 119-120.

2. Hilāl, p. 361.

3. Dhayl, p. 197; Hilāl, p. 465.

4. Ath. Vol. VII. pp. 131, 162; Jaw. Vol. VII. p. 121.

'Amīd al-Jīyūsh, in putting down public demonstrations, riots and protests. In one of his odes he appreciated the vizier's control over a hard situation and praised the Būwayhid rule as well.¹ His brother, al-Murtadā, did much the same.² The two brothers revealed an anxiety and concern over the lower classes' movement. In another ode al-Radī was proud of his part in bringing Baghdad's serious situation back to normal.³ It would be difficult to depend on al-Radī's poetry to throw light on the depth of misery of the populace's life. In this respect he attached himself to the ruling class and represented its point of view.

It is interesting to present the real picture of Baghdad in the fourth Islamic century, which was drawn by truthful witnesses who suffered poverty and faced hardship. They either failed to gain the rulers' favours or disdained to be under their service. In al-Radī's time the famous poet Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī turned his attention to the capital. He thought of trying his fortune in Baghdad, "the great field of genius and exertion, where talent of every kind had the fullest scope and the highest encouragement."⁴ In the capital he refused to pay court to the ruling classes and disdained to write verse professionally.⁵ His hope to establish himself came to

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 112-114.

2. D. T. Vol. III, pp. 201-203.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 2.

4. Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 313-314.

5. Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, Letters, ed. tr. D. S. Margoliouth, Oxford, 1898, intro.

grief. He faced hardship and poverty, despite the high respect with which he was held by men of learning.¹ He left Baghdad for two reasons: his poverty and the illness of his mother.² When he returned from the city he sent a letter to his maternal uncle. He expressed his frustration and despair. He made sarcastic comments on the capital, revealing his alienation when he was there. He said, "I found Baghdad like a pie's wing=fair but carrying nothing". As for his condition when he was in Baghdad, he cited a line which runs as follows:

Truly Iraq is no home for my people, and its door is shut against Abū Ghassān. 3

إِنَّ الْعِرَاقَ لِأَهْلِيٍّ لَمْ يَكُنْ سَكَنًا وَالْبَابُ دُونَ أَيِّ غَنٍّ مَرْدُودٌ

Abū⁴Alā's contemporary, the Qādī' Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Mālikī (362-422/973-1031) suffered the same fate. He was an able juriconsult, an elegant scholar and poet.⁴ On the authority of Ibn Bassām, Ibn Khallikān narrates that "Baghdad rejected him as is the old established custom of cities towards their men of merit".⁵ On the occasion of leaving Baghdad forever, he said to his friends as he left the city, "Had I found among you a roll of bread every morning and every evening I should

1. Letters, intro.; see Nicholson op. cit., p. 314.

2. Letters, intro.

3. Letters, English version p. 37; Arabic version p. 30.

4. Ibn Kh. Vol. II, p. 165.

5. Ibid., p. 166.

not have turned from your town as I would then have obtained all I wished for".¹ The capital of the Islamic lands in his eyes was a city of misery and pain. He portrayed Baghdad in a picture abundant with despair and regret. It runs as follows:

Baghdad is a delightful residence for those who have money, but for the poor it is an abode of misery and suffering.
I walked all day through its streets bewildered and desolate; I was treated with neglect like a Qur'ān in the house of an atheist. 2

بغداد دارٌ لأهل المال طيبةٌ وللغفالي دارُ الضيق والصيق
ظلمتُ حزاناً أشتي في أزقتها كائني مصعباً في بيتٍ زنديق

The third famous witness who suffered in Baghdad and revealed his indignation and pain was Abū Hayyān al-Tawhīdī. Yāqūt observed that this well-known man used to lament on his misfortunes and complain of his privation.³ His hopeless condition drove him to burn his books. In consequence, a tearful lamentation was made for his works. It is the tragedy of a sensitive and learned man who lost support and comfort. Abū Hayyān found relief in pouring his biting comments on those peoples who disregarded his merit. He said, concerning his burned books: "How am I to leave my books behind to those with whom I have lived for twenty years without receiving love or regard; by whom often and often I have been driven to privation and hunger

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p. 167.

3. Ibn Kh. Arabic version, ed. M. 'Abd al-Hamīd, Cairo, 1948, Vol. II, p. 388.

and galling dependence or reduced to the necessity of bartering away my faith and honour."¹ He added that in the lack of food he found himself compelled to eat the grass in the desert.

It is worth noting that the above picture of Baghdad's society is still incomplete. These three famous and learned men depicted the social condition from a personal point of view. They revealed some aspects of this social life and its misery in so far as it had close connection with their own lives. However, they did throw light on the social environment in contrast with those court-poets and writers who played their parts as window-dressers of the régime and made no effort to expose the truth. But they paid no attention to the populace's misery. Nevertheless, they did mirror the gap between those poets and writers who attached themselves to the ruling-class and others who found themselves close to the bottom of the social ladder.

Returning to the miserable condition of the populace in the Būwayhid era, it is apparent that the lower class failed to improve its state either peacefully or violently. In consequence, it became a prey to subservience and despair. The poor took refuge in mosques and saints' shrines. They indulged in hope for some anonymous saviour who would come to their rescue and lift them from their misery.² Mez observes that in the fourth century the

1. Yāqūt, Vol. V, pp. 380-381.

2. Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 121; see Ālī, Mihyār, pp. 15-16.

story-tellers qussās had come down in the world to the level of the populace to whom, for money, they related pious stories and legends and made jokes in mosques and on the streets.¹ They may have given relief and comfort to the desperate common-folk by relating stories concerning the rough and simple life of righteous men and priests.² On the other hand, the populace's condition and social disparity gave, in one way or another, a fertile ground for remarkable politico-religious and intellectual movements in the fourth Islamic century. At the intellectual level the main movement which took place at that time was that of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, "Brothers of Sincerity".³ In the politico-religious field there was another group called "the Carmathians". In Bernard Lewis's view those two groups and Ismā'īlism were all different facets of one and the same movement which by the catholicity of its doctrines and simplicity of its purpose, attempted and almost succeeded in uniting the whole population of the Islamic orient, irrespective of creed and social status.⁴

Concerning Ikhwān al-Ṣafā , they formed a secret association aiming at religious and social reform which made its first appearance in Basrah and spread to Baghdad.⁵

1. Mez, pp. 326-327.

2. Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 121; 'Alī. Mihyār, p. 16.

3. Dūrī, Economic History, p. 88.

4. Bernard Lewis, The Origins of Ismā'īlism, Cambridge, 1940, see intro; Cf. B. I. art. Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, by T. J. Deboer.

5. Hitti, op. cit., p. 372.

This society produced some fifty separate treatises termed Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā. They comprised all the branches of knowledge of that time. It is probable that they wrote them in a hope of popularising knowledge for the sake of the masses.¹ Traces of sympathetic attitudes among these members towards the populace are found in their treatises, in one of which they directed particular attention to labourers and craftsmen whose nobility was highly esteemed.² There is another aspect of this society's interaction with the populace's hopes and interests. It is safe to assume, as Hitti put it, that this movement "formed views opposed to the existing order. It aimed to overthrow the régime by undermining popular ideas and religious beliefs".³

It is likely that our poet al-Radī did not escape the influence of these movements. A close examination of his poetry shows us traces of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā's spirit. He left us two dirges in which he lamented anonymous friends. The explanatory preludes of these odes are obscure. It seems that al-Radī was not in a position to identify his friends for one reason or another.⁴ In the first dirge the poet used the term Ikhwān al-Ṣafā in identifying his friend.⁵ In the same ode he called his friend my

1. Dūrī. Economic History, p. 88; B. Lewis, intro.

2. Dūrī. p. 89; see Buṭrus al-Bustānī, Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, Beirut, 1957, Vol. I, p. 91.

3. Hitti, op. cit., p. 372; Dūrī, Economic History, p. 91.

4. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 493-495, 495-496.

5. Ibid., p. 495.

brother (Akhī)¹ the term which was used frequently by the members of this society.² In addition, he described his friend by qualities which seem to be a part of this association's ethics. In the second ode the poet applied the term Ikhwān al-Ṣafā with a slight alteration.³ In view of all these points, one could suggest that al-Radī had something in common with this society. However, our poet was an Imāmite personality, who had at least personal sympathy with 'Ismā'īlism and Carmathians as we shall see later on. All those factors provided a common ground between al-Radī and this movement. Furthermore, al-Radī as an openminded⁴ man, may have admired 'Ikhwān al-Ṣafā's tolerance.⁵

As for the Carmathians, they were a revolutionary sect which formed a remarkable force at that time. It began as an offshoot of Ismā'īlism and probably separated itself later on. Its birthplace was the south of Iraq where a fertile soil was ready for such a movement. Peasants, the poor and other dissatisfied elements placed their faith in it as a movement aimed at equality and justice.⁶ Desert Arabs and elements of different races

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 494.

2. Buṭrus al-Bustānī, Rasā'il. Vol. I, pp. 43, 48, 53, 54. Vol. II, pp. 23, 24. Vol. IV, pp. 10, 17, 18.

3. He used the word Aqrān al-Ṣafā which means fellows of sincerity. See D. R. Vol. I, p. 495.

4. Al-Radī's openmindedness will be discussed in a coming chapter.

5. Concerning Ikhwān al-Ṣafā's tolerance, see B. Lewis, op. cit., intro; Nicholson, op. cit., p. 370.

6. Hitti, op. cit., pp. 444-445; O'Leary, op. cit., pp. 39-50.

and origin identified themselves with this revolution.¹ To the end of the last quarter of the fourth century, Hijāz, the desert in general, Iraq, and other districts became a scene of its violent activities.² On many occasions they attacked the pilgrimage caravans that were on their way to Mecca.³ In the year 375/985 the Carmathians occupied Kūfah and threatened Baghdad itself. In consequence, alarm overspread the capital. Several times the Būwayhid rulers tried to make friends with them and responded to their demands.⁴ Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's friend Abū Bakr b. Shāhawayh was a representative of this movement in Baghdad. As Abū Shujā' relates, that he "lived in the capital like a vizier, obtained audience of the sovereign, who fell in with his ideas, while the grandees were afraid of him, put up with his arrogance, and obeyed his commands - for no reason except his relations with these people."⁵ Our poet indicated that Abū Bakr was a man of importance in Baghdad at that time.⁶ The intimate relationship between them is evident. Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī sent him a praising ode. It implies that Abū Bakr had high regard for al-Raḍī's poetry.⁷ On the occasion

1. O'Leary, *op. cit.*, p. 49; al-Dūrī, Muqaddamah fī al-Tārīkh al-Iqtisādī al-'Arabī, Beirut, 1969, p. 74.

2. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 121; Dhayl, p. 113.

3. Jaw. Vol. VII, pp. 51, 76.

4. Ibid., p. 126.

5. Dhayl, p. 113.

6. D. R. Vol. I, p. 384.

7. Ibid., p. 502.

of his friend's death, al-Radī composed a dirge in which he expressed his regret and pain.¹ He called him "my brother" (Akhī) as he did in his two dirges concerning the supposed member of Ikhwān al-Safā.²

From this above review of the Carmathians and Ikhwān al-Safā and their connection with Ismā'īliem, it shall be apparent that these trends played an important part in al-Radī's time. They helped to channel the indignation and distress of the populace, and formed a real threat to the caliphate and rulers of Baghdad. Our poet as a politician and a man of soaring ambition to assume the caliphate's position, seems to be aware of the importance of these movements. In addition, his Shī'ite background, rebellious mind and feelings and his dissatisfaction with the social and political system of that time, are all factors which played a part in strengthening his links with these movements. Yet our poet did not participate in such revolutionary movements. As a politician and official religious personality, he probably balanced his position against those militant movements. He revealed his good will to the caliphs and rulers and concealed his real relationships with those revolutionary trends in order to maintain his close links to the ruling class.

Thus, though al-Radī turned his back on the lower-

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 384.

2. Ibid.

classes' misery, basing his stand on his identity with the upper class, he shows some leanings towards revolutionary trends. The decline of moral standards and the increase of corruption in aristocratic social life gave him cogent reasons to deprecate and reject it. At the moral level, he tried to separate himself from his class and lived according to his own high principles which gave him grounds on which he built his own world in his poetry as we shall learn later. Yet he could not avoid showing the influence of the age in which he lived.

As for conditions as a whole, they seem to have been dynamic and filled with many motivating trends. The gap at the social and political levels between the upper classes and lower classes was wide. Signs of affluence and hardship, civilised progress and moral decline from Islamic standards existed side by side. The fourth Islamic century was a period of renaissance which reached its peak then took the first steps towards decline.¹ Fortunately, literary records succeeded, in different degrees, in portraying this important epoch, as we shall see in the forthcoming chapter.

1. In this respect we assess al-Radī's time from the social and intellectual point of view. It is plain that the political condition was in a state of anarchy and deterioration, as we have seen in the first chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE LITERARY ENVIRONMENT

In the foregoing review of the political and social life of the age in which al-Radī lived, it has become apparent that there are many factors which contributed towards the shaping of literary conditions at that time. Politically, the Islamic empire disintegrated and separated into many states. The Būwayhids became the masters of several regions in the east and the rulers of Baghdad. As we have seen before, social and political insecurity marked this period. However, this environment provided a fertile soil for literary activity to grow and make much progress. Fortunately, the rulers of these states throughout the length and breadth of the empire were eager to enhance their reputation on the cultural level as much as on the political. In consequence, they established many intellectual centres and extended their patronage to men of learning.¹ It is true to say that "the Būwayhid period", as Kabir says, "witnessed unprecedented development under the patronage of Amirs and viziers, some of whom were themselves great men of learning".²

Education and the dissemination of learning were facilitated by various means. Among these were many academies which were established in several cities of the Islamic world.³ Literary gatherings abounded which

1. Zuhr, Vol. I, pp. 94-95.

2. Mafizullah Kabir, art. "Academies and Libraries during the Būwayhid Period", I. C. January, 1959, Vol. XXXIII, No. I, pp. 31-33.

3. See Chapter I.

were held at the houses of famous figures as well as at the courts of rulers. Learned men used to attend such cultural assemblies. They would conduct intellectual and literary debates on various subjects.¹ The recital and improvisation of poetical pieces was also a major activity at these literary clubs. Furthermore, libraries, both public and private, spread in every city. 'Adūd al-Dawlah's library in Shīrāz was one of these famous institutions. al-Maqdisī tells us that its books were arranged in cases and its titles were listed in catalogues. He adds that it was administered by a regular staff.² In Baghdad the library of Sābūr's "house of learning" was well-known.³ Its books numbered about 10,400 amongst which were a hundred precious copies of the Qur'ān and many monographs of famous writers.⁴ Al-Maqdisī, who travelled throughout the Islamic world, visited many public and private libraries and was able to make comparisons between them.⁵ He pointed out that Basrah's "house of books" was a big one and full of various Books.⁶ It is interesting to note that the famous vizier al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād had an enormous collection. It is said that

1. Zuhr. Vol. I. pp. 135. 229-230.

2. al-Maqdisī, Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Mu'rifat al-Aqālīm. ed. M. J. Goeje. 2nd edn. Leiden, 1967, p. 449; Hitti, op. cit., p. 413.

3. See Chapter I.

4. I. C. art. Academies and Libraries; Jaw. Vol. VIII, p. 22; Ath. Vol. VII, p. 324.

5. al-Maqdisī, op. cit., p. 413.

6. Ibid.

transporting it required 400 camels.¹

Mosques also functioned as repositories of books and suitable places for lectures. The most famous of these was the mosque of al-Manṣūr in Baghdad. Al-Raḍī's disciple Mihyār al-Daylamī used to take his place there, surrounded by the pupils who wanted to study his diwān under his supervision.² At another mosque called Masjid Ibn al-Mubārak, the famous Shāfi'ite theologian al-Isfarā'inī (d. 406/1015) lectured to seven hundred students on theology.³

From these brief remarks one would imagine that great opportunities occurred for people to acquaint themselves with various sorts of knowledge. The passion for learning was obvious; it seems as if everyone from the upper classes to the lower classes was eager to learn and participate.

It is strange that in striking contrast to the decline of political and social condition, literary life was generally of a high quality. The lack of unity throughout the Islamic lands and the emergence of many states became contributory factors towards the development and progress of intellectual movement as a whole.⁴ Even sectarian conflicts and social insecurity, which were considered

1. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 180; Yāqūt, Vol. II, p. 315.

2. Tārīkh, Vol. XII, p. 276.

3. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 277.

4. T. Ḥusayn, Tajdīd, p. 39; Zuhr, Vol. I, pp. 90-92.

signs of decline made their contribution in different ways as we shall see later. However, one might bear in mind that it is, by no means, unique to encounter many splendid pictures of the literary life in an age full of anarchy and bloodshed.

Before going into detail, we must state here that our aim in the following survey of literary activities is not to cover all its aspects, which would be beyond the scope of this chapter. Attention will be focussed on some characteristic aspects of the literary situation which seem to have some close connection with our poet, his works and teachers. Details will be given in so far as they throw light on the poet's literary life and elucidate his writings.

In the fourth Islamic century, Arabic still maintained a dominant position throughout the Islamic world as a vehicle of its civilisation. Its response to the requirements and needs of this new life is evidence of its maturity and flexibility.¹ Meanwhile, linguistic studies kept pace with literary development and expansion. Two features distinguished the products of the linguistic field. The first was the quantity of dictionaries which were characterised by an abundance of words and the organised form of their composition.² The second was the stress placed on derivation (Ishtiqāq) and the increased

1. Anwar G. Chejne, The Arabic language, its rôle in history, Minnesota, 1969, p. 68.

2. 'Abd al-Razzāq Muhyī al-Dīn, Adab al-Murtadā min Siratihī wa Āthārih, Baghdad, 1957, pp. 41-42.

use of analogy (qiyās). Concerning the first point, Mez suggests that "In the two main branches of Arabic philology - in grammar and in the preparation of the dictionary - the fourth century struck a new path. Like theology, it was then emancipated from the shackles of juristic method in external form entirely."¹ He adds that old savants concentrated on an individual approach and paid no attention to the organization of their works, which seem to be discursive.² "The leading philologists of the fourth century", as Mez put it, "felt the need of method, the systematization of their material. In imitation of this new method the study of Greek played the chief rôle."³

As for derivation and analogy, the leading philologists in this field were Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987) and Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/991). Both were teachers of al-Radī, as we shall learn later. Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī was greatly admired by 'Adud al-Dawlah, for whom he wrote Kitāb al-Hujjah fī al-qirā'āt al-sab' "a book on seven different readings of the Qur'ān". Amongst his other books are al-Takmilah and al-Idāh.⁴ With his disciple Ibn Jinnī serious etymological enquiry began. This famous grammarian and linguistic figure is the author of the celebrated book al-Khasā'is and other important

1. Khuda Bukhsh, art. "philolog" a Translated chapter from A. Mez's work "Die Renaissance Des Islāms", I. C. No. III, July 1931, p. 442-445.

2. Ibid.,

3. Ibid., see also Zuhr, Vol. II, pp. 85-86.

4. Jaw, Vol. VII, p. 138; Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 243.

works.¹ Amin suggests that al-Fārisī and Ibn Jinnī were the founders of a new linguistic school which called for tolerant attitudes in dealing with Arabic. They declared that language should be commanded by the people and developed at their hands. They added that Arabic was not a holy thing; in their eyes it was just common property. Accordingly, Ibn Jinnī waged a campaign in favour of derivation and analogy.²

In the poetical field it is probable that this new linguistic school opened the way for innovation and expansion and it may have encouraged the poets to enrich and enlarge their vocabularies.³ The influence of these famous linguistic leaders can be traced in al-Raḍī's works. He referred to them at many points and adopted Ibn Jinnī's views when he analysed or discussed certain linguistic questions. In other respects our poet appears to be independent, but in general he used to mention his two teachers with great regard.⁴

In the theological and Qur'ānic fields, it is apparent that the Būwayhid era was a productive period. The Islamic sects made themselves felt in this area.

1. Tārīkh, Vol. XI, p. 311; Yāqūt, Vol. V, pp. 15-16.

2. Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 185, Vol. II, pp. 91-92.

Note: Concerning Ibn Jinnī's study on derivation and analogy see his important book al-Khasā'is, Vol. I, published in Cairo, 1913, pp. 39, 123; Vol. II, Cairo, 1955, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār, pp. 133-193.

3. A. Muḥyī al-Dīn op. cit., pp. 41-42.

4. Majāzāt, pp. 68, 127, 285; Talkhis, p. 186.

Their contribution towards the enlargement of the field of knowledge is great. "The fourth Islamic century", in the words of H. S. Nyberg, "saw the shī'ah flourishing and the 'Abbāsid power disappearing; the favour of several Būwayhid governors now to some degree made good the loss of prestige which had been suffered by the Mu'tazilah." He observes that this school continued its work and spread to the east.¹ However, Baghdad at that time seems to have been a fertile soil in which many sects and doctrinal opinions took root and grew. The Hanbalites, for instance, who were zealous opponents of the Shī'ites and Mu'tazilites, still had the power to challenge other sects² in the Būwayhid period. The Mu'tazilites suffered a serious split when the Ash'arites raised their heads against them. Hitti suggests that "The man credited with exploding the Mu'tazilite theory which has once become the heritage of Sunnī Islam, was Abū al-Hasan 'Alī al-Ash'arī (d. 325/936)."³ He began as a pupil of the famous Mu'tazilite Abū Alī al-Jabba'ī (d. 304/916) then he separated himself and used his polemics against his teacher. The harvest of these theological and sectarian conflicts and activities was a great deal of works. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to enumerate them all, as our aim is only to deal with those having a direct or indirect connection with al-Radī.

1. E. I. art. the Mu'tazilah, by H. S. Nyberg.

2. Zuhr, Vol. I, pp. 222-226; Vol. II, pp. 4-5; Mez, pp. 66-67.

3. Hitti op. cit., pp. 430-431; Zuhr, Vol. I, pp. 221-222.

The Shī'ites who took advantage of Būwayhid sympathy laboured ceaselessly, and among many works which were written at that time was the Kitāb al-Kāfi of al-Kulīnī (d. 328/929) containing 16,000 Hadiths. Another celebrated book was Mā lā Yahduruhu al-faqīh by Ibn Bābawayh (d. 381/991).¹ Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Nu'mān (d. 413/1022) was a well-known scholar and theologian in al-Raḍī's time.² He was a voluminous author whose works number nearly 200. The lengthy list of his books indicates that he waged constant warfare against the Mu'tazilites and Sunnites and was an enthusiastic defender of Shī'ite opinion.³

The two brothers, al-Raḍī and al-Murtaḍā, made remarkable contributions to the theological and Qur'ānic fields.⁴ Al-Murtaḍā was a poet, credited with a Dīwān of poems containing more than 10,000 verses. He was a prolific author, and the list of his works proves his erudition in a variety of fields of knowledge. It is difficult to enumerate his books, but amongst them the following are important:

1. Ghurar al-Fawā'id wa durar al-qalā'id, which was devoted to a detailed discussion of some of the verses of

1. E. I. art. Shī'ah, by R. Strothmann.
2. al-Nu'mān was the first to teach al-Raḍī and his brother al-Murtaḍā in their childhood.
3. E. I. art. al-Mufīd, by R. Strothmann; see also Muhammad b. Shahrāshub, Ma'ālim al-'Ulamā', 2nd edn. Najaf, Iraq, 1961, pp. 112-114.
4. C. H. Shaykh art. "Some important personalities of Baghdad", B.D.C.R.I. 1940-1941, Vol. II, pp. 119-131.

the Qur'ān with copious notes from traditions and philological questions and references to poets.¹

2. Kitāb al-Shāfi, a defence of the Imāmites of the "Twelves" against the al-Mughāl of the Mu'tazilite chief qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1024).²

3. Al-Masū'il al-nāṣiriyyah, on the difference between the Shī'ites and other sects.³

The poet al-Raḍī was a theologian as well. He concentrated on Qur'ānic studies and composed many works.⁴ He was credited with works dealing with the exegesis of the Qur'ān, the first of which is Talkhīṣ al-Bayān fī Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān in which the author dealt with Qur'ān from rhetorical point of view.⁵ The second is called Ḥaqā'iq al-ta'wīl fī mutashābah al-Tanzīl, in which al-Raḍī studied the obscure verses in the Qur'ān.⁶

Ibn Khallikān highly esteemed al-Raḍī's contribution to this field. He says, "He (al-Raḍī) composed a work on

1. This work was published in Cairo, 1959.

2. Ibn Shahrāshūb op. cit., pp. 69-70. For further information see his Diwān, intro. written by M. R. al-Ṣaffār, part I, pp. 117-124. The list of his works numbers 71 books.

3. Ibn Shahrāshūb op. cit., p. 70; see B. I. art. al-Murtadā.

4. The list of his books will be enumerated in the next chapter.

5. Ibn Shahrāshūb, op. cit., p. 51; Ibn Kh., Vol. III, p. 120, this work was published in Baghdad, 1955.

6. Ibid., the fifth volume of this work was published in Najaf = Iraq, 1936. The others have not come to us.

the rhetorical figures of the Qur'ān Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān to which it would be difficult to find one equal in merit; it indicates the author's vast information in grammar and philology. He drew up also a treatise on the metaphors of the Qur'ān (Majāzāt al-Qur'ān), one of the most remarkable works on the subject."¹

It is worth noting that in the Būwayhid period it became common to find Imāmite theologians who had Mu'tazilite tendencies. Al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād was a case in point. He was a passionate Imāmite figure and Mu'tazilite, and in his odes he expressed his admiration for this school's opinions and declared his Imāmite belief as well.² Among al-Raḍī's teachers there were many Shī'ite theologians who had leanings towards the Mu'tazilites. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Īsā al-Rummānī (d. 384/994) was one of them. He was a Shī'ite theologian and well-known grammarian.³ In general, many other philologists who worked in the Qur'ānic field had a sympathetic attitude towards the Mu'tazilites. Among them were al-Raḍī's teachers Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī and

1. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 120.

2. M. A. Mu'īd Khān, art. "al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād as a writer and poet". I. C. Vol. XVII, January 1943, pp. 176-205; Yāqūt, Vol. II, p. 276; concerning his poetry in which he declared his Imāmite and Mu'tazilite belief, see Muhammad Ḥusayn Āl Yāsīn, al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād, Ḥayātuḥu wa Adabuh, Baghdad, 1957, pp. 85-86.

3. Yāqūt, Vol. VI, p. 281; see D. R. Vol. I, the intro.

Muhammad b. 'Umrān al-Marzubānī (d. 383/993).¹

Our poet appears not to have escaped this sphere of influence. We have already learned that many Mu'tazilite teachers taught him. Consequently, he might have been influenced by them. In two of his books, al-Majāzāt and Talkhīṣ al-bayān, he appears to be open-minded in discussing many religious questions. He referred to the Mu'tazilites' opinion with high regard,² but he also referred to Sunnite theologians with approval. In addition, in one of his books he discussed the authenticity of a certain tradition of the Prophet and based his conclusion on the Shāfi'ite qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār's opinion in refusing this tradition on the grounds that the transmitter was hostile toward 'Alī b. Abī Tālib and was untruthful.³ In general, al-Raḍī reveals a great deal of flexibility and latitude in his theological works.

In al-Raḍī's time al-Tha'ālibī, (d. 432/1037), in his famous anthology of recent and contemporary poets and writers Yatīmat al-Dahr, gave a vivid picture of the trends and activities in prose and poetry. It is probable that he was the first in Arabic literature to classify a work concerning poets and writers according to their

1. Tārīkh, Vol. VII, p. 276, Vol. III, pp. 135-136; see Zuhr, Vol. II, p. 89. In Amīn's opinion al-Fārisī and Ibn Jinnī were influenced by the Mu'tazilites. He suggests that their liberal attitudes in dealing with linguistic subjects owed, in part, to their Mu'tazilite leanings.

2. Talkhīṣ, p. 155; see Majāzāt, p. 49.

3. Majāzāt, pp. 48-50.

literary environment, and his method was imitated by several authors.¹ In addition, it is clear that the Yatimah forms an important and reliable source for any study of the fourth Islamic century.

As for literary criticism, the Būwayhid period witnessed the culminating point of this branch of Arabic literature. Though the critics appear for the most part conservative in their attitude, and dominated by the idea of the uniqueness of ancient poetry, they also showed respect for contemporary poetry. In general, they concentrated on certain points, e.g. the miracle (I'jāz) of the Qur'ān, the dispute between ancient and modern, poetical plagiarisms and comparison between poets. With regard to al-Mutanabbī's poetry, the conflict between his detractors and admirers formed an important issue as well. It is worth noting that Arab critics, as we shall see, focussed their attention on poetry rather than prose, and it was poetical form that engaged them while content received scant attention. In accordance with this view, the scope of our own observations on literary criticism might well be restricted to the method which was adopted by the Arab critics themselves.

The insuperability of the Qur'ān is stated in the holy book itself,² and this belief became current among

1. Nicholson op. cit., p. 348.

2. In the Qur'ān the verse runs as follows: "Say if men and Jinn banded together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they would never produce its like; not though they backed one another." The Koran Interpreted, Tr. A. J. Arberry, London, 1955, Vol. I, The night journey's Surah p. 312.

many literary critics and theologians who discussed it from a rhetorical point of view and confirmed the stylistic uniqueness of the Qur'ān. They made a vital contribution to the field of literary criticism.

"Discussion of the stylistic virtues of the Qur'ān", as Grunebaum put it, "turned out to be fruitful of critical investigation".¹ Al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) the passionate defender of I'jāz shows how far the studies of the Qur'ān's insuperability led him to deal with the rhetorical figures used by poets and draw comparisons between the use of these metaphors in poetry and the holy book.² The author analysed the Mu'allaqah of Imru' al-Qays and subjected it to a systematic aesthetic criticism. He used the same method for a poem of the 'Abbāsid poet al-Buḥturī.³ Al-Rādī's teacher al-Rummānī also used this system. In his comparative study of the stylistic characteristics of the Qur'ān and Arabic style in general, like the others he concluded that the holy book has its own inimitable style. He discussed many rhetorical questions such as conciseness, metaphors, similes, rhyme, exaggeration and so forth.⁴

As for our poet we have already mentioned his two works concerning Qur'ānic study. In his book Talkhīṣ

1. Von Grunebaum, art. Arabic literary criticism in the 10th Century A. D. J. A. O. S. 1941, Vol. 61, pp. 51-57.

2. Bāqillānī, pp. 100-143.

3. Ibid., pp. 184-210, 244-272.

4. Muhammad Zaghīlūl Salām, Aṭhar al-Qur'ān fī Tatawwur al-Naḍd al-Adabī, 2nd edn. Cairo, 1961, pp. 234-256.

al-Bayān he stated in the introduction that his work was intended to trace the metaphors in the holy book in a systematic way beginning with the first surah and closing with the final one.¹ Al-Radī made references to another book written by him in which he stated that he had dealt with the metaphorical figures in the Qur'ānic style and pointed out that the eloquence of the Qur'ān is beyond the capability of human beings.²

Concerning the dispute of ancient and modern poetry, it seems to have been a lasting problem in Arabic literary criticism which might be dated back to the early 'Abbasid period. Philologists and transmitters of poetry were conservative in general and their hostility to contemporary poetical trends was obvious.³ Poets made only a limited effort to modernise their style and content. Even Abū Nūwās who claimed to have freed himself from traditional shackles in poetry seems to adhere to old poetical conventions in his praise.⁴

The dispute took a more mature form in the fourth Islamic century. Critics concentrated on two poets: Abū Tammām, whom they regarded as a modern poet in his style and al-Buhturī, considered to be a representative of the

1. Talkhīs, intro. p. 1; see pp. 3, 4, 288.

2. Ibid., p. 1.

3. Muhammad Mandūr, al-Naqd al-Manhajī 'Ind al-'Arab, Cairo, 1948, pp. 60-61 c.f. Mahmūd al-Rabḍawī, al-Harakah al-Naqdiyyah Hawla Abī Tammām, Beirut, n.d. part I, pp. 20, 21, 22.

4. Muhammad Mahdī al-Basīr, Fī al-Adab al-'Abbāsi, 2nd edn. Baghdad, 1955, p. 194.

traditional form of Arabic poetry. However, they did not restrict themselves to these issues. The field was enlarged and enriched, and many important points concerning literary criticism were discussed and studied.

Poetical plagiarism received particular attention in al-Radī's time. Critics appear to be tolerant in this respect, and their attitude seems to be fairly flexible. Abū al-Hasan 'Alī b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Jurjānī (d. 392/1001) in his book al-Wasāṭah Bayn al-Mutanabbī wa Khusūmih, states that:

Plagiarism (he sums up) is an ancient disease and an inveterate blemish. If you are just, you will realise that the people of our age, and of the age after us, are more excusable and less blameworthy, because those who preceded us have exhausted the ideas and outstripped us to them, using up the great majority; what remains has been left, out of either aversion or disdain or remoteness or intractability. When any of us makes a great effort and applies his whole mind and thought to produce an idea which he thinks to be strange and original, and to compose a verse he supposes unique and unprecedented, and then searches through the dīwāns for it, he will not fail to find it exactly, or to find something like it which diminishes its beauty. 1

These opinions became current and acceptable at that time. Al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād declared that borrowing from poets later than al-Buḥturī was plagiarism and literary theft.² This shows that in his opinion it is excusable

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1. Jurjānī, p. 158, see the English version, A. J. Arberry, Poems of al-Mutanabbī, Cambridge, 1967, pp. 12-13; the same attitude towards poetical plagiarism was taken by Amīdī in his book al-Muwāzanah, pp. 131, 149, and al-'Askarī in his work al-Sinā'atayn, p. 196.
 2. M. A. Mu'īd Khan art. al-Ṣāhib, I. C. 1943, Vol. 17, pp. 176-205.

for poets to borrow their meanings from the early 'Abbāsid period.

However, critics in the fourth Islamic century believed that the age of innovation in poetical composition had closed, while the new epoch of enrichment and enlargement of ancient meanings had dawned. The development of a conventional theme by new shading is nearly as highly esteemed as the creation of an unique one.

As for our poet, al-Raḍī, he appears to share this opinion. He demanded of a "modern" poet who had looked through various poetical collections and assimilated ancient meanings that he take pains to improve these meanings and detail them. He admitted that the ancients should take the credit for the creation of meanings and the "moderns" should improve on them. In connection with this al-Raḍī gives an example of al-Mutanabbī's poetry in which the poet took an ancient theme and improved upon it. In al-Raḍī's eyes al-Mutanabbī's concept surpassed the original.¹

Critics made further contributions with regard to ancient and modern poetry. Although, they missed no opportunity to reveal their admiration for ancient poets, they also showed signs of responding to the environment. They did not fail to find links between the poet and life or at least to avoid contradiction between them.² In

1. Raḍā'īl. pp. 88-89.

2. Von Grunbaum, art. Literary criticism, J. A. O. S.

al-ʿAmidī's eyes, the urban poet should use his own vocabularies.¹ Meanwhile, critics warned modern poets to be cautious of indulging in simplicity and vulgarity. In al-Jurjānī's opinion, poets should not adopt absolute simplicity to the level of weakness; the best style is that which takes the middle way between the vulgar and Bedouin styles.²

It is noteworthy that critics in the fourth Islamic century began to pay attention to the content of poetical composition. Although they disagreed on this subject, the importance of it was recognised. In practical criticism al-ʿAskarī stands for the supremacy of the idea, but theoretically he insists on the significance of the form,³ while al-ʿAmidī appears to be a moderate. His view is that the verse should be considered under three aspects: verbal expression (Lafz); Idea (Maʿnā) and composition (Nazm).⁴ Al-Raḍī himself declared that words should serve their meanings,⁵ and he developed this opinion in his poetry. He stated that poetical balance must be maintained between the form and content, and claimed that he adopted this principle in composing his own poetry.⁶

The last important feature of literary criticism in

1. ʿAmidī, p. 201.

2. Jurjānī, p. 18; see Sināʿatayn, p. 148.

3. Sināʿatayn, pp. 58-59; Von Grunebaum art. Literary Criticism, in J. A. O. S.

4. ʿAmidī, p. 183.

5. Talkhīs, p. 244.

6. D. R. Vol. II, p. 957.

al-Radī's time is the dispute concerning al-Mutanabbī as a personality and a poet. This poet was a controversial and influential figure during his lifetime and a long time after his death. His admirers and detractors have different specialities, backgrounds and tastes, but many of them represent a high level of learning and erudition. The list of books written by them on this matter is too long to be enumerated. Among many important people who stood by al-Mutanabbī, Ibn Jinnī is worthy of mention. This famous grammarian and philologist was considered an authority on al-Mutanabbī's poetry.¹ Among his works is a commentary on al-Mutanabbī's poetical collection called al-Faṣṣ "the explanation". It was described by Hilāl as exhaustive in character, containing a quantity of grammatical and lexicographical material.² Another admirer of this poet was his own transmitter Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maḡhribī who composed two books in defence of the poet.³

The detractors of al-Mutanabbī during his life and after his death were numerous and the dispute went throughout the length and breadth of the Islamic empire for many centuries.⁴ Ibn Fūrrajāh (b. 330/941) wrote two works in which he criticised Ibn Jinnī's commentaries.

1. Yatīmah, Vol. I, p. 124.

2. Hilāl, p. 443.

3. Yāqūt, Vol. VI, p. 274.

4. D. M. intro. by al-Barqūqī; see also 'Abd al-Raḥmān Shu'ayb, al-Mutanabbī Bayn Nāqddih fī al-qadīm wa al-Ḥadīth, Cairo, 1964, pp. 31-43.

The first was al-Fath 'alā Abī al-fath, the second was al-tajannī 'alā Ibn Jinnī.¹ Among those who waged a campaign against this famous poet in his lifetime was Abū 'Alī Muhammad b. al-Hacan al-Hātimī (d. 388/998). He declared his hostility towards the poet and criticised him violently in a treatise called al-Risālah al-Muwaddīḥah fī dhikr sarīqāt al-Mutanabbī.² The famous vizier al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād took his part in this campaign. He devoted a work called al-Kashf 'an masāw' Shi'r al-Mutanabbī to tracing the poets' shortcomings and defects in composition.³

This long-lived and heated dispute paved the way for other authors to play the rôle of judges. Al-Tha'libī in his work Yatīmat al-dahr and al-Jurjānī in his book al-wasāṭah tried to hold the scale of justice between al-Mutanabbī's admirers and detractors. Al-Tha'libī devoted a long chapter to the poet's defects and merits.⁴ The author, as Nicholson put it, "bears witness to the unrivalled popularity of the al-Mutanabbī's diwān amongst all classes of society, he observes that it was sharply

1. D. M. intro.; see also Mandūr op. cit., pp. 155-164. Note: Ibn Jinnī wrote another explanation which is called al-Faṣr al-Ṣaghīr. It has been edited by Muhsin Chayyād and published in Baghdad under the title: Al-Fath al-Wahbī 'alā Muṣḥkilāt al-Mutanabbī, 1973. The first volume of al-Faṣr al-Kabīr was edited and published by S. Khulūṣy, Baghdad, 1970.

2. The treatise was edited by Muhammad Yūsuf Najm, Beirut, 1965, see pp. 3, 4, 94.

3. Yāqūt, Vol. II, p. 316; Mandūr, op. cit., pp. 181-187.

4. Yatīmah, Vol. I, pp. 127-240.

criticised as well as rapturously admired!"¹ In another part of his Yatimah he states that even those who denied al-Mutanabbī's merits were influenced by his poetry. In his view al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād was a case in point.² The second judge al-Jurjānī left a book of great importance in Arabic literary criticism. In his work the author, before entering into his main topic, reviewed the characteristic features of Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī's poetry and studied the shortcomings of poetry in general and the rhetorical side of the structure of the ode.³ By a comparative method he drew a distinction between Abū Nuwās and Ibn al-Rūmī⁴ and proceeded to deal with al-Mutanabbī.⁵ His concentration on poetical plagiarism, which engaged Arabic critics, is of great merit and illustrates his erudition in ancient and "modern" poetry.⁶ In general, he seems to be moderate when he discusses and repudiates critical observations put forward by al-Mutanabbī's detractors, but he did not fail to expose the poet's shortcomings and defects.

Al-Raḍī inhaled the atmosphere of al-Mutanabbī's influence in one way or another and witnessed the dispute on this poet. Some of his teachers and friends supported

1. Nicholson op. cit., pp. 308-309.

2. Yatimah, Vol. III, pp. 139-142; see Vol. I, p. 143.

3. Jurjānī, pp. 7, 14, 37.

4. Ibid., p. 42.

5. Ibid., pp. 64-135.

6. Ibid., pp. 136-159.

al-Mutanabbī or took sides against him. His brother al-Murtadā, for instance, had a strong dislike of him. He put his prejudice in practice by criticising Ibn Jinnī's commentary on al-Mutanabbī's diwān.¹ In al-Raḍī's diwān, as we shall see later, the stamp of al-Mutanabbī's style and spirit is visible. Although he did not take part in this dispute, his response to it was of lasting influence in his poetry. In addition, he referred to this great poet with admiration and high respect. In his correspondence with his friend al-Ṣābī, his comments imply such esteem.² Furthermore, he drew a brief comparison between three important poets: Abū Tammām, al-Buḥturī and al-Mutanabbī. In his view "Abū Tammām is a pulpit-preacher, al-Buḥturī a describer of the wild cow while al-Mutanabbī is a slayer of armies."³ Al-Raḍī's estimation of these famous poets seems to be obscure. However, it could be inferred that he assessed each one according to his distinguishing characteristic. It implies that Abū Tammām's poetry was distinguished by wisdom and an argumentative tone, while al-Buḥturī succeeded in his descriptions of desert and coloured his poetry with his own tender sentiment. As for al-Mutanabbī, his poetry, as al-Raḍī observes, is impregnated with bellicose words and filled with displays of strength.

1. Yāqūt, Vol. V, p. 174.

2. Rasā'il, pp. 89-90.

3. Ḍiyā' al-Dīn b. al-Aḥīr, al-Mathal al-sā'ir fī adab al-Kātib wa al-Shā'ir, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, 1939, Vol. II, p. 396.

From the proceeding survey, it has become plain that a remarkable development and growth in various literary fields characterized al-Raḍī's time. The list of poets and writers who flourished in this period is too lengthy to be enumerated and their lasting contribution to poetry and prose is beyond our scope to review in detail. However, it would be fitting to trace the important artistic features which distinguished the prose and poetry of that time. Also, references will be made to these pioneering poets and writers who took part in developing the form and content of belles-lettres. Furthermore, interaction between literary trends and the political and social conditions of al-Raḍī's time will be illustrated in so far as these influences seem to be visible and effective. Concerning our poet, particular attention will be given to an estimate of his place in and contribution to this field.

With regard to prose, it underwent a radical change in form and content. This development can be recognised in official letters "al-Rasā'il al-sultāniyyah", private correspondence "al-Rasā'il al-ikhwāniyyah" and the Maqāmāt. As for the form the passion for rhymed prose and the search for ornamentation became widespread. Embellishment, in general, was considered a characteristic feature of official and private letters.¹ Consequently, the style of writers was bound to be affected and artificial. Al-Ṣābī and al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād were true

1. Zakī Mubārak, al-Naṭh al-Fanni fī al-qarn al-rabi', Cairo, 1934, Vol. I, p. 105.

representatives of this literary style. The former was highly esteemed for his contribution to setting the standard for official correspondence. In Mez's view, his style was admired up to the twentieth century. He says: "Even today the letters of al-Ṣābi can be read with relish and admiration for the command of language which enlivens even business correspondence with delightful diction, adorns it with pleasing rhymes and embellishes it with wit and humour!"¹ As for al-Ṣāhib, his love of rhyme was extreme. He is said to have had a mania for it. He was possessed by it to the point that he would not miss an opportunity for it even to destroy everything or to risk the greatest dangers.² This tendency towards the use of flowery embellishment encroached upon private correspondence too. A glance at the Yatimah shows us to what extent those writers in the fourth Islamic century were attracted by rhetorical and verbal ornament.³

Nevertheless, this artistic surge failed to achieve absolute mastery over prose. Many writers seem to be quite sparing in the use of rhymed and flowery diction. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī and al-Raḍī in their correspondence and prose-writings and al-Jurjānī in his critical work

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1. Mez, p. 243. See Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 327-328. This point of view is acceptable from a conservative standpoint rather than a modernist. It is well-known that modern prose today is free from rhyme, and to a further extent, from embellishment.
 2. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī, Akhlaq al-wazīrayn, ed. Muhammad b. Tawīt, Damascus, 1965, p. 124. See Yāqūt, Vol. II, p. 291.
 3. Yatimah, Vol. II, pp. 251-252, 316-317, Vol. III, pp. 198-199, 201.

represent this moderate trend. They are not enamoured of artistic embellishments and rhyme to the extent of sacrificing meaning on the altar of artificiality.¹

Art prose, in general, made much progress in al-Radī's time and became close to poetry in regard to its form, content and other qualities. Johann Fück observes that in the fourth Islamic century, flexibility, finesse, politeness and elegance were what one expected in good style. He adds that these qualities were as necessary for prose as for poetry. He concludes that poetry had now become rhetoric and drew closer toward prose. On the other hand, rhymed prose acquired a poetic characteristic.² Of course, many poets of the fourth Islamic century were prose writers as well, and famous prose writers were known to have composed poems of note. Among those who were known as poets and prose writers were al-Radī, his brother al-Murtaḍā, al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād, al-Khawārizmī and so forth. In addition, the critics of that time began to realise the mutual connection and influence between prose and poetry. Abū 'Alī al-Hātimī, for instance, came to the conclusion that the ode should be composed as though it were an eloquent letter in its organisation and coherence. He called on poets to be aware of this fact in composing

1. Rasā'il, pp. 63-70; Jurjānī, intro. See also Mubārak, al-Nathr al-Fannī. Vol. I, p. 106.

2. Johann Fück, 'Arabiya, tr. Claude Denizeau, Paris, 1955; see Mubārak, al-Nathr, Vol. I, p. 107.

Note: Fück's opinion about the similarity between poetry and art prose seems to be acceptable in general. But it loses some of its weight if we generalise it to the extent of covering traditional poetry.

poetry.¹

Another point of similarity and close connection between prose and poetry rests on the fact that prose began to encroach on poetry's themes. Many subjects, formerly confined to poetry, like elegy, eulogy, love, satiro and sectarian religious themes, were treated in prose. The private correspondence of al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād, al-Khawārizmī and Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadānī embody this interesting feature.² In the Yatīmah there are many specimens of al-Ṣābi's and Badī' al-Zamān's letters in which they treated poetic themes such as elegy, eulogy and congratulation.³

The fourth Islamic century witnessed the rise of the new artistic form called al-Maqāmāt. Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadānī is credited with the creation of the Maqāmah or at least developing it into its matured form.⁴ "Al-Hamadānī" (d. 398/1007), as Nicholson put it, "imagined as his hero a witty, unscrupulous vagabond journeying from place to place and supporting himself by the presents which his impromptu

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1. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī al-Huṣrī al-Qayrawānī, Zahr al-Adāb wa thamar al-Albāb, ed. 'Alī al-Bajāwī, 1st edn., Cairo, 1953, Vol. II, p. 597; see Sinā'atayn, p. 165.
 2. Al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād, Rasā'il al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād, ed. Shawqī Dayf and 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām, 1st edn. Cairo, 1946/1366, pp. 11, 122, 123-135, 152-162. Al-Khawārizmī, Rasā'il al-Khawārizmī, ed. Muḥammad al-'Adawī, Cairo, 1279/1862, pp. 15, 18, 27, 68, 187.
 3. Yatīmah, Vol. II, pp. 249-252; Vol. IV, pp. 280-290.
 4. Nicholson, op. cit., p. 328. See also Mubārak al-Nathr, Vol. I, pp. 197-200. He suggests that the creator of Maqāmāt was Ibn Durayd (d. 321/993) for much information, see B. I. art. Maqāmah, By Brocklemann.

displays of rhetoric, poetry, and learning seldom failed to draw from an admiring audience. The second character is the rāwī or narrator, who should be continually meeting with the other, should relate his adventures and repeat his excellent compositions."¹ The Maqāmāt incorporates two important features. From a literary point of view they well mirror the artificiality of style and the extreme tendency towards flowery expressions at the cost of meaning. On the other hand, from the social standpoint, the appeals of beggars, professional mendicity and the spirit of complaint and deprivation found their expression in the Maqāmāt. Though the Maqāmāh was characterised by joking and humour aimed at entertainment, it did not fail to shed light on the real misery of life at that time. It was, as Zakī Mubārak observed, a real reflection of the corruption and the decline of moral principles of the social life as well.² Abū al-Fath al-Iskandarī, the hero of al-Hamadānī in his Maqāmāt, represents a vagabond scholar and social critic of the fourth Islamic century. It seems reasonable to suppose that the author himself passed his biting comments through his hero.³ His sarcastic observations, sharp criticism of social inequality, lack of fair judgement and the disregarding of corruption are loud and acute.

In al-Maqāmāh al-Sāsāniyyah, Abū al-Fath describes

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1. Nicholson, op. cit., p. 328.
 2. Mubārak, al-Nathr, Vol. I, p. 222.
 3. Badī' al-Zamān, The Maqāmāt of Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadānī, tr. with intro. and notes by W. J. Prendergast, Madras, 1915, intro. p. 15.

his own time as follows:

This age is ill-starred, and as you see, oppressive. In it, stupidity is esteemed and intolligence a defect and a blomish and wealth is a nocturnal visitor, but it hovers only over the ignoble. 1

2

كَلَامُهُ غُثٌّ	هَذَا الزَّمَانُ غُثٌّ
وَالْعَقْلُ غَيْبٌ وَلَوْ	الْحَمْدُ فِيهِ طَيِّبٌ
هُوَ اللَّيْلُ يَحُومُ	وَالْمَالُ طَيِّفٌ وَلَكِنْ

In Abū al-Fath's view poverty in the days of meanness is the generous man's bondage and this is one of the signs of the last day. Consequently, he came to conclude that his own age was base and called people to give up their reason and act foolishly.³ He says:

Never be deceived by reason, madness is the only reason. 4

لَا تُدْزِنُ بِعَقْلٍ لَا الْعَقْلُ إِلَّا الْجُنُونُ

Vagabond behaviour, feeling of despair, irresponsibility and a sense of loss, found their ways of expression in popular poetry which was advocated by a poetical group calling themselves "Banū Sāsān", about whom we shall learn

1. W. J. Prendergast, op. cit., p. 83; the quotation is modified.

2. Muhammad 'Abdūh, Maqāmāt Badī' al-Zamān, Beirut, 3rd edn. 1924, pp. 100-101.

3. Ibid., pp. 70-71.

4. Maqāmāt, ed. Prendergast, p. 75.

Note: It is interesting to note that poets and writers who represent the vagabond trend called themselves Banū Sāsān. They ascribed themselves to a legendary king or might be a certain Persian king called Sāsān who had lost his throne and become a beggar. Al-Hamadānī is said to have been a narrator of the poet Abū al-Ahnaf al-'Ukbarī who was a leading member of Banū Sāsān. See Mez, p. 249; Yatimah, Vol. III, pp. 357-358.

more later.

Though prose reached its highest point in style and shape, we must note that poetry held the preponderant position in the literary field at al-Radī's time. A glance at the Yatimah shows that passion for poetry was widespread in those days. Everybody, as al-Tha'ālibī relates, tried his hand at this. Amīrs, viziers and other governors and officials patronised poets, taking part in criticising their efforts and even trying their hand at composition.¹ According to the Yatimah, one would be inclined to conclude that poetry enjoyed a glorious epoch throughout the length and the breadth of the Islamic empire at that time. The list of the professional and amateur poets is extremely long. It shows us how far poetry increased in quantity and developed in quality.

A close examination of this poetry reveals to us that there were four characteristic poetical trends. The first was the traditional poetry which had a leading position in élite circles and the upper classes. It maintained its close connections with ancient artistic models. The second represented a new wave which seems to have freed itself from the shackles of poetical conventions in trying to reflect the life of the people in their misery and deprivation. This trend could be termed "popular poetry". Parallel with these two types of poetical pieces, "al-Maqtū'āt al-Shi'riyyah" found a fertile soil to grow and

1. Yatimah, Vol. I, pp. 43-44, Vol. III, p. 170.
Vol. II, pp. 217-234.

increase and to reflect, to some extent, the mannerism and the affluence of life at that time. In addition, the religious poems proved a real echo of sectarian struggle and underwent notable change as well.¹

As for traditional poetry, it is clear that the tide of public opinion was on its side at that time. Many poetical collections (Diwāns) which have come to us reveal the fact that the conventional themes like elegy and eulogy take up a great part of any diwān. These themes seem to have undergone no radical change in their poetical structure and main artistic parts. Nevertheless, they were liable to be modified and improved in detail and adorned with embellishments. In general, they adhered to ancient models in many other respects. Concerning this point one could suggest many reasons for the continuation of the old pattern of the qasīdah and its sway over poets in the fourth Islamic century, and even considerably later. First of all, the professional poets failed to express their own ideas and feelings. They continued to compose what they were supposed to say and repeat the old stories in their elegy, eulogy, self-pride and even love poetry. Secondly, the image of the ideal man which had been established for centuries had strong Bedouin characteristics, like generosity, bravery, audacity, forbearance and so forth. Though this picture may have been modified and decorated in conformity with the requirements of time, it did not undergo radical change. In odes of praise, professional poets reflected

1. We have already dealt with the fourth trend of poetry which expressed the tide of nationalism and shu'ūbiyyah, see Ch. I.

this fact clearly when they painted a glorious picture of their patrons. Moreover, it is safe to assume that the fascination of the old Bedouin life exercised its sway upon thoughts, feelings and imagination of Arabs in the fourth Islamic century and for many centuries beyond, perhaps up to the present day. Critics at that time, for instance, highly respected the time-honoured qualities and called on poets to be aware of them when praising their patrons. They set down the main principles of eulogy and oulogy which should be followed by the poets, limited the list of qualities which must be attributed to the men praised, trying to keep the Bedouin spirit intact.¹

In view of all the above-mentioned points one must bear in mind that the influence of the Bedouin spirit on traditional poetry and the continuity of the old pattern are not mere imitation or blind repetition by the poets of the fourth Islamic century. As H. A. R. Gibb has observed the psychological relation of the Arabs, however long settled or urbanized, to the habits and traditions of the desert was alive and active. In his view, "The bedouin furnished - and throughout all changes continued to furnish - the living models for two characteristics which were felt to be fundamental to the Arab way of life. One was the cult of the Arabic language, the fountainhead of all Arabic artistic sensibility and emotion." In his opinion "in the second place, the heroic virtues of the desert supplied the human and social ideals which were held to be

1. ^{Umdah}, Vol. II, pp. 105-106.

those of the Arab par excellence."¹

It is common knowledge that al-Mutanabbī, who flourished in the first half of the fourth Islamic century, was considered to be a true representative of bedouin poetical trend. He treated the ancient form and content successfully, reflecting the desert spirit and its virtues. His odes of praise on Sayf al-Dawlah were a case in point. He presented this Arab leader as a Bedouin hero in his character and personality, who embodied generosity, audacity, austerity, extravagance and other desert virtues.²

Many poets who established themselves at al-Mutanabbī's time or came after his death represented this bedouin trend in their poetry. At the head of the list, it is worth mentioning: Abū Firās al-Hamdānī, Ibn Nubātah al-Sa'dī, al-Murtadā and al-Radī and his pupil Mihyār al-Daylamī. As far as al-Radī was concerned the influence of al-Mutanabbī is not the only factor which coloured and characterised his poetry by bedouin spirit. He had his own personal experiences of desert life. As one of those leaders of a pilgrim-caravan, he travelled through the desert enjoying its scenes and suffering its hardships and, as we will see later, his nostalgia towards it was deep. Moreover, he shows little interest in town life and

1. H. A. B. Gibb, art. "Arab Poet and Arabic Philologist". B.S.O.A.S. 1948, Vol. XII, parts 3 and 4, pp. 574-578.

2. D. M. Vol. II, pp. 3-18, 228-231, 243-260. The poet lavishes bedouin virtues and qualities on the Persian Amīr 'Aḡud al-Dawlah when he praised him, see Dīwān, Vol. II, pp. 193-207.

attached himself to the desert and loved to dwell upon war, tribal raids, camels and those virtues valued by the bedouin.

Yet this traditional style of poetry did not escape the influence of civilised life at that time. Modification, improvement and various sorts of embellishment made themselves felt. Concerning the effectiveness of rhetorical ornamentation, this poetry seems to be less influenced than artistic prose. Although the poets received the impact in different degrees, they did not sacrifice their meaning to flowery expression. Al-Radī could be placed at the head of poets representing this view.

Another artistic feature which reflected the signs of the new life at that time in this poetry was the increased use of shorter metres. The appearance of this tendency might be traced back to the beginning of the 'Abbāsid period. The influence of singing and music became effective in poetry. This close connection resulted in the modification of poetic metres to meet the songs' requirements. Consequently, short metres were often used.¹ In al-Radī's time the use of shorter and lighter metres like Hazaj, Ramḍ, Khafīf and so forth, increased and their range became larger than ever. Poets employed them in elegy, eulogy, and even sectarian religious odes.² Al-Radī's poetry

1. Dayf al-Fann, pp. 70-71, 72-74; see also 'Inād Ghazwān ismā'il, the Arabic qasīda, its origin, characteristics and development, thesis for Ph.D., School of Oriental Studies, Durham University, 1963, p. 463.

2. D. T. Vol. I, pp. 68, 127; Vol. II, pp. 305, 331; see D. Y. Vol. II, p. 370; Vol. IV, pp. 142, 147.

illustrates this. He often used short metres as his Diwān shows. In his eulogy this tendency is apparent.¹

Shī'ite poetry forms an offshoot of the traditional poetical trend. Although it has its own characteristic features, its content is a mixture of elegy and eulogy combined with religious and political emotions and thoughts. Its artistic frame and diction are close to the old pattern in general. The Shī'ite ode, in the fourth Islamic century was marked by two outstanding aspects. On the one hand, this type of poem lacked the revolutionary tone which had characterised it for the first three Islamic centuries. It was replaced by the occasional ode repeating the tragic story of the 'Alids' abortive uprisings throughout the course of Islamic history, condemning the Umayyad and 'Abbāsid leaders who oppressed the 'Alids and harshly put down their revolts. On the other hand, this poetry became condemnatory and sharp. Poets attacked their enemies calling them opponents of the Prophet's house. The list of these enemies was extended from the first orthodox caliph Abū Bakr right down to the 'Abbāsid rulers.² Sunnite poets praised their heroes and criticised the rival sect as well. It became clear that a type of sectarian polemical ode was developed in al-Raḍī's time. Miḥyār was considered a poet passionately attached to the Shī'ites. On the other side, Abū 'Alī al-Sukkarī (d. 413/1022) was

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 316-321, 416; Vol. II, pp. 894, 929.

2. D. Y. Vol. II, pp. 259-262, 202; see also al-Sāhib b. 'Abbād, dīwān, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn āl-Yācīn, Baghdad, 1965, pp. 169-170.

called the poet of the Sunnites. He used to glorify the companions of the prophet and oppose the Shī'ite poets.¹ Al-Radī's attitude, in comparison with his contemporaries, seems to be a moderate one. Although his dirges on al-Husayn are filled with pain and burning emotion, he did not attack the orthodox Sunnite heroes sharply.

Shī'ite poets of this time included in their poetry another interesting feature. They used to compose odes on the occasion of the 'Ashūrā' anniversary, in memory of al-Husayn's martyrdom.² In addition to the poetical works of these poets, there are many odes which were suitable for reciting in the public lamentation performed by the Shī'ites every year, some of which are still used for this purpose up to the present day.³

Poetical pieces, al-Maqtū'āt al-Shī'riyyah form another outstanding feature of the fourth Islamic century's poetry. A glance through the Yatimah shows us to what extent this poetical trend developed and grew. It reveals the fact that gatherings of learned men and assemblies for enjoyment and drinking provided a fertile environment for this kind of poetry to increase in popularity. In these gatherings writers, poets, and other men of talent used to improvise poetical pieces in which they paraded ability in the rapid description of different things they

1. Tārīkh, Vol. XII, p. 17.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 33; Vol. II, p. 658; D. T. Vol. I, p. 145.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 33; D. T. Vol. I, p. 68; Vol. II, p. 163.

saw. This sort of poetry seems to be close to artistic prose in two ways. Its style is plastic and cultivated. It also incorporates the increasing use of rhetorical figures and flowery language. As for the content, it seems to be of various themes. Obscenity and vulgar references form a substantial part of it. Concentration on the description of material things also became a common concern of the poet. As Mez put it, "A striving after uncommon metaphors and similes marks the entire poetry of 4th/10th century. It powerfully stimulated the tendency to penetrate into the most hidden secrets of things and to see the oddest peculiarities in them."¹ As for al-Radī, he had no interest in such kinds of descriptions. However, this fact does not mean that he lacked a skilful competence in descriptive poetry in general, according to Arabic literary standards. He succeeded in presenting a vivid picture of the desert, its scenes and views and although his description is of the traditional type, it reflects his love for the Bedouin life and his personal experience of this life.

The fourth Islamic century saw the appearance and the growth of a new poetical trend which could be called popular poetry. This type has its own characteristics in content and form which distinguish it from traditional poetry in many points. For the first time popular life made itself felt in this poetry which drew its inspiration, pictures and words from the lowest classes. Poets who

1. See I.C. art. Poetry, a translated chapter from Mez's work "Die Renaissance Des Islāms", tr. Khuda Bukhsh, Vol. VI, 1932, p. 136.

advocated this trend went to the extent of defying grammatical rules and even openly breaking them. Moreover, foreign words and vulgar expressions were often used.¹

A first glance at this poetry gives us an impression that these poets were irresponsible and careless in their behaviour and attitude towards life. However, a closer examination reveals that although this poetry is full of vulgar remarks put in a flagrant style, it sheds light on the reality of the social and political life of the fourth Islamic century.

The representatives of this poetical trend are two groups. Ibn Sukkarah al-Hāshimī (d. 385/995) and Ibn al-Hajjāj (d. 391/1000) headed the first group. Ibn Sukkarah as al-Tha'ālibī relates, composed 50,000 verses of which 10,000 are addressed to his black singing girl Khamrah.² His poetry is abundant with vulgarity, obscenity and sexual references.³ In addition, his sarcastic comments on the social inequality and injustice are apparent.⁴ He once described himself as follows:

To sum up my statement: I am insolvent,
and there are no friends for a bankrupt.
And he who lives without a dirham has a life of
injustice and oppression.

جَلَّةُ أُمْرِي أَنِّي ظَلَمْتُ دَلِيلِي لِلظُّلْمِ إِفْرَانُ
وَكُلُّ ذِي عَيْشٍ بِلَا دَرَاهِمٍ نَفِثَةُ ظَلَمٍ وَعِدْوَانُ

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1. Yatīmah, Vol. III, pp. 33, 61; pp. 358-377.

2. Ibid., p. 3.

3. Ibid., pp. 3-20.

4. Ibid., p. 29.

5. Ibid., p. 26.

Like the wretched people he realised that there was no reason to dream of justice and improvement at that time. In his eyes nothing but death could establish equality between the caliph and the poor. He says:

shows impartiality
 Death ~~created~~ justice when it treated the caliph and the poor indiscriminately. 1

والموتُ أصف من عدلٍ قسمةً بين الخليفة والفقر البائس

Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, though he claimed to be the prophet of frivolity,² made a contribution to the field of social criticism which was not less than that of his comrade. He well realised the decline in moral values and the spread of corruption in all areas of life. He came to the conclusion that there was no place for honest and righteous men. So he called on his friend to free himself from modesty and integrity. He said:

Beware of chastity, beware!
 Take care not to allow it to corrupt your nature.

إياك، الفقه، إياك إياك، أن تُفدضنا
 3

Concerning the administrative chaos, Ibn al-Ḥajjāj depicted it in bitter statements. He was appointed to an office for four days, then he was dismissed. The poet addressed his lord presenting his strange state as follows:

1. Yatimah, Vol. III, p. 29.

2. Ibid., p. 33.

3. Ibid., p. 83.

O, you if the new moon
looked at his beauty it would bow down
You assigned me (to get my job) on Tuesday, then
dismissed me on Sunday. ^{Thursday}

يا من اذا نظر الحيد
ل الى طاسه سجد
يوم الخميس بقتي
وصوتني يوم الزهر 1

This popular poetry with its smutty references and sexual terminology won a high reputation throughout the Islamic empire and many people of different status admired it. Our poet al-Radī took an interest in it as well. He was on familiar terms with Ibn al-Hajjāj.² He lamented on his death expressing his admiration and revealing his familiarity with the poet and his poetry.³

It is of interest to present Hilāl's account concerning Ibn al-Hajjāj and his popularity at that time. He says:

He specialised in a line of obscenity wherein he had no predecessor, but, although he followed this line, he had gifts for others; and al-Radī Abū al-Hasan Mūsawī made a large selection of his decent verses which is exceedingly beautiful, artistic, and effective. He got on so well that he became possessed of wealth and owned estates; he became a person whom men were afraid to offend, whose tongue they dreaded, whose disapproval they feared, whose demands were executed, and whose mediation was received. For a single eulogy the ruler of Egypt transmitted to him a thousand dinars of Maghribi coinage as a gift. His poems are collected, and there is a demand for them in different countries. 4

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1. Yatimah, Vol. III, p. 85.
 2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 862; Hilāl, p. 431.
 3. D. R. Vol. II, p. 862.
 4. Hilāl, p. 431. See also Yatimah, Vol. III, p. 32. Note: Mez, in his interesting observations on al-Radī's poetry suggests that in al-Radī's poetry there is evidence that he is Ibn al-Hajjāj's pupil. To the best of my knowledge there is no ground to suppose so. It is a well-known fact that Ibn al-Hajjāj devoted his poetry to obscenity as much as al-Radī attached and confined himself to chastity. Mez himself admitted this fact. In his observations. Moreover, I failed to find any point of similarity between them. See Mez, p. 274.

The second poetical group which represented the popular trend in al-Radī's time was called Banū Sāsān; it included Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī¹ and al-Aḥnaf al-'Ukbarī (d. 385/995).² A close comparison between these two groups which advocated popular poetry shows us that there are many points of similarity between them in respect of social content, style, simplicity and their close link to the populace. However, Banū Sāsān's poetry is distinguished by two outstanding characteristics. The first is that this popular trend depicts very well the life of the professional beggars and the misery of the down-trodden classes. It presents a realistic picture of these people who lacked independent means of livelihood, roaming from place to place in search of a living, availing themselves of any sort of device or trap. On the other hand, this poetry, to some extent, seems to be devoid of filthy words and sexual references in comparison with the first group.³

From the social and poetical point of view, Banū Sāsān's poetry has some interesting aspects. First of all, this vagabond group represented a section of professional beggars which won supporters and sympathisers. Secondly, this popular poetry was a mirror of the wretched classes which felt lost and homeless and came to conclude that it

1. Yatimah, Vol. III, pp. 356-377.

2. Ibid., pp. 122-142.

3. In the Yatimah there are many specimens of Ibn al-Hajjāj's poetry in which he reflects the influence of Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī and al-'Ukbarī. He used their special terminologies, see Vol. III, pp. 61, 62, 63, 65. [See over].

was in their interest to pay no heed to social traditions, laws and time-honoured values.¹ Al-Ahnaf al-'Ukbarī described his homeless state as follows:

Despite feebleness the spider spins a web to
rest therein.
I have no home
the dung-beetles find support among their kind,
but neither love nor support have I.

الضفدوت بنت بيتاً على رهن تأوي إليه وما لي مُدُون
والغناء لها من بيت كُن ولي لي ملأ ألف، ولكن²

Al-'Ukbarī composed a famous ode in which he confirmed his affiliation to Banū Sāsān and took pride in being a member of them and asserted that though he belonged to a group which had neither home nor resort, he felt that all the world was his home.³

Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī composed a long poem in which he explains the traditions of professional beggars, their tragedy, conduct and tricks. He poured sarcastic comments on political conditions throwing a revealing light on the misery of the 'Abbāsīd caliph at the hand of the rough Būwayhid prince. It is a bitter reflection on the time when Abū Dulaf says:

And to us belongs the Guardian of the Faith
al-Muṭī', whose reputation is widespread,
he bogs from Mu'izz al-Dawlah the bread as
much as he can get. 4

1. Yatimah, Vol. III, pp. 358-377.

2. Ibid., p. 123.

3. Ibid., p. 122.

4. Von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam, p. 220.

وَمَا قِيمُ الدِّينِ الْمَطْبُوعُ الشَّائِعُ الذِّكْرُ
 بِكَذِّبِي مِنْ مَفْرِ الدُّوَلَةِ الْخَبْرُ عَلَى قَدْرِ

1 It is ironic that while the community at that time was immersed in heated sectarian conflict, those professional boggars took no heed of it. Moreover, they knew how to take advantage of this religious conflict. Abū Dulaf tells us that these boggars used to practise the following tricks, among others. They would collect a large crowd around them, one narrator (qassas) would take his stand at one end of the street and quote traditions regarding the excellence of 'Alī. At the other end of the street at the same time the other who magnified Abū Bakr excessively, thus obtaining, at one and the same time the dirhams of the Sunnites and the Shī'ites. Then they divided what they had gained.²

Such was the literary situation in the age in which al-Raḍī grew up. It provided a fertile field for social and political comment in prose and poetry. The gap between the upper and lower classes and the social imbalance were echoed in literary products. In addition, there was the emergence of popular poetry and the Maqāmāt. The effect of this literary situation on al-Raḍī's life and poetry will be considered later.

1. Yatimah, Vol. III, p. 371.

2. Ibid., p. 366.

CHAPTER IV

AL-RADĪ'S LIFE

Al-Raḍī and his family

Al-Raḍī's full name is as follows: Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. Mūsā b. Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā b. Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb. He was born in 359/969. He was later well-known by his nickname al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.¹

His family was one of the famous 'Alid households at the political and religious level in Baghdad in the Būwayhid period. It was held in high esteem by caliphs, rulers and the populace.² His father al-Ḥusayn was a descendant of Mūsā al-Kāzim, who is considered, by the Shi'ite twelvers, the seventh among twelve Imāms who have a divine right to inherit the prophet's position in guiding the faithful and ruling the Ummah.³ On his mother's side he was descended from Zayn al-'Abidīn, the fourth Imām in the 'Alid family tree from the twelvers' point of view. Fāṭimah, al-Raḍī's mother, was a grand-daughter of the 'Alid figure al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Nāqir al-Utrūsh "the deaf" (d. 304/916). He was the famous leader in al-Daylam.

1. Tārīkh, Vol. II, pp. 246-247; Yatīmah, Vol. III, p. 136; Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī, Jamharat Ansāb al-'Arab, ed. B. Lévi provençal, Cairo 1948, p. 56.

2. Yatīmah, Vol. III, p. 137; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah, Cairo n.d. Vol. I, p. 10; Ibn Taghrī Bardī al-Atābikī, Abū al-Mahāsīn, al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah, 1st edn., (1352/1933), Vol. IV, pp. 56, 223.

3. Concerning this point, see Muḥammad al-Nu'mān, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, Awā'il al-maqālāt fī al-Madhāhib wa Mukhtārāt, 2nd edn. Tabriz (1371/1951), pp. 9-10.

He succeeded in converting a large number of the Daylamites to Islam. Consequently, he became the ruler of this country for many years.¹

Al-Radī's family played an influential rôle in religious and political circles in the Būwayhid era. Like others, it enjoyed the favourable days of this period. When fortune turned against it, the calamity which was the order of the day engulfed it. However, the naqābah, the high religious position of that time, seems to have been monopolised by this family. Al-Radī's grandfather, his mother's maternal uncle and after that his father, al-Radī himself, and his brother became naqīb many times as our poet recorded in his poetry.² Although al-Radī was proud of this high position, he apparently attached more importance to his 'Alid family tree which was highly regarded by all Muslims. Possibly this uncontested reputation might have opened the way for his self-pride and soaring ambition. He celebrated his distinguished ancestry as follows:

My grand-father (ancestor) is the Prophet, my mother his daughter, my father his regent, my ancestors the chosen among nations.

جدي النبي وأمي بنته وأبي

وصية وجددي خيرة الأئمة

3

1. Ibn Abī al-Hadīd, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 10; Jamāl al-Millāh, op. cit., p. 181.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 277.

3. D. R. Vol. II, p. 819.

This historic and glorious background which gave al-Radī solid grounds to boast, caused him a great deal of sorrow and disappointment. It inculcated in him the spirit of frustration and indignation with a deep feeling of oppression. It is very likely that al-Radī's inherent sorrow and traits of melancholy were due in part to his awareness of his family's historic tragedy. He records this fact as follows:

We are a people doomed to misfortunes,
We gladly accepted our fate.
What cuts short the span of our life,
is that we disdain to die of old age.

نحن قومٌ قسمَ الله لنا بالزرايا ورضينا بالقسم

إنما قصر من آجالنا أننا نألف من موت الهرم 1

As for his family's living standards, they seem to have been of high style. His father was well-to-do, except during the period when his fortune was confiscated by the Būwayhid prince 'Aḍud al-Dawlah. His mother, Fāṭimah, inherited a good fortune from her father. She sponsored our poet in his youth and supported her family when her

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1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 849.

Note: It is most likely that al-Radī felt that he had been born in an 'Alid household to be the heir of its historic sorrow and frustration. It is well-known that the Shī'ites in general and the 'Alids in particular had dogmatic belief concerning the question of the caliphate which came down through the course of history. They believed that the heirs of the prophet had the sole legitimate right to the caliphate. Accordingly, all those who assumed this position were usurpers and oppressors. In Islamic history the 'Alids revolted many times for their divine right receiving many heavy blows which caused them a long list of martyrs and made their history a tragic record. See E. I. art. 'Alids, written by B. Lewis. See also, Duhā Vol. III, pp. 277-282.

husband was deprived of his property.¹ The life-style of this 'Alid household was also of high standards from the Islamic moral point of view. Al-Radī's father was highly esteemed by Arab historians for his unswerving uprightness, generosity and patronage of the 'Alids as a whole.² His two titles: al-Tāhir "the pure" and Dhū al-Manāqib "the meritorious" reveal his record of well-respected and high-minded conduct.³ He was devout and God-fearing as well. As a politician he was considered a successful man. In Arab historians' eyes, he was a man of peace. He used to smooth out the tense situations when they led to conflict and anarchy. His great talent for making compromises between the rulers and the populace was evident. Al-Radī describes him as follows:

He is the peace-maker among kings when they commit an offence and come to the brink of risking the necks.

مؤلف ما بين الملوك اذا هفوا
 و اذا هفوا على عز الرقاب راسرنا 4

As a naqib, al-Radī's father must have acquired a deep knowledge of theology to carry out the responsibilities of his position. In addition, he was familiar with grammar

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 20.

2. Ibn Abī al-Hadīd op. cit., Vol. I, p. 10; Ibn Taghrī Bardī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 223.

3. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 247; Ath. Vol. VII, p. 250; Mihyār al-Daylamī and Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī elegised al-Radī's father. In their dirges they confirmed that he was generous, righteous and courageous. See D. Y. Vol. III, pp. 23-27; Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, Siqt al-Zand, Beirut, 1963, pp. 31-34.

4. D. R. Vol. II, p. 526.

and ancient poetry as al-Radī tells us.¹

Al-Radī's mother was well-educated. Her interest in theology was respected by the Shi'ite theologian al-Mufīd. He composed a book on this subject and dedicated it to her.² As for her character and deeds, she used to help people who suffered hardships, and patronised her relatives.³ She led a righteous life renouncing worldly pleasure and carrying out her religious duties ceaselessly.⁴

His childhood

Al-Radī was the third of four children. His elder brother 'Alī was born in 355/955. One of his two sisters was called Zaynab and the other Khadijah. The elder died in 419/1028,⁵ while the younger died in the lifetime of our poet. He lamented her death in a mournful dirge in which he expressed his deep family feeling.⁶

Concerning the early stages of his childhood, unfortunately our historical sources are silent. What we can draw from them is the fact that al-Radī's family was rarely united. His father was frequently absent from his

1. Talkhīṣ, p. 237.

2. al-Tehrānī, Muḥammad Aghā Bozork, al-Dharī'ah ilā taḥānif al-Shi'ah, Najaf (1355/1936), Vol. I, p. 302.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 18.

4. Ibid.

5. D. T. Vol. III, p. 186.

6. D. R. Vol. I, p. 129.

home performing his duties as a leader of pilgrim caravans or carrying out his commitments as an envoy of the rulers of Baghdad in political affairs. In the year of al-Raḍī's birth his father was in Mecca. He stayed there until 360/970. He was away in 361/971 and 366/976 as well on his way to Mecca.¹ Consequently, al-Raḍī's mother found herself obliged to take care of her children and bear the responsibility of the family. Our poet seems to have enjoyed a great measure of maternal affection and even excessive protection from his mother, as he records in his poetry.² His mother's excessive affection for him may have been due to two reasons. On the one hand, al-Raḍī suffered from a certain disease in his childhood which may have lasted to the day of his untimely death.³ In addition, his mother predicted high things for him and this was realised by his teachers later on.

Years of suffering

In the year 369/979 the ruler of Baghdad was the Būwayhid prince 'Adud al-Dawlah. He was shrewd, severe and eager to strengthen his grip over his subjects. He inaugurated his reign by limiting the activities of those

1. Jaw. Vol. VII, pp. 53, 57, 83.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 20.

3. Concerning al-Raḍī's illness, he made reference to it in his dirge on his mother. In addition, his brother al-Murtadā confirmed that he had expected al-Raḍī's death which implies that the condition of his health was not good. See al-Murtadā's diwān, Vol. II, pp. 131-132. Furthermore, al-Khawānsārī indicates that al-Raḍī suffered physical disease and emotional insecurity, see Rawḍat al-Jannāt, Tehran, (1307/1889), p. 576.

influential figures who may have been considered an obstacle in his way to secure absolute authority.¹ The naqīb al-Hucayn b. Mucā, his brother, Abū 'Abd-Allāh b. Mūsā and the chief of judges Abū Muhammad b. Ma'rūf were at the head of this ruler's victims. They were arrested and sent off to Fāris as prisoners,² and the properties of al-Raḍī's father were confiscated.³ The list of unfortunate personalities who suffered under 'Aḍud al-Dawlah included the famous 'Alid leader Muhammad b. 'Umar al-'Alawī who was deprived of his estates and imprisoned in Fāris as well. The great writer and the faithful friend of al-Raḍī's family Abū Ishāq al-Sābi had the same fate. He remained in prison for three years. For his release he paid a heavy price: 'Aḍud al-Dawlah compelled him to write the history of the Būwayhid dynasty. It is said that al-Sābi called it a pack of lies.⁴

The years of calamity lasted until 'Aḍud al-Dawlah's death in 372/982.⁵ while their aftermath continued until the Būwayhid ruler Sharaf al-Dawlah put an end to this catastrophe by liberating al-Raḍī's father who accompanied the prince on his way to Baghdad in 376/986, when the family's properties were restored as well.⁶ In these

1. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 115; Ibn Abī al-Hadīd op. cit., Vol. I, p. 10.

2. Misk. Vol. II, p. 428; Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 98.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 236; Ibn Taghrī Bardī op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 223.

4. Dhayl, p. 16; see Yatimah, Vol. II, p. 245.

5. D. R. Vol. I, p. 206.

6. Ibid., p. 333; Vol. II, pp. 610, 772.

years of hardship and misfortune, our poet suffered a bitter and distressing condition during his adolescence which is a formative period in one's life. It is a time when an adolescent searches for a perfect world and perfect people and judges both himself and others by his own ideals.¹ Unfortunately, al-Radī had bitter experiences in this sensitive period. The downfall of his family affected him deeply. Friends disappeared, allies were no longer allies. The household's status was destroyed in a moment. Even other 'Alids were indifferent to this unfortunate family and began to turn the situation to their own advantage.² Consequently, this heavy blow upon his family shook his confidence in relations, friends and the régime as a whole, as his poetry shows us in all stages of his subsequent life. It is not surprising that al-Radī in later life came to conclude that everything went astray and the people were against the just. He says:

I wonder, yet there is no wonder that
mankind are enemies to men of virtue

وَلَقَدْ عَجِبْتُ دَلَّاجِبٍ أَنَّهُ
كُلُّ الْوَرَى لِلْفَاضِلِينَ أَعَادِي

3

His poetry shows how far this tragedy impressed him. The sad memories were still fresh even in the days of happiness when his father returned home. The poet remembered this

1. Note: From the psychological point of view the term adolescence is usually taken to mean the age from twelve to eighteen. See J. A. Hadfield, Childhood and Adolescence; Penguin Books, 1962, pp. 185, 242.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 238, 338.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 261.

tragic period with tearful feeling. He says, addressing his father:

You went away, and every eye was full of bloody tears, and every heart was throbbing.
You left me behind like a seedling planted by the grower.
O, the stem grew tall and shady.

رحلتَ وفي كلِّ حينٍ دُمٌّ عليكُ دني كلِّ قلبٍ وهيبٌ
وَهَلَّنتَنِي غَرَسٌ شَتَّى ظلالٌ وادورقُ ذاكُ القصبِ¹

The misfortune of al-Raḍī's family coincided with the humiliation imposed upon its historic heritage. ¹Adud al-Dawlah's vizier al-Muṭahhar had an exchange of words with al-Raḍī's father in which the vizier insulted him, directing bitter remarks on this 'Alid family and ridiculing its pride in what he called the things of the past. Al-Raḍī was conscious of this attack aimed at his historic glory when he was ten years of age. He did not forget it for many years to come.² In his poetry he records it as follows:

But he thought that abusing the Prophet was an advantage, being surrounded only by suspicious and ungrateful men.
Had he been living among the Fātimids, lances, swords and forearms would have been waved over him.

1. D. R. Vol. I. pp. 58, 60.

2. D. R. Vol. I. p. 238, the explanatory prelude of his ode indicates that the ode was written when the poet was ten years old. apparently this ode suggests a great measure of maturity. It is most likely that the poet revised it later on.

وَكُنْ رَأَى سَبَّ النَّبِيِّ غِيَةً
وَمَا هَوْلُهُ إِلَّا مَرِيبٌ رَجَاهُ

وَلَوْ كَانَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ رِفْرِفٌ

عَلَيْهِ الصَّوَالِي وَالطَّبِي وَالْوَعْدُ

1

The above mentioned lines reflect two important facts. On the one hand, they make it clear that al-Radi's confidence in people came to be destroyed. He deeply felt the lack of supporters and sympathisers for his family. On the other hand, the second line reveals the early signs of his leanings towards the ruling dynasty in Egypt, the Fatimids. This sympathetic attitude appeared many times in his poetry when he felt wronged and oppressed.²

As for his family's hardship at that time, it seems to have been serious. Though his mother supported him, the sad memories of these years were still alive for a long time. When his father returned from his exile in 376/986 and the properties were restored, he reminisced on the days of deprivation and poverty. He says:

I complain, yet suppress some of what I am
suffering, and I disdain to make complaints
about poverty.

Having dreamed of glorious deeds,

I would not care for money and fortune.

اشْكُو دَأْبِي بَعْضُ مَا أَنَا دَاهِي
فَأَكْتُمُ أَنْ أَشْكُو مِنْ الْوَعْدِ
وَأَذَا ظَفَرْتُ مِنَ الْمُنَاقِبِ بِالْمُنَى
أَهْوَيْتُ بِالْأَرْزَاقِ وَالْوَقْدِ

3

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 238.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 972.

3. Ibid., p. 800.

Early stages of his education

In the years of his father's exile, Fāṭimah, al-Raḍī's mother stood firm and undismayed. Although her responsibility was intensified, she took a great interest in her two sons' education. She requested the fiery Imāmite theologian Muhammad al-Nu'mān to teach them the rules of theology¹ while other tutors began teaching al-Raḍī grammar and philology. At that time he was about ten years of age. His ability made itself felt early. His teacher, Abū al-Faṭḥ b. Jinnī relates that when al-Raḍī was a mere boy about ten years old he went to take lessons from the grammarian Ibn al-Sirāfī (d. 368/978). One day his tutor questioned him on some points of syntax according to the usual system of instruction: "When we say", his teacher said, "I saw 'Amr Ra'aytu 'Amran by what mark is it known that 'Amr is in the accusative case." Al-Raḍī replied, "his hatred for 'Alī". Ibn al-Sirāfī and other persons present were struck with the acuteness of his mind.²

Al-Raḍī began composing poetry when he was ten years old.³ His ambitions, self-pride and admiration of his family's glorious heritage were his foremost concerns in the ode which might be the first to be written by him. He says:

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1. Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 14; al-Khawānsārī, op. cit., p. 563.
 2. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 120; see al-Wāfī, Vol. II, p. 375; Ibn Shākir al-Kutubī, 'Uyūn al-tawārikh, Ms. al-Maktabah al-Zāhiriyyah No. 3414, Damascus, Vol. XIII, fol. 12.
 3. Yatimah, Vol. III, p. 136; al-Wāfī, Vol. II, p. 374; Ibn al-Imād al-Hanbalī, Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār man Dhahab, Cairo, 1350/1931, Vol. III, p. 182.

Glory knows that sublimity is one of my aims, even though I went astray in merrymaking and temptation.
I am from those people who, when they were tested, proved worthy as prophet and regent.

المجد يعلم أن المجد من أري دلو تهاديت في غي دني لب

إني لمن مضى إن جئوا لملئ تفرّتا عن بني اروضي بني¹

Al-Radī, in the early stages of his education became familiar with the famous philologist Ibn Jinnī who was considered a passionate advocate of al-Mutanabbī's poetry. The teacher admired his pupil and the apprenticeship turned into intimate friendship which lasted until Ibn Jinnī's death (d. 392/1001).² It is very likely that this philologist inculcated into al-Radī the admiration of al-Mutanabbī's poetry.³ In addition, al-Radī may have found much in common with this poet who coloured his verses with a rebellious tone, indignation, soaring ambitions and a dark outlook towards life and people.⁴ It is probable as well that al-Radī had access to ancient Arabic poetry as a whole under his teacher's supervision. The influence of this acquaintance reflected itself in his poetry. His teacher commented on four of the poet's odes which were characterised by their bedouin style and coloured by the spirit of the desert. The work was called

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 89.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 562.

3. Dayf, al-Fann, p. 353. He came to the conclusion that Ibn Jinnī encouraged al-Radī to learn al-Mutanabbī's poetry by heart.

4. Points of similarity between al-Radī and al-Mutanabbī will be discussed later.

Tafsīr al-‘Alawiyyāt and has not come down to us.¹

Further stages of his education

Al-Raḍī had a keen desire for acquiring knowledge. He carried on his learning ceaselessly under the famous scholars of that time. The list of his teachers reveals the wide range of his erudition in grammar, prophetic tradition, poetry, history, theology, philology and Qur’ānic studies. His tutors are listed as follows:

1. Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-Fārisī (d. 377/987). He was Ibn Jinnī's teacher and the famous grammarian in the fourth century. He was well-known for his Mu‘tazilite leanings.² Al-Raḍī studied Kitāb al-Idāh under his direction and drew on it in his work al-Majāzāt al-Nabawiyyah.³

2. Abū Ḥasan ‘Alī b. ‘Isā al-Rab‘ī (d. 420/1029). He was a famous grammarian and sons of upper-class families used to attend his lectures.⁴ Under his supervision our poet studies prosody and grammar.⁵ Al-Raḍī referred to his tutor in his works.⁶

1. Yāqūt, Vol. V, p. 31; al-Qiftī, Inbāh al-Ruwāt ‘alā Anbāh al-Nuhāt, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1952, Vol. II, p. 337.

2. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 138; see Tārīkh, Vol. VII, p. 275.

3. Majāzāt, p. 127; al-Amīnī, al-Ghadīr fī al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah wa al-Adab, 3rd edn. Beirut, 1967, Vol. IV, pp. 183-185.

4. Tārīkh, Vol. XII, p. 17; Yāqūt, Vol. V, p. 283.

5. al-Amīnī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 183.

6. Majāzāt, pp. 67-68.

3. 'Alī b. 'Īsā al-Rummānī (d. 383/993). He was a Mu'tazilite theologian and well-known grammarian and philologist.¹

4. Ibn Nubātah al-Sa'dī (d. 405/1014). He was one of those famous poets in the fourth Islamic century who represented the bedouin style in their poetry. Al-Raḍī and his brother studied Arabic poetry under his care.²

5. Abū 'Ubayd Allāh Muhammad b. 'Umrān al-Marzubānī (d. 384/994). He was a Shī'ite with Mu'tazilite leanings, and was a trusted transmitter. His erudition regarding poets and poetry was great.³ He wrote two important books among many others. The first is called Mu'jam al-Shu'arā', the second al-Muwashshah fī Ma'ākhidh al-'Ulamā' 'alā al-Shu'arā'. Al-Raḍī tells us that he studied under his supervision. He referred to his teacher's works in al-Majāzāt.⁴

6. Among al-Raḍī's teachers was the Mu'tazilite and Shāfi'ite "judge of judges" 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1024).⁵ Al-Raḍī sat at his feet studying his two important theological books: al-'Imād fī usūl al-fiqh, and Sharh al-usūl al-khams.⁶

1. Yāqūt, Vol. V, p. 281; see D. R. Vol. I, intro.

2. al-Qummī, Safīnat al-Bihār fī Madīnat al-Hikam wa al-Āthār, Najaf, 1352/1933, Vol. I, p. 525.

3. Yāqūt, Vol. VII, p. 50; Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 177.

4. Majāzāt, pp. 216-217.

5. Ath. Vol. VII, p. 315; al-Aminī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 183.

6. Majāzāt, pp. 48, 180, 362.

7. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Khawārizmī (d. 403/1012). He was one of the famous Sunnite theologians of al-Raḍī's time. He was held in high regard by both rulers and populace.¹ Our poet studied theology under his care. He spoke highly of him and drew on his accounts in his works.²

8. His tutors on Prophetic tradition were two leading authorities. The first was 'Īsā b. 'Alī b. 'Īsā al-Jarrāḥ (d. 391/1000). He was a truthful and reliable transmitter.³ Al-Raḍī, in dealing with Prophetic tradition drew many times on this teacher's account.⁴ The second was Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. Ibrāhīm al-Kinānī (d. 390/999). He specialised in Prophetic tradition and Qur'ānic readings.⁵ Al-Raḍī mentioned that he had studied the different readings of the Qur'ān under his supervision.⁶

9. Also among his teachers was al-Mu'āfā b. Zakariyyā al-Nahrawānī (d. 390/999). He was a Mālikite, trusted and reliable in his account. He had great ability in grammar, theology and Qur'ānic studies.⁷ Al-Raḍī received further lessons on Qur'ānic readings under his direction.

1. Tārīkh, Vol. III, p. 247; al-Wāfi, Vol. V, p. 93.

2. Talkhīs, p. 205; Majāzāt, p. 145.

3. Jaw, Vol. III, p. 218; Ath, Vol. VII, p. 211.

4. Majāzāt, p. 241; al-Aminī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 185.

5. Jaw, Vol. VII, p. 211; al-Aminī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 185.

6. Majāzāt, p. 28.

7. Jaw, Vol. VII, pp. 213-214; see Talkhīs, p. 102.

10. Our poet had access to another Mālikite theologian. He was Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarī (d. 393/1002). Under his supervision al-Raḍī learnt the Qur'ān by heart. His teacher so admired his cleverness and desire to study that he presented him with a home of his own.¹

11. The list of his teachers includes many others who had less influence on him. They were as follows:

A.- Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Akfānī (d. 405/1014). He was the sunnite judge of Baghdad for many years.²

B - Abū Muḥammad Hārūn b. Mūsā al-Tal'akbarī (d. 385/995).³

C - Saḥl b. Aḥmad al-dībājī (d. 385/995).⁴

This list of al-Raḍī's teachers suggests many important aspects of his qualifications and erudition. First of all, it exhibits the wide range of his knowledge of the various Islamic studies available at that time. Secondly, it seems that philosophic subjects had no place in his mind owing to the fact that his teachers in general did not reveal such tendencies. Thirdly, our poet was fortunate to have had access to those famous and talented

1. Tārīkh. Vol. VI. p. 19; Jaw. Vol. VII. p. 223.

2. Tārīkh. Vol. X. p. 141; Muḥammad Jamīl Shalash. al-Hamāsah fī Shi'r al-Sharīf al-Raḍī. M. A. thesis. Baghdad University. 1971. p. 94.

3. al-Amīnī, op. cit.. Vol. IV. p. 184.

4. Shalash. op. cit.. pp. 94-95.

figures who flourished in his time. In addition, this list illustrates the point that he did not confine himself to Imāmīte tutors. Mu'tazilite, Sunnite, Mālikite and Shāfi'ite teachers form notable figures among those who taught him. Even some of his Imāmīte instructors had Mu'tazilite leanings. Consequently, it is most likely that the dogmatic Imāmīte doctrine which may have been implanted in his mind by his passionate Shī'ite teacher Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān in the early stages of his education, was liable to lose its absolute sway over his thoughts and feelings. It is clear that al-Raḍī studied vigourously even in the bitter period when his father was imprisoned and his economic condition was harsh. As we shall see later, he made full use of the knowledge he acquired. The fruit was many works in different subjects.

Waiting for the exile's return

'Adud al-Dawlah's régime which rode roughshod over al-Raḍī's family, apparently ended in 372/982, but its aftermath lasted for another four years. However, the announcement of 'Adud al-Dawlah's death gave our poet and his family limited relief. His father was released from his prison, but stayed in Fāris with the Būwayhid prince Sharaf al-Dawlah who had liberated him. In Baghdad, Ṣamsām al-Dawlah succeeded his father. Consequently, the supporters of the brutal régime still held power. al-Raḍī was thirteen years old. He sent his father the first letter in which he seems to be cautious. Though he could not conceal his pleasure over 'Adud al-Dawlah's death, he

did not attack him openly. He says:

O, my friends, deliver a message to al-Husayn on my behalf saying, "The towering mountain has been sunk into the ground after you".

The flame whose fire you suffered, was reflected by the events of time and it has become calm.

أبلغنا عني الحية الزمناً إن ذا الطرد بعد محمد سافاً
والشهاب الذي اطمئت لظاه حكمت منوره الطربُ نباحاً¹

After the above-mentioned poetical correspondence the poet seemed to impose on himself a period of silence. He raised no voice until his father's return in 376/986. save in one ode in which he praised the Caliph al-Tā'i¹ in 374/984.² It is strange that al-Raḍī made no reference to his father's return or the restoration of his confiscated fortune. However, it is likely that this ode was an attempt to further relationships between al-Raḍī's father, himself and the Caliph for which al-Raḍī came to be eager.

Under his father's shadow

Al-Raḍī's family was reunited in 376/986 when his father accompanied Sharaf al-Dawlah who entered Baghdad and became its ruler. Al-Husayn's fortune was restored and a period of happiness and security for al-Raḍī

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 206.

2. Ibid., p. 186.

began.¹ He was now seventeen years of age. He had showed poetical mastery by his many odes written at that time. His first appearance in the political scene was as a spokesman on behalf of his father. In his praise-odes, he took pains to paint a splendid picture of his father as an experienced politician and a man indispensable to rulers. On the other hand, he attacked his political enemies, exposing their incompetence and the moral decline of their conduct.² It is plain that he directed his praise to those figures who had formed a political group with his father. The list includes the viziers: Sābūr b. Ardashīr, Abū Mansūr b. Ṣālihān, Abū Sa'd b. Khalaf and Abū 'Alī al-Mūwaffaq.³ The Caliph al-Tā'i and the Būwayhid prince Sharaf al-Dawlah received many praising odes.⁴ By such constant efforts al-Raḍī tried to confirm his family's loyalty to these rulers on behalf of his father. Meanwhile, he endeavoured to strengthen the link between the palace and his family, aiming to restore the naqābah.⁵ Al-Raḍī's father seems to have pinned high hopes on his younger son whose ambitious personality made itself felt and whose qualifications were evident. Al-Raḍī

1. Dhayl, p. 140; Ath. Vol. VII, p. 131. In al-Raḍī's Diwan one of the explanatory preface of his odes suggests the year 386/996. This date seems to be inaccurate for two reasons. Firstly, al-Raḍī in this ode praised Sharaf al-Dawlah who died in 379/989. Secondly, the poet stated in many odes that the confiscation had been lifted in 376/986. See D. R. Vol. II, p. 610.

2. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 612, 775. See Vol. I, p. 343.

3. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 45, 48, 225, Vol. II, p. 827.

4. D. R. Vol. II, p. 772.

5. Ibid., pp. 598-603, 605.

himself began to make his own way in his career through his father's relationships with the politicians of that time. His ceaseless attempts to build up a friendly link with the Caliph al-Tā'i' became clear as his odes reveal to us.¹ Although, for many years he failed to gain admission to the caliph's palace, eventually he achieved his goal. His odes disclose how much the poet suffered in his constant effort to win al-Tā'i''s favour. In one of his odes he says:

I take refuge in your glory from being
left with an unfulfilled desire.
My only gifts being mere promises
Living far away from seeing you,
with a thirsty heart, while your watering-place
is accessible to all.

أَعِيذُ بِجَدِّكَ أَنْ أَبْقَى عَلَى طَمَعٍ
وَأَنْ تَكُونَ لِمَطَايَاِ الْمَوَاعِيدِ
رَأَيْتُ الْحَيَّ بَصِيرًا مِنْ لِقَائِهِمْ
ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي دُونَكَ الْوَرْدُ مُورِدٌ 2

It is interesting to note that two attempts of marriage of convenience were made in al-Radī's favour, probably having political intent and planned by his father. The daughter of the vizier Abū 'Alī al-Mūwaffaq was the first engaged to al-Radī, but unfortunately the betrothal was broken. Another attempt was made and the vizier Sābūr's daughter became al-Radī's fiancée. This plan came to grief as well.³ Consequently, the poet was upset over his failure to gain a political link with such

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 207-210.

2. Ibid., p. 210.

3. Ibid., pp. 52-54.

important personalities. In his ode to the vizier Abū 'Alī al-Muwaffaq he did not conceal his plan to attain political advantage through this proposed marriage. He said:

I had wished that you would have
been my means to others,
through whom I would have gained fame
and glory.

لَقَدْ كُنْتُ أَرْجُو أَنْ تَكُونَ ذَاتِي

1 إِلَى غَيْرِكُمْ هَيْتَ الْعَلَى دَاكِنًا بِهَا

Al-Raḍī made a notable advance towards public life coming nearer to the centre of the limelight under his father's shadow. In the year 380/990 the naqābah was restored to the family and the two brothers al-Murtaḍā and al-Raḍī became acting naqīb on their father's behalf.² Our poet well utilized the opportunity to strengthen his relationships with politicians and enlarge his circle of acquaintance. At last he became on familiar terms with the Caliph al-Ṭā'i', but this did not last for long. As he records, he was one of those who witnessed the day on which the Caliph was dethroned and arrested in barbaric circumstances in 381/991. Al-Raḍī apparently now came to be disillusioned and decided to relinquish his intimate links with these rulers. He says:

Never shall I be deceived by a sovereign again,
fools are those who enter sovereigns' doors.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 53.

2. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 153.

حياتٍ أغترَّ بالسلطان ثانية
قد ضلَّ ولجَّ أبواب السلاطين¹

However, his isolation from the political scene was short-lived. Soon after al-Tā'i's dethronement he began to look forward to having access to the palace again.²

Meanwhile, he began to pin high hopes on the Būwayhid ruler of Baghdad, Bahā' al-Dawlah whose reign and absolute power lasted for twenty years. Our poet held the position of the naqābah many times, carrying out his duty as a spokesman on his father's behalf until his dismissal in 384/994.³ When his father was sent to Fāris as an envoy to make peace between the armies of Šamsān al-Dawlah and Bahā' al-Dawlah, and kept there, al-Radī thought that the ruler's primary intent was to keep his father away from Baghdad. He demanded his return, criticising those who helped to contrive such a situation.⁴

The year 384/994 witnessed a great crisis affecting al-Radī's family. His father was deposed from his position and his two sons were consequently dismissed.⁵ Al-Husayn was eighty years of age. He seems to have been unable to carry on his political obligations, but still directed and protected his two sons in their

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 867.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 417.

3. D. R. Vol. II, p. 699; Ath. Vol. VII, p. 165.

4. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 189-191.

5. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 174.

political lives. However, this crisis and others which took place later on did not greatly affect al-Raḍī's political advance. He began to make his future under his patron Bahā' al-Dawlah.

Al-Raḍī the naqīb

Al-Raḍī enjoyed a great measure of Bahā' al-Dawlah's patronage despite two setbacks during this intimate relationship. The prince appointed al-Raḍī his deputy in Baghdad twice, the first time in 381/991 and the second in 388/998 when the Būwayhid ruler was away from the capital.¹ Al-Raḍī tried to carry out his responsibilities to his utmost and succeeded in bringing the insecure conditions under which Baghdad suffered back to normal. Unfortunately, al-Raḍī's political enemies succeeded in shaking the prince's confidence in his friend. Consequently, al-Raḍī was deposed from his position. On another occasion, al-Raḍī lost his position again after he had regained it for a while. Although he received a heavy blow to his political career he appears to have had self-confidence combined with ambition and arrogance. On the first occasion he addressed Bahā' al-Dawlah as follows:

Why am I like a stranger behind people
who, had they been tested, would have been
found to be behind me.
Am I to be afflicted, only to be denied to be
chosen as protégé?
Sufficient for me is my past gallantry (heroic deeds).

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 11, Vol. II, p. 873.

كَيْفَ أَنَا كَالغَرِيبِ وَرَأَيْتُمْ لَوْ ائْتَبَرْتُمْ لَقَدْ طَانُوا وَرَأَيْتُمْ

أَأُبْلَى ثُمَّ يَبْدُو فِي أَهْلِنَا عِي كُنْأَيِ مَا تَقْدُمُ مِنْ بَدَائِي ¹

On the second occasion al-Radī pretended that he gave no heed to the loss of his position as a nagīb. He asserted that his ultimate goal was far-reaching, voicing his soaring ambition openly. He says:

Had I been content with the headship of the 'Alids alone,

Having achieved it I would have had no more hopes, but I possess a soul which aspires to a position, beyond which there is none higher to reach.

لَوْ كُنْتُ أَتَمَعْتُ بِالنَّجَابَةِ وَهَدَّهَا

لَنَفَضْتُ هَيْنَ بَلَفْتَا أَمَالِي

لَكِنِّي لِي نَفْسٌ تَتَوَقَّ إِلَى الَّتِي

مَا بَعْدَ أُعْلَمَهَا مَكَانَ عَالِي ²

In this period in which al-Radī underwent harsh and difficult experiences, his relationships with the Caliph al-Qādir, who assumed the caliphate in 381/991, appeared to worsen. Al-Radī apparently withstood the challenge. On the one hand, he defied the caliph in one of his odes in which he praised him, trying to allege that he was on a footing of equality with him.³ Furthermore, he seriously upset him by mentioning the Fāṭimid caliph of Egypt who threatened the legitimacy of the caliph of

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 11.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 654.

3. Ibid., p. 544.

Baghdad. In one of his odes he voiced his loyalty to the Fātimids and pointed the finger of suspicion at al-Qādir. He says:

(I wonder that) I am clothed in the garment
of humiliation in this land of enemies, when there
is an 'Alid caliph in Egypt;
He whose father is mine and whose lord is my lord,
when a more distant relative humiliates me.

ألبس الذل في ديار الأعادي دبهر الخليفة العلوي

من أبوه أبي ومولاه مولد ي إذا ضايتي البعير الضهي¹

The Caliph al-Qādir, on hearing these attacking verses summoned al-Raḍī's father and blamed him for his son's attitude. Al-Raḍī's father was in an embarrassing situation, and he apologised to the Caliph. In addition, he tried to persuade his son to disown these biting lines. Our poet refused to do so. Consequently, his relationship with his father and brother deteriorated. It is said that his father swore that he would not share the city with him.²

It is clear that the poet used to compose such protesting verses when he felt seriously wronged. As we have already seen, he referred in the same manner to the Fātimids when his family received a heavy blow under 'Adud al-Dawlah's régime. However, al-Raḍī was no longer concerned over his relationship with the Caliph al-Qādir. Later he attached himself to his patron Bahā' al-Dawlah

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 972.

2. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 282; D. R. Vol. II, p. 972.

on whom he pinned high hopes for his political aims.

To Mecca

The period 384/994 to 394/1003 seems to have been embarrassingly delicate both for al-Raḍī and his family as a whole. The caliph's attitude was unfriendly and al-Raḍī's father was well aware that his son's incautious behaviour brought the whole family into conflict with the palace. Our poet appears to have been obstinate, as his Diwān reflects. He did not praise the caliph from 384/994 onwards. Later his relationship with Bahā' al-Dawlah suffered hard conditions in 388/998.¹ In the following year al-Raḍī seems to evade this stifling climate. He made his first journey to Mecca to perform the duty of pilgrimage which provided him with the best opportunity to absent himself from the political scene in Baghdad.² He was away from Baghdad many times. He tells us that on account of the hardship and adversity from which he suffered in the capital he found himself compelled to be absent in 391/1000.³ He made another three journeys, two being to Mecca in 392/1001 and 394/1003 and the other to 'Alī's tomb in Kūfah.⁴

It is worth noting that al-Raḍī during this period tried to impose political isolation upon himself. As his

1. Hilāl, p. 365.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 873.

3. Ibid., p. 702.

4. D. R. Vol. I, p. 55. Vol. II, p. 885.

Dīwān indicates, he did not praise any ruling figures at that time, making no effort to associate himself with them. There is only one exception to this, in which he addressed his friend the vizier Abū 'Alī al-Mūwaffaq. In this ode al-Raḍī seized the opportunity to direct bitter remarks at those rulers who were proud of their honourable yet empty titles.¹ In general, he confined himself to lamenting his intimate friends who were overtaken by death one after another. Meanwhile he composed many odes of self-pride. The outcome of this period, as his Dīwān illustrates, was about twenty-four odes consisting of elegy and self-pride.

Al-Raḍī, in his visits to Mecca, came to have first-hand experience of the desert and bedouin life which deepened his feelings and affection for this type of life. In his poetry the vivid pictures of the pilgrimage season and references to religious cities and desert sites began to occupy a large place in his love poetry and odes of self-pride. In addition, in his Hijāziyyāt which form an interesting part of his love poetry, he drew his inspiration from his personal experiences, as we shall see later.

One of his journeys to Mecca was of great importance with regard to his ambition and his dream of assuming the caliphate. He became acquainted with a leading bedouin called Ka'b al-'Amirī. Al-Raḍī identified him as Abū

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 905.

al-ʿAwwām and Ibn Laylā. Al-Raḍī and Ibn Laylā confided in each other. The bedouin admired our poet to the extent of devoting his life to being his propagandist, serving his farfetched plan to assume the caliphate.¹ It was the first time that al-Raḍī tried to put his ambitious aim into reality, as we shall see later.

Al-Raḍī the ambitious politician

Al-Raḍī's ambition to claim the caliphate seems to be a story of legendary dimensions. Though Arab historians agree over the fact that he aspired to the caliphate, they give no information about his plans, the first step taken to achieve his goal and the time he gave up this dream and came down to reality.² They state that one of his intimate friends, Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābī made him believe that he was qualified to be caliph. Al-Ṣābī predicted al-Raḍī's future from the stars, coming to the conclusion that he would assume the highest position.³ It is difficult to pinpoint the time when this event took place. However, al-Ṣābī was imprisoned till 376/986 and the first friendly correspondence between him and al-Raḍī had begun by this year.⁴ The important poetical letter sent by al-Ṣābī to his friend runs as follows:

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 55, 183, 431, 449; Vol. II, pp. 715, 960.

2. al-Wāfi, Vol. II, p. 376; Jamāl al-Millāh, op. cit., p. 185; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 11-12; al-Khawānsārī, op. cit., p. 574.

3. Jamāl al-Millāh, op. cit., p. 185; al-Khawānsārī, op. cit., p. 574.

4. Rasāʿil, p. 7.

O, Abū Ḥasan I have an intuitive knowledge
about men,
which fails me not in telling the truth.
It has told me that you are a man of nobility
who will rise to the highest rank.
So I gave you full honour before it was
due, praying that God may prolong the life of the
master. Not revealing yet a phrase which I
kept secret,
until I see myself free to spell it out.

أَبَا هَسَنِ لِي فِي الرِّجَالِ بَرَاءَةٌ تَعَوَّدْتُ نَحْنُ أَنْ تَقُولَ نَهَضًا
رَقْدٌ خَبَّرْتَنِي عَنْكَ أَنَّكَ طَاهِدٌ سَدَقْتَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْيَاءِ أَبَدَ مُرْتَقَى
فَوْضَيْتَكَ التَّعْظِيمَ بَيْنَ أَوْدَانِهِ رَمَلْتَ أَطَالَ اللَّهُ لِيَدَّ الْبَقَا
وَأَضْرَتَ مِنْهُ لِنَفْسٍ لَمْ أَجْجُ بِهَا إِلَى أَنْ أَرَى إِطْلَاقَهَا لِي مُطْلَقًا¹

In al-Radī's reply he promised his friend that he would requite al-Ṣābī's veneration by deeds. He says:

Should you grant me veneration before its time
is due,
I shall offer you deeds more fragrant and
redolent.
May the nights help me to achieve my
aspirations.
May they rap on a closed door behind which
my good fortune lies.

وَلِنْ تَعْظِيَنِ الْإِعْظَامَ قَوْلًا نَائِنِي سَأُعْطِيكَ نَهْضًا مِنْهُ أَذَى رَأْبَعًا
لَعَلَّ اللَّيَالِي أَنْ يَبْلُغَنِي نُسْبَةٌ وَيَقْرَعَنِي لِي بَابًا مِنْ الْخَطِّ مُطْلَقًا²

Al-Ṣābī's prediction concerning al-Radī's future was not the only factor which fostered this soaring ambition in al-Radī's mind. As we have already seen, there were

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 581; Rasā'il, p. 40.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 581; Rasā'il, p. 40.

many factors which contributed to laying the foundation of his high aspiration: his Shī'ite background, the historic glory which he inherited as an 'Alid descendant, his early upbringing, the high esteem in which he was held by his family and teachers and his own great self-esteem. All these factors played their part in fostering such an ambition, which was triggered off by al-Ṣābī's mysterious prediction. From his poetry it can be assumed that his aspiration emerged early in his life.¹ When he was sixteen years old, he made it clear that his ultimate goal was not only to be a poet or to obtain mastery in literary subjects. He says:

Have I passed sixteen years of my age,
in which I achieved no good other than literary
upbringing.

أَنْفَيْتُ سِتّاً دَعُوراً طَافَيْتُ بِهَا
بَوَى الْحَقِّ دُحُوراً إِلَا بِنِ الدُّبِّ²

Al-Radī was greatly preoccupied with his ambition to be a caliph. It governed his behaviour and his relationships with his family, friends and rulers. Although he had self-confidence in his qualifications to reach the summit of high position, he seems to have been hesitant and unable to put his plan into action. Unfortunately, the Arab historical sources give no information concerning his plans and preparations for achieving his goal. Nevertheless, a close examination of his Dīwān reveals that

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 89.

2. Ibid., p. 148.

from 380/990 onwards he began to act in his own interest and in accordance with his ultimate aim. He strengthened his relationships with the Ḥamdānid and the 'Uqaylid rulers, both having Shī'ite tendencies and representing notable tribal powers at that time.¹ Meanwhile, he won the friendship of the representative of the Carmathians in Baghdad, as we have already seen, and maintained a friendly link with the Fāṭimids of Egypt. Furthermore, he laboured successfully to win the confidence and friendship of many politicians of the period.² Yet he did not take the first step towards putting his plan into action.

His acquaintance with the bedouin leader Abū al-'Awwām led to the appearance of his aspiration in a practical form. This propagandist, al al-Raḍī tells us, began his mission for al-Raḍī's claim by inviting the famous Arab tribe of Tamīm to support his cause. Unfortunately, the people of Tamīm deserted Abū al-'Awwām and later on killed him.³ Our poet, as he indicates in his poetry, received a heavy blow from this which rendered him sad and disillusioned.⁴ Although he did not completely identify his friend, he praised his loyalty, courage and forbearance and lamented his death in many odes.⁵ In

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 378, 477, 489, see Vol. II, p. 175.

2. Ibid., p. 55, 114, 216, 220, 225.

3. Ibid., p. 182.

4. Ibid., pp. 182, 431.

5. Ibid., p. 447.

one of his dirges he says:

Whoever made Ibn Laylā his guide,
would not go astray nor be misled.

ومن جعل الرليل له ابن ليلى
لم يخطئ الضلال ولا الضلالتا¹

However, this disenchantment drove al-Raḍī much more towards reality. He appears to have given up his revolutionary aims and the rebellious tone in his poetry began to wane gradually. Nevertheless, he did not free himself entirely from his wishful thinking and fantasy which remained with him to the end of his life.

The last stage of al-Raḍī's professional career

In the year 394/1003 Bahā' al-Dawlah once again appointed al-Raḍī's father as head of the 'Alids, leader of pilgrimage caravans and chief of judges over the 'Alids, but he did not assume the office of qādī through the refusal of the Caliph al-Qādir to sanction it.² It is probable that the caliph's unfriendly attitude was due in part to al-Raḍī's stubborn behaviour which brought the family into al-Qādir's disfavour, as we have already seen. At that time al-Raḍī began to move from the shadow to the limelight again. He tried to strengthen his relationships with the Būwayhid prince. He now appears to set a limit to his ambition and tries to adjust himself to the realities of political life by attaching himself much more

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 447.

2. Jaw. Vol. VII, pp. 226-227.

to his patron Bahā' al-Dawlah as a last resort of his hopes. From the year 394/1003 till 403/1012 he devoted his poetry to praising the Būwayhid prince. He lavished twenty praise-odes on him, to prove his loyalty and sincerity. Bahā' al-Dawlah conferred many honorable titles in return.¹ Meanwhile, the poet paid no attention to the caliph. He neither praised him nor made any effort to restore their deteriorating relationship back to normal. As his Diwān appears to indicate, he ignored him entirely.

Al-Radī's father retired from all official duties. His brother al-Murtadā no longer participated in bearing the responsibilities of the headship of the 'Alids, while in the year 397/1006 al-Radī appears to have had absolute authority over them.² In the following years the Būwayhid prince endowed him with the title "al-Radī dhū al-Hasabayn".³ In 401/1010 he received another title from his patron. He became "al-Sharīf al-Ajall" the greatest noble.⁴ His professional career reached its highest point in 403/1012 when he was appointed a naqīb over the 'Alids in the dominions ruled by Bahā' al-Dawlah.⁵

Al-Radī crowned his professional career by obtaining a position to which none of his ancestors had risen. However, instead of being gratified, he was frustrated

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 436; Vol. II, p. 742, 752.

2. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 234; D. R. Vol. I, p. 436.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 39.

4. D. R. Vol. II, p. 752.

5. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 260; Ath. Vol. VII, p. 268;
see D. R. Vol. I, p. 210.

and despairing. His disappointment was due in part to the fact that he found himself behaving against his ambition, conviction and even his ideals. He laid aside his claim to the caliphate and moreover he was forced to make clear his retreat and submission. In 402/1011 al-Raḍī put his signature, amongst others, to a manifesto written at the caliph's request in which the signatories condemned the Fāṭimid family in Egypt and denied its genealogical descent from the Prophet's household.¹ Al-Raḍī, who used to take pride in his kinship with this family, was compelled in this instance to act against his will. Furthermore, in the year 403/1012 he gave up his previous resistance openly. He was appointed a naqīb and accepted the wearing of the black official dress of the 'Abbāsīd which no 'Alīd had previously worn.² As Mez observed, with this step al-Raḍī, who relinquished his claim to the caliphate, declared himself defeated.³

Although al-Raḍī enjoyed a great measure of Bahā' al-Dawlah's patronage, possessing a high position, he seems to have been restless and dissatisfied with his status. The naqābah caused him much trouble and brought him into conflict with his brother and relatives, as his

1. Jaw. Vol. VII, pp. 255-256.

2. Ibid., p. 260; see Ath. Vol. VII, p. 268.

3. Mez, pp. 153, 272. In his opinion, al-Raḍī was the first 'Alīd aristocrat who publicly abandoned resistance to authority, who exchanged the white dress, which his father had worn with as much pride as grief for the black uniform of the 'Abbāsīd courtier and official. See Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 260.

Diwān indicates.¹ He requested the Būwayhid prince to free him from the shackles of this responsibility as a naqīb on the grounds that he was tired and unable to carry out his undertakings effectively. He asserted that he had become unloved by the 'Alids. Bahā' al-Dawlah refused to accept his resignation.²

The final years

In the year 403/1012 al-Raḍī received a heavy blow when the death of his intimate friend Bahā' al-Dawlah was announced. He was sad and dispirited. He composed two dirges in which he lamented the loss of his patron. They reveal his sincerity, loyalty and profound sorrow.³ At that time al-Raḍī retired from political life and became silent. It seems he was tired and ill. The Būwayhid prince Qawām al-Dīn who succeeded his father requested the poet to praise his régime. Al-Raḍī tried to convince him that he had abandoned poetry, and that he no longer had any interest in praising kings. The prince persisted with his demands and consequently the poet responded to his wish and then returned to silence.⁴

The last year of al-Raḍī's life was a sad one. Some months before his death he lost his best friend, Ahmad b. 'Alī al-Battī, one of his longstanding companions from his youth. He wrote his last dirge on him and this proved

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 246-247. Vol. II, p. 522, 750.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 750.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 474. Vol. II, p. 591.

4. D. R. Vol. II, p. 517.

to be his final ode. He saw his end drawing near and the last chapter of his life approaching. He says:

Calamity never missed you when it overtook
those whom you love.

لَا أَفْهَأُكَ النَّاسُ نَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْ مِنْ تَبْ¹

Al-Raḍī's untimely death occurred in 406/1015.² His elder brother al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā was so grief-stricken that he could not attend his funeral. When the burial was about to take place he retreated to the mausoleum of the Imām Mūsā al-Kāzīm feeling unable to support the bier and attend the interment.³ The vizier Fakhr al-Mulk b. Ghālib conducted the funeral prayer at al-Raḍī's house before a large assembly and then a great many people flocked towards his home to pray over the deceased.⁴ Among the poets who lamented his death was his brother al-Murtaḍā. He composed a tearful dirge in which he expressed his grief saying that he had expected his brother's end. He praised his deeds and conduct, revealing his profound sorrow over his short life.⁵ The vizier, Abū al-Qāsim al-Maghribī composed a dirge over al-Raḍī in which he likened his death to that of the Prophet's departure.⁶ Al-Raḍī's pupil, the poet Mihyār al-Daylamī

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 138.

2. Tārīkh, Vol. II, p. 246; Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 121; Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 279.

3. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 122; al-Wāfī, Vol. II, p. 378.

4. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 383; al-Wāfī, Vol. II, p. 378.

5. D. T. Vol. II, pp. 131-135.

6. Al-Kutubī, op. cit., Vol. XIII, fol. 17.

compiled an elegiac ode on his teacher which was censured for its extravagance. He wrote another in which he enumerated al-Raḍī's virtues and deeds.¹

Al-Raḍī was buried in his own home,² but his remains were, however, removed later on to Karbalā'.³ He left behind him his only son called 'Adnān, who, according to Ibn Athīr's account, was born in 400/1009. He was of great importance and held with high respect by rulers. He succeeded his uncle al-Murtadā in assuming the headship of the 'Alids.⁴ Unfortunately, we have no information concerning the rest of al-Raḍī's family.

His personality and character

Al-Raḍī was highly esteemed by Arab historians. They endowed him with splendid and noble qualities. In their eyes, he was righteous, generous, modest, upright and god-fearing.⁵ He himself took pride in his good conduct. There is no doubt that the highly moral and spiritual life which his family led had a great influence on him. He tells us that he treated himself with great discipline and self-control. In one of his odes he described himself as follows:

1. D. Y. Vol. I, p. 249, Vol. III, pp. 336-370.

2. al-Kutubī, op. cit., Vol. XIII, fol. 17.

3. Ibn Abī al-Hadīd, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 10; al-Khawānsārī, op. cit., p. 576.

4. Ath. Vol. VIII, pp. 74, 81; al-Qummī, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 188.

5. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 279; Ibn Taghrī Bardī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 240; Jamāl al-Millāh, op. cit., p. 184.

I know not obscenity except by its description.

I utter nothing offensive when I am in anger.

ولما عرف الغناء الذي بوصفها
ولما انطق المرء والطيب ففصب¹

In his Diwān he gave no place to satire which was a common subject in his time. Furthermore, no ugly or vulgar expression or phrase escaped his lips even when he was indignant and provoked.

He was deeply conscious of his historic heritage, political privilege and religious status. He never accepted any money or presents from viziers, rulers or even friends. Once, on the occasion of a birth in al-Raḍī's house, the vizier Fakhr al-Mulk sent him 1000 dinars. Al-Raḍī would not accept it. The vizier sent it again as a gift for the nurses. Al-Raḍī refused it on the grounds that in the family of the prophet to which he belonged, none but the women of the family were employed on such an occasion. The vizier sent it a third time requesting the poet to distribute it among the students who attended his academy.² On another occasion, al-Raḍī's teacher Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarī presented him with a house. Al-Raḍī did not accept the gift, claiming that he did not receive presents, except from his father. However,

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 85.

2. Ibn al-Hadīd, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 13. Compare with Jamal al-Millaḥ op. cit., p. 184. See also Margoliouth, op. cit., intro. p. XXXIII. The author suggests that the vizier was Sābūr b. Ardashīr. However, we have no evidence to support his assumption.

he eventually acquiesced.¹

It is worth noting that behind this splendid picture of al-Raḍī, which has already been painted, there are traits of contradiction and emotional unrest which caused him much trouble in his life. As we have already seen, he had boundless ambition impregnated with arrogance and high self-esteem which entirely governed his outlook and determined his relationships with friends, relatives and others. These drove him to judge them according to his Utopian world which he had built in his imagination and to which he tried to be true. He suffered a great deal of pain in keeping a balance between reality and his idealistic principles. Al-Raḍī came to feel himself alienated despite the fact that he was in the centre of the limelight. As we have learned before, his relationship with his father, brother and maternal uncle was often poor.² he described himself among his family and relatives as follows:

The soul is but a stranger among relatives
once it has lost its close intimate friends and
equals.

وما النفس في الأهلين إلا غريبة

إذا فقدت أشكالها ولداً ٣

His feeling of isolation was intense and profound. He says:

1. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 223.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 96, 100, 306, 355.

3. Ibid., p. 167.

They said meeting people brings comfort
and ease.
Had I found satisfaction with people
I would not have been alone.

وقالوا لقاء الناس أنى ذراحة
ولو كنت ارضى الناس ما كنت مفردا¹

It is, however, this trait of isolation with high self-esteem in his character that has a point of similarity with a man who suffers from megalomania.

It seems likely that illness and the emotional insecurity from which he suffered in his early life became chronic. His shyness and reserve could be traced to his melancholic temperament. He admits that he was not able to recite poetry owing to his timidity. He says:

My soul is brave when I praise
but when I am asked to recite, my tongue is tied.

هنا في حجاج إن دعت رايحا
لاني إن سيم السيد هبا ن²

Al-Radī confessed that he suffered emotional conflict and intense self-reproach. He says:

I might justify myself before men
from whom I keep aloof.
I am more hostile to myself than
all men put together.

أروم انتفاني من رجال أباعد
ونفسي اعدى لي من الناس اجمعا³

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 220.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 954.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 505; see Mez. p. 272.

In another ode he illustrates his restless life and emotional anxiety as follows:

They say: "Comfort thyself, for life is but a sleep;
When it ends, care, the nightly wanderer, vanishes too".
Were it a peaceful sleep, I would welcome it,
but it is a disquieting, dreadful sleep. 1

وقالوا: نَقَلْ إِنَّا الْمَيِّتُ نَوْمَةً يَقْضَى دِيْهِنِ طَارِقُ الْهَمِّ الْجَمْعُ
وَلَوْ كَانَ نَوْمًا سَأَلْنَا لِحَدِيثِهِ وَكَلَفَهُ نَوْمٌ مَرْدَعٌ مُفَرَّعٌ

Al-Raḍī failed to keep a balance between his ideal world and reality when he sometimes tried to put his unrealistic principles into practice as a naqīb. He lost the 'Alids' sympathy and became disliked when he tried to impose severe disciplinary measures over them.² On one occasion an 'Alid woman complained to him that her husband gambled away his fortune instead of providing for his wife and child. When the witness testified that this was true, al-Raḍī summoned him and ordered him to be flogged. The woman thought the punishment would be light, but when it exceeded 100 strokes she cried out in protest. Al-Raḍī reproached her saying, "Did you imagine you were complaining to a schoolmaster?"³

Al-Raḍī as a man was true to himself. He tried to live up to his moral principles and high standards both in his private and public life and rid himself of all worldly enjoyments in which his contemporaries immersed

1. Mez, p. 272; D. R. Vol. I, p. 506.

2. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 521-522.

3. Jamāl al-Millāh, op. cit., p. 186.

themselves. On this point he was careful and strict. In his relationships with his intimate friends he was loyal and faithful. As a politician he was obsessed by his soaring ambition to be caliph. He deemed everything subordinate to his ultimate aim, leaving no stone unturned to achieve it. He well realised that he led his political life at the cost of his principles. He found himself compelled to pay homage to undeserving rulers.¹ However, his readiness to paint a favourable picture of the evil face of Bahā' al-Dawlah's régime was unforgivable in a man of high moral principles like al-Raḍī. It is clear that the gap between al-Raḍī as a man of principle and as a politician was too wide to be closed. Nevertheless, in comparison with his contemporaries, his immunity to moral decline and corruption was undeniable.

His religious belief

Al-Raḍī was born and brought up in an Imāmite family. In addition, Muḥammad al-Nu'mān, the passionate and dogmatic Imāmite advocate was the first to teach him the principles of Islam and theology according to Shī'ite doctrine. In his further education he became acquainted with teachers of different Islamic sects of whom some were Mu'tazilites and Sunnites. Consequently, al-Raḍī was influenced by his tutors, as his books indicate. Furthermore, his political career was often led at the expense of his sectarian convictions. Despite this fact, Arab historians paid no attention to the developement of his

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 190.

religious beliefs during the course of his life. Shī'ite historians state that he was pure Imāmite.¹ while Sunnites introduce him as a dogmatic and strict Imāmite. They called him a Rāfidite.² A close examination of his life and his poetry reveals to us the fact that al-Raḍī was neither as extreme an Imāmite as the Sunnites regarded him, nor was he as pure as the Shī'ites imagined. He himself made it clear that although he was Imāmite, he had Mu'tazilite tendencies. He says:

My grandfather (ancestor) is the prophet,
my Imām is my father ('Alī)
and my banner is unity and justice.

جَدِّي نَبِيٌّ وَإِمَامِي أَبِي
وَرَأْيِي التَّوْحِيدُ وَالْعَدْلُ 3

Al-Raḍī, in the line quoted above referred to the Mu'tazilite doctrine concerning the existence of God and his unity which meant, according to the Mu'tazilites, that the perfect order of the universe denotes that there is one God who is neither accident nor of substance, and no one can see him face to face while he sees and hears

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1. Yūsuf b. Yahyā al-Ṣan'ānī, Nisamat al-Saḥar fī Dhikr maṇ Tashayya'a wa sha'ar, MS. Najaf, Vol. I, p. 311; al-Aminī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 181; D.R. Vol. I, intro. p. 54.
 2. Ibn Taghrī Bardī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 56; see also Shihāb al-dīn Ahmad b. Alī al-'Asqilānī, Lisān al-Mizān, Hyderabad, 1331/1912, Vol. V, p. 141.
Note: The term Rāfidah was used to identify the Imāmites from Zydites, the followers of Zayd b. 'Alī b. al-Husayn who rebelled against the Umayyads. A section of his supporters desired him to condemn the orthodox caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar and declare them unjust to 'Alī. He refused to do so. There upon they deserted him and called them 'deserters' or 'Rāfidah', see Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, al-Farq bayn al-firaq, Cairo, 1910, pp. 24-25.
 3. D. R. Vol. II, p. 720.

without the help of any instruments. Consequently, the Mu'tazilites were called the people of justice and unity. Ahl al-'Adl wa al-Tawhid.¹ Al-Raḍī, in one of his praise odes appreciated al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād's adoption of Mu'tazilite tendencies as a method of defending the religion of Islam against the unbelievers.² In addition, he referred to this religious school in his books and sometimes accepted its opinion on certain points. He mentioned the people of "Justice and unity" and their ideas with high respect drawing on their account when discussing certain religious questions.³

Al-Raḍī appears to have been Imāmīte in principle, whereas he seems to free himself or at least put aside some of these sectarian shackles when he was dealing with his ambition to assume the caliphate. As an Imāmīte, he was supposed, like others before him, to lay down his arms practically and theoretically after the collapse of many futile attempts made by 'Alid leaders to assume the caliphate and to fall back on the expectation of the twelfth Imām the saviour "al-Mahdī's return". In Imāmīte doctrine this Imām would come out of his concealment to spread justice over the world.⁴ Al-Raḍī in this respect

1. Hitti, op. cit., p. 245; Duhā, Vol. III, pp. 21-23, 44-45.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 242.

3. Majāzāt, pp. 11, 190-191; see Talkhīs, pp. 34, 36, 68.

4. Duhā, Vol. III, pp. 235-237; see Muḥammad al-Husayn Kāshif al-ghīṭā', Asl al-Shī'ah wa usūluhā, 7th edn. Najaf, 1950, pp. 103-104; Von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam, pp. 193-194.

adopted the Zaydites' attitude, which was based on the idea that 'Alid leaders should carry on their revolution against the usurpers and regain their legitimate right to the caliphate.¹ Al-Raḍī, as we have already seen, claimed to be caliph.

Generally speaking, al-Raḍī seems to be broadminded concerning the historic question of the caliphate which divided the Muslims for many centuries. Although he believed that 'Alī was the most competent to hold this religious position, he avoided voicing his ill-feeling towards the other Orthodox Caliphs as his pupil Miḥyār did in his poetry.² On this point al-Raḍī came nearer to the Zaydites who concluded that the caliphs who assumed power before 'Alī were legitimate.³ Al-Raḍī never contested the legitimacy of those caliphs in his Shī'ite poetry. These points of similarity between his attitude towards the caliphate and Zaydite belief drove some historians to conclude that he was a Zaydite.⁴ However, it is difficult to accept such an assumption for two important reasons. First of all, al-Raḍī himself admitted that he was Imāmite, and like other Imāmites he believed in the superiority of 'Alī who was nominated by the Prophet to be his successor.

1. E. I. art. Shī'ah; see also art. Zayd b. Alī, by R. Strothmann.
2. xD. R. Vol. I, pp. 280-281; D. Y. Vol. I, p. 299, Vol. III, pp. 50, 119.
3. 'Abd al-qāhir, op. cit., p. 25.
4. Jamāl al-Millāh, op. cit., p. 186; see also al-Khawānsārī, op. cit., p. 575.

In addition, he referred to the twelve Imāms who came through al-Ḥusayn and had the divine right to lead the faithful.¹ In this respect, the Zaydites believed that each one of the children of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn who unsheathed his sword and summoned the faithful (al-Ummah), was to be considered Imām.²

Al-Raḍī, as a politician, whose ambition was a bee in his bonnet, seems to attach less importance to his sectarian convictions if they came into conflict with his ultimate goal. He admitted the legitimacy of the 'Abbāsid caliph, calling him his Imām,³ the term which was confined in the Imāmite view to 'Alī and his successors. In his poetry he recognised the legality of the Ismā'īlite caliphs, declaring his leanings towards them, as we have already seen. In his relationships he appears to have been broadminded. His friends were of different sects and religions at a time when sectarian conflict was intensified and a dogmatic attitude prevailed. Generally speaking, he was Imāmite in the broad sense, with obvious tendencies towards other Shī'ite sects. In addition, there is no doubt about his admiration of the Mu'tazilite school. He was a moderate with independent views at a time when fanaticism and dogmatism had dominant power over thoughts and feelings.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 35; see his work Majāzāt, p. 86.

2. 'Abd al-Qāhir, op. cit., p. 23; Duḥā, Vol. III, p. 275.

3. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 762, 773.

His works

Al-Radī worked vigorously during the short period of his life. Although he was exhausted by his demanding position as a naqīb and obsessed by his overriding ambition, yet he devoted most of his life to literary pursuits. He compiled a number of books on different topics in which he proved the wide range of his knowledge. He began writing when he was twenty years of age and continued to the last years of his life.¹ Unfortunately, some of his works have not survived the ravages of time. However, it is not difficult to collect information on them from our historical sources. Others were published and are available, including his Dīwān which has been printed many times. His books may be listed as follows:

1. Sīrat al-Tāhir: this book is a biography of his father in which al-Radī, as he tells us, related his father's deeds and glorious career. The work is lost and there remains only an ode in which the poet celebrated the first book to be written by him.²

2. Khaṣā'is al-A'imma: al-Radī is said to have compiled this work in 383/993 in response to the wish of his friends, who realised that the poet had made no contribution in this field. On the authority of Aghā Bozork al-Tehrānī, the manuscript of this book is

1. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 631-635; Talkhīs, p. 288.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 635; al-Wafī, Vol. III, p. 375.

available in Najaf and Teheran. He became acquainted with it by looking through the introduction which was written by al-Raḍī. According to al-Tehrānī this work contains a biographical survey of the twelve Imāms, including their careers, talents, dates of birth and death.¹ Al-Raḍī himself indicates that he began writing this book when he was in the prime of his youth. In the course of his work he came across al-Imām 'Alī's sermons and sayings and began to collect them.²

3. Haqā'iq al-ta'wīl fī Mutashābah al-tanzīl: al-Raḍī in this book discussed the obscure Qur'ānic verses. The work was of many volumes, but all except the fifth are lost. He referred to this book in his other works, calling it his "big book". The fifth volume has been edited and published.³

4. Talkhīs al-Bayān fī Majāzāt al-Qur'ān: in this work the author traced the metaphorical figures in the Qur'ān. He composed it in 401/1010 as he indicates on its closing page.⁴

5. Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān: Ibn Khallikān related that al-Raḍī "composed a work on the rhetorical figures of the

1. Aghā Bozork, al-Dharī'ah, Vol. VII, pp. 164-165.

2. Nahj al-Balāghah; ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1963, Vol. I, p. 4.

3. Talkhīs, intro. pp. 1-21, see al-Raḍī, Haqā'iq al-Ta'wīl fī Mutashābah al-Tanzīl, ed. Muḥammad al-Riḍā Al-Kāshif al-Ghitā', Najaf, 1936, Vol. V, intro. p. 4.

4. Talkhīs, p. 288.

Qur'ān, to which it would be difficult to find one equal in merit; it indicates the author's vast information in grammar and philology."¹ This book was mentioned many times in Arab historical sources.² Unfortunately it has not come down to us.

6. Al-Majāzāt al-Nabawiyyah: the author in this work selected 361 prophetic traditions, analysing them from the rhetorical point of view. He indicates that he compiled his work after he had written many studies on the Qur'ānic subjects.³

7. Ta'liq Khilāf al-fuqahā': this work was mentioned many times by the biographers but they gave no information concerning its content. The book is lost, but we can infer from its title that it was intended to discuss theological subjects.⁴

8. Ta'liq 'alā Īdāh Abī 'Alī al-Fārisī:⁵ al-Raḍī, as we have mentioned before, studied Kitāb al-Īdāh under al-Fārisī's supervision. It is probable that this treatise was a sort of commentary on his teacher's work.

9. Al-Hasan min Shi'r al-Husayn: In this work the

1. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 120.

2. al-Wāfi, Vol. II, p. 375; see Ibn Shahrāshūb, op. cit., p. 51; al-Khawānsārī, op. cit., p. 574.

3. Majāzāt, pp. 9-10.

4. al-Khawānsārī, op. cit., p. 578; al-Amīnī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 199.

5. al-Khawānsārī, op. cit., p. 578; al-Amīnī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 199.

author made a large selection of the decent verse of Ibn al-Hajjāj who specialised in obscene verse.¹ Al-Radī arranged this poetical selection in alphabetical order.²

10. Akhbār quḍāt Baghdād: This work was mentioned by Arab biographers,³ but it has not come down to us. There is no information concerning its exact content.

11. Mukhtār Shi'r Abī Ishāq al-Ṣābī: the title indicates that al-Radī made a selection of his friend's poetry. The work has not come down to us.⁴

12. al-Ziyādāt fī Shi'r Abī Tammām: this book is lost. However, it was mentioned in many historical sources.⁵

13. Rasā'il al-Sharīf al-Radī: it is said that he left three volumes which contain his correspondence with his friends. What has come down to us is only his letters to al-Ṣābī and his replies which were inserted in a book called Rasā'il al-Ṣābī wa al-Sharīf al-Radī.⁶

14. Judging from the account of Ibn 'Umar al-Irbillī, it is possible that al-Radī made a poetical selection

1. Hilāl, pp. 431; Jamāl al-Millāh, op. cit., p. 184.

2. al-Zurakī, al-A'lām, 2nd edn. Damascus, 1955, Vol. VI, pp. 328-330.

3. al-Wāfī, Vol. II, p. 375; Jamāl al-Millāh, op. cit., p. 184.

4. al-Amīnī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 199.

5. al-Khawānsārī, op. cit., p. 573; al-Amīnī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 199.

6. al-Wāfī, Vol. II, p. 375.

concentrating on verses of wisdom and proverbs. Ibn 'Umar says that he made a summary of al-Raḍī's works.¹

15. Nahj al-Balāghah: this work is supposed to be the sayings, letters and sermons of the Imām 'Alī which were collected and arranged by al-Raḍī. Arab historians, ancient and modern, and orientologists, disagree on the genuineness of this book. Ibn Khallikān was the first to suspect the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāghah. He says:

"It is a controversial point whether the book entitled Nahj al-Balāghah "highroad of precision in discourse", and containing a collection of sayings of the Imām 'Alī Ibn Abī Tālib, was compiled by al-Murtadā or his brother al-Raḍī; it has been even stated that these sayings were never uttered by 'Alī, and that the person who collected them and attributed them to the Imām was himself the author of them; of this God is the best judge." 2

Those who followed in the footsteps of Ibn Khallikān in his suspicion were many. Amongst them were: al-Ṣafadī in his work al-Wāfi³ and Ibn Taymiyyah who states that all the literary and historical works that appeared before al-Raḍī's time are devoid of most of what was mentioned in Nahj al-Balāghah.⁴

Shī'ite biographers ancient and modern are of the opinion that Nahj al-Balāghah is genuine and that there

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1. Fu'ād al-Sayyid, Fihrist al-Makhtūṭāt al-Musawwarah, Cairo, 1954, Vol. I, p. 524.
 2. Ibn Kh. Vol. II, pp. 256-257.
 3. al-Wāfi, Vol. II, p. 375.
 4. Ibn Taymiyyah, Manhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah, 1st edn. Cairo, 1322/1902, Vol. IV, p. 24; see p. 159.

is no doubt about it. They base their assumption on the grounds that a great deal of its content could be found in Arabic sources compiled before al-Raḍī's birth. In addition, there are about seventy commentaries on it, written throughout about nine centuries and none of those commentators directed any suspicion at the authenticity of Nahj al-Balāghah. Furthermore, in the Shī'ites' view there is no reason to suspect al-Raḍī's account and accuse him of forgery.¹

Some orientalist and modern Arab scholars who discussed the question of the Nahj thought that it was compiled by al-Murtadā or by both al-Raḍī and his brother, and attributed to 'Alī.² However, there are no grounds for forming the opinion that the Nahj was written or collected by al-Murtadā. In addition, there is no reason to suppose that he participated with his brother al-Raḍī in collecting the Imām 'Alī's sayings, letters and sermons. Al-Raḍī himself states that he collected the materials and arranged them. He asserted this in two of his books which were compiled before the Nahj. The first was Talkhīs al-bayān and the second al-Majāzāt.³ Furthermore, in his

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1. al-Khawānsārī, op. cit., p. 577; al-Qummī, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 525; al-Amīnī, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 186-196.
 2. E. I. art. al-Murtadā; see H. A. R. Gibb, Arabic Literature, Oxford, 1963, 2nd edn. p. 98; C. Brockelmann, Geshichte der Arabischen Litteratur, suppl. I, Leiden 1937, p. 132; see also S. Khulūsy, Shī'ism and its influence on the Arabic literature, Ph. D. thesis, University of London, 1947, pp. 83-84.
 3. Majāzāt, pp. 39-40, 67; Talkhīs, p. 178.

introduction to the Nahj he confirmed that he came across 'Alī's sayings and sermons when he was compiling his first book Khasā'is al-ʿImmah. He carried on his work until 400/1009 in which year he completed it.¹ However, al-Radī tells us that he did not scrutinise and test his materials cautiously and carefully. He accepted different versions and accounts of 'Alī's sayings without further investigation or checking.² In addition, he left some unwritten pages at the end of every chapter of his script. Perhaps these pages were filled with additional and spurious texts. It is possible that the original work suffered alteration and expansion later on. Thus it is reasonable to suspect some sections of the whole work. However, there is no convincing reason to undermine the authenticity of the book as a whole.

16. His Diwān.³

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1. Nahj al-Balāghah, ed. Abū al-Fadl, Vol. I, see the intro. pp. 4, 5; see also Nahj with commentary by Muḥammad ʿAbduh, Cairo, n.d., Vol. III, p. 267.
 2. See Nahj with Muḥammad ʿAbduh's commentary, Vol. III, p. 267.
 3. Historical observations will be given on al-Radī's Diwān in Chapter V, see below.

PART II

AL-RADĪ'S POETRY

CHAPTER V

HISTORICAL OBSERVATIONS

ON

AL-RADĪ'S DĪWĀN

Al-Raḍī left behind a bulky Diwān containing almost 16,000 verses on different poetical themes. Arab biographers during the many centuries after al-Raḍī's death, often referred to this poetical collection describing its size and content.¹ Al-Raḍī himself was the first to collect his poems and arrange them in a Diwān. Unfortunately, the original version has not come to us. It is difficult therefore to form a clear idea about the exact order which was followed by the poet in preparing his collection. However, in his lifetime it seems that his Diwān was in great demand. Al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād (d. 385/995) had a copy of it.² While in Egypt, Taqiyyah b. Sayf al-Dawlah took an interest in Al-Raḍī's poetry and requested a copy of it. His friend Abū Bakr b. Shāhawayh asked the poet to send him a part of his poetry as al-Raḍī records in one of his odes.³ From this information it is clear that this Diwān took its form during al-Raḍī's life and many copies were available. His brother al-Murtaḍā indicates that he became acquainted with this Diwān after the death of al-Raḍī. He confirms that he looked over it and asserted that the version was written by the poet himself. He selected the poetical lines in which al-Raḍī described al-Tayf, the phantom of the beloved which, we are told, appears to a poet at night.

1. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 120; Ibn Shahrāshūb, op. cit., p. 51; al-Wāfi, Vol. II, p. 374; al-Yāfi'ī, Mir'āt al-Jinān, Beirut, 1970, Vol. III, p. 19.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 220.

3. Ibid., p. 502.

As we have already said, it is difficult to form a clear idea about the first arrangement of al-Raḍī's poetical collection, made during his lifetime. However, al-Murtadā tells us that he found one of al-Raḍī's odes rhymed with bā' in the second volume of this Diwān. This indicates that the alphabetical order was not applied by al-Raḍī. So it is possible that the odes were arranged according to their dates or themes.¹

After al-Raḍī's death "different persons" as Ibn Khallikān states "have essayed to collect the poetical works of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, but the best edition is that of Abū Ḥakīm al-Khabrī (d. 470/1077)."² This copyist was educated and reliable in his account. He specialised in transcription and his writing was accurate and fine.³ However, many manuscripts of al-Raḍī's Diwān have come down to us, some of them versions of Abū Ḥakīm's copy. In one of these manuscripts which is still extant the copyist indicates that he copied his version from a transcript which was first arranged according to poetical themes. He rearranged them alphabetically.⁴ In addition, the biographer Aghā Bozork al-Tehrānī, who specialised in Shī'ite works in the course of Islamic history, acquainted himself with three handwritten copies of al-Raḍī's Diwān, one of which was written in 515/1121. The odes were

1. I. 'Abbās, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, p. 64.

2. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 120.

3. al-Qiftī, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 98; see Yāqūt, Vol. IV, p. 285.

4. al-Raḍī, Diwān, B. M. MS., no. Add 19410; see Bibl. Nat. MS. no. 6440, fol. 122.

arranged according to their themes and the poems of each theme were disposed alphabetically.¹ A similar arrangement was adopted in a version which was a copy of Abū Ḥakīm's original version. On the first page, it was stated that "this is the third volume of al-Raḍī's poetry arranged according to the themes and alphabetically. It was made by Abū Ḥakīm al-Khabrī."²

It is very likely that Abū Ḥakīm's arrangement of al-Raḍī's odes was followed by many copyists, and even those who applied the alphabetical order gave attention to the themes' disposition and maintained it. Abū Ḥakīm arranged the odes according to their themes as follows:

1. The first section contains eulogy.
2. The second comprises al-Raḍī's self-pride poetry (Fakhr) and other poems relating to complaint of the vicissitudes of fate. (shakwā).
3. The third part is called the section of elegy.
4. The fourth includes his love poetry and his odes in which he described greyness (al-Shayb) and the phantom (al-Tayf).
5. The fifth is of various other themes and short poetical pieces (maqṭū'āt).

In the printed versions of al-Raḍī's Dīwān, the odes are arranged alphabetically, but some signs of the original order made by Abū Ḥakīm and those who followed him can be

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1. Aghā Bozork. op. cit., Vol. IX, p. 372.
 2. al-Raḍī, Dīwān, B. M. MS., no. Add 19410, see also Bibl. Nat. MS., no. 6440, fol. 1-2.

seen. In addition, the dates of these odes were, to some extent, observed in this disposition.

A close examination of the printed versions and the manuscripts at present available shows us that the poet looked over his poetical collection and revised many of the odes which were written in the early stages of his life. In addition, he dropped some of his verses. He sometimes omitted a whole ode except only the opening line. In others he crossed out large sections of some of his odes with which he had become dissatisfied.¹

Concerning this point Abū Ḥakīm's version, which became a reliable source to many copyists, is of great importance. He made his own commentary on some of al-Radī's odes giving interesting detail concerning the occasion for which they were written. What he collected from al-Radī's draft papers supplies us with information about the poet's development in his verse, and his early artistic shortcomings. He preserved for us what al-Radī had tried to discard from his final copy.²

As for the authenticity of al-Radī's Diwān as a whole, there is no doubt about it and no one has suspected any section or any ode of it, save one which was doubted by some copyists. This suspect ode is a dirge in which the poet lamented al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom. It exists in two

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 89, Vol. II, pp. 586, 717, see B. M. MSS no. 25750, 19410.

2. al-Radī, Diwān, Bibl. Nat. MS no. 6440, fols. 19, 110, 123, 140; see also 'Abbās, al-Sharīf al-Radī, p. 65.

manuscripts at present extant, but the explanatory proface suggests that there is doubt about it on the grounds that it was not found in the original version and its style is simple and gentle. However, there is an indication that it was the last poem to be written by the poet.¹

The following manuscripts of al-Raḍī's Dīwān have been consulted, in writing the present thesis:

1. The first volume of al-Raḍī's Dīwān exists in Paris (Bibl. Nat. no. 6440). This copy was written at Aleppo in 584/1188, but the name of the copyist was entirely effaced. It has 275 folios and the odes are arranged according to their themes and each theme is disposed alphabetically. This version was enriched by linguistic comments. It is probable that the copyist drew on Abū al-Hakīm's version.
2. Al-Raḍī's Dīwān which is in Istanbul (Köprülü no. 1242). This copy contains the complete Dīwān with the additional poetical pieces and individual lines which were found after al-Raḍī's death. The folios of this copy number 225. It was written by Abū Mansūr Abū al-Barakāt al-Madā'inī in 668/1269.
3. The third part of al-Raḍī's Dīwān (British Museum no. 19410). This copy was made according to Abū Hakīm's version. It was written by Yāqūt al-Musta'ṣimī in 1018/1610. It contains 132 folios.
4. The fourth manuscript is (British Museum no. Add.

1. al-Raḍī, Dīwān, Bibl. Nat. MS fol. 19; see also Köprülü MS no. 1242; see D. R. Vol. I, p. 33.

25750). This copy depended on an old version of al-Raḍī's Diwān whose odes were arranged according to themes as the copyist tells us. He rearranged them alphabetically. It contains 287 folios comprising the whole Diwān. It was written in 1046/1636.

5. The fifth is (Cambridge MS no. OR. 212 (a)). This copy contains 474 folios comprising the whole Diwān. It was written by Muḥammad 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Baḥrānī in 1090/1679. The odes are arranged alphabetically.

The Diwān has been published many times, the first occasion being in 1306/1888. This edition contains 549 pages filled with misprints and mis-spellings. In addition, many odes were printed incomplete.¹ The second edition was made in Beirut 1307-1310/1889-1892, in two volumes containing 986 pages. This version was edited with a commentary by Muḥammad Salīm al-Labābīdī. It was reprinted in Tehran in 1964 with a vast introduction on al-Raḍī's life written by 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Hillī.² There are two other editions: the first was published in Beirut in 1961 in two volumes and the second has not yet been completed in Cairo. The first volume of this edition was edited by Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd but he did not mention on which manuscripts or published copies he depended.

However, there is no difference between these three editions.

1. al-Raḍī, Diwān, Bombay (1306/1888), pp. 126, 135, 136.

2. al-Raḍī, Diwān, published by Dār al-Bayān in Tehran, 1964. In this study when we use the abbreviation D. R. we refer to this edition.

A close examination and comparative test of these manuscripts at present available and the published Diwān reveals to us that there is no important difference between them. The organisation of the odes seems to have almost the same alphabetical order and the explanatory prefaces are, to some extent, similar with very slight alteration. However, there are a few historical errors in the manuscripts and the published Diwān. Fortunately, some of al-Radī's odes which are undated in the printed version are furnished with dates in the manuscripts.¹ In addition the handwritten copies can be used to correct the dates suggested in the published edition. One of al-Radī's odes, for instance, was dated 396/1005. It was written to console the Caliph al-Ta'i', who had died before the above-mentioned date, on the occasion of his son's death. One of our manuscripts suggests 376/986 as the year, and this seems to be the most likely.² However, care must be taken in accepting all dates suggested by manuscripts without examination owing to the mis-spellings which occurred in them. The published Diwān on which we depend in this study seems to be relatively more accurate on this point. The handwritten versions give no additional text. Nevertheless, they attest the authenticity of the published Diwān and make it likely that this version forms

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1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 48. Compare with B. M. MS add 25750. See also D. R. Vol. I, p. 268, and MS fol. 87.
 2. al-Radī, Diwān, Vol. I, p. 14. See MS. B. M. no. 19410, p. 82.

the complete poetical collection of al-Radī's poetry.¹

Al-Radī's Diwān with the explanatory preludes of its odes is of great importance. His poetry is a vivid record of his relationships - both private and public - and of his attitudes towards rulers and political events. His odes - in different degrees - illustrate his ambition and aspiration, throwing light on his frustration, advance and retreat on the political scene. From a historical point of view, the Diwān is a helpful supplement to any study concerning the political condition of Baghdad and Iraq in the Būwayhid period. He was one of the eye-witnesses who suffered from its ups and downs, and enjoyed its prosperous days. As for his family and its leading rôle in society, the poet took pains to record its deeds and participation in this era.

Although he viewed and analysed events and political developments from his own standpoint and according to his own interest, and even tried to distort the image of the Būwayhid's rulers, his poetical collection is still, to some extent, a useful help to political accounts of this period.

As for the Diwān's contents, it consists of al-Radī's poetry from the early stages of his poetical composition 369/979 till 404/1013. The outcome is about 391 odes

1. It is worth noting that Ihsān 'Abbās in his study on al-Radī examined two other manuscripts which exist in Muḥammad Shākir's private library. He concluded that there is no difference between these manuscripts and the published Diwān. See his work, al-Sharīf al-Radī, p. 65.

divided according to their themes as follows: Eulogy 100, self-pride 83, Elegy 80, love-poetry 43, friendly poetical correspondence 40, Shi'ite odes 5 and various other themes 40. In addition, there are almost 280 small poetical pieces and individual lines relating to the above-mentioned themes. Some of them are the remains of many complete odes which were deleted by the poet himself when he looked over his poetry and revised it.

The above simple statistics show us that eulogy occupies a large part in his Diwān. Secondly, self-pride received full attention and formed an independent theme in al-Radī's poetical collection. This is natural to a poet who had boundless aspirations. Elegy is another important part of the Diwān: through this theme the poet expressed his loyalty and affection to his friends and illustrated his wide acquaintance. As for his Shi'ite odes, they are few. However, al-Radī used to refer to Shi'ism and the 'Alid family's tragedy and its historical record in his self-praise poetry and poems on other themes. As we shall see later, his descent from the Prophet's house forms a cornerstone for his self-pride. Concerning his love-poetry, al-Radī, like other Arab poets, opened many of his odes with the traditional erotic introduction. In addition, he composed 43 odes which were devoted to the love theme, and a large section of them is known as al-Hijāziyyāt, which we shall discuss later at some length.

CHAPTER VI

AL-RADĪ'S EULOGY

And this is my praise, in it I seek
no fortune. Glory forbade
me to make a living out of eulogy.

فَهَذَا شَأْنِي لَا أُرِيدُ بِهِ الْفَتْحُ
أَيُّ الْمَجْدِ لِي أَنَا أَجْعَلُ الْمَدْحَ مَكْبِي

al-Radī

1 - General Remarks

Bulogy is one of the important ancient themes in Arabic poetry. Poets began composing it as early as the Jāhilite period. They first were recognised as defenders of the honour of their tribes and their foremost duty was to celebrate their people's glorious deeds and fame. Meanwhile, many of them began to praise certain personalities and gain money in return. Arab critics found an excuse for the famous Jāhilite poet Zuhayr praising the great and accepting rewards. They alleged that he never praised men but as they deserved and his effort to gain money through his panegyrical odes was limited.¹ Al-Nābighah al-Dhubyānī and al-A^ʿshā al-Kabīr were considered the first of the Jāhilite poets to sell their praises and lower their standards by flattering kings and asking their rewards. Al-Nābighah was said to have reaped rich prizes for his praises. As for al-A^ʿshā, he was sharply rebuked by Arab critics because he represented a professional poet roaming from place to place singing the praises of those who rewarded him.²

During the Orthodox Caliphate poetry in general suffered strict limitations when Islam reacted unfavourably to it, but this era was not long enough to affect it seriously. By the advent of the Umayyads poetry in general

1. ʿUmdah, Vol. I. pp. 49-50; see also Ibn Qutaybah. al-Shiʿr wa al-Shuʿarāʾ, ed. Muhammad Shākir, Cairo, 1944, Vol. I. p. 87.

2. ʿUmdah, Vol. I. p. 49.

and eulogy and satire in particular were given a free rein and the poets who followed al-Nābighah and al-ʿAʿshā in their profession were innumerable. The three famous poets al-Parazdaq, Jarīr and al-Akhtal were at the head of the professional encomiasts who not only sold their praises but were also ready to revile anyone who would not pay for their services.¹ Poets who refrained from lauding the great became, to some extent, exceptional. Among them were ʿUmar b. Abī Rabiʿah and Jamīl Buthaynah who composed nothing but love poetry.² In addition, there were a few committed poets who adhered to political or religious sects and refused to praise rulers. The Khārijite poets were a case in point.³

Poets in the ʿAbbāsīd period extensively attached themselves to the Caliph's palace and to other rulers. Their poetical skill was at the disposal of those who paid well. Consequently, eulogy became the most lucrative type of poetry and it brought poets nearer to those who had power and wealth. Caliphs, princes and other rulers made full use of the professional poets' talents and rewarded them lavishly. Such was the condition that it was natural that eulogy occupied a large section in any Diwān of this period. Few poets were able to stand firm

1. Nicholson, op. cit., p. 240; Dayf, al-Tatawwur wa al-Tajdīd fī al-Shiʿr al-Umawī, 3rd edn. Cairo 1965, pp. 120, 126.

2. ʿUmdah, Vol. I, pp. 50-52.

3. Ihsān ʿAbbas, Shiʿr al-Khawārij, Beirut 1963, intro. p. 16.

against this trend. Among them were 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mu'tazz in the third Islamic century (d. 296/908) and the Hamdānīd prince Abū Firās al-Hamdānī (d. 357/998).¹ In al-Radī's time Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arri refused to write poetry professionally and eventually confined himself in solitude.² Al-Radī belongs to the same class.

In the Diwān of al-Radī, like those of other Arab poets, eulogy occupies a large section. Nevertheless, he has his own opinion concerning poetical practice as a profession. He refused to regard himself as a professional poet as his ancestors and predecessors did. He stated this fact repeatedly when he addressed those whom he praised. He says:

This is my praise, in it I seek no fortune
glory forbade me to make a living out of
eulogy.

فَذَا ثَنَائِي لِمَا أُرِيدُ بِهِ الثَنَى
أَبِي الْمَجْدِ لِي أَنْ أَجْعَلَ الْمَدْحَ مَكْبِي³

In this respect al-Radī lived up to his principles and seemed to be true to his ambition as a man aspiring to the caliphate. He was reluctant to accept the loss of his political and religious privilege and status.⁴ In addition, the poet regarded his poetry as a means to an end, making use of it in his political life as a weapon

1. 'Umar Farrūkh, Abū Firās Fāris Banī Hamdān, 1st edn. Beirut 1954, pp. 71, 91.

2. Margoliouth, Letters, p. XXVII.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 159.

4. D. R. Vol. II, p. 765.

to achieve his ultimate goal. He says:

To compose poetry only as a means towards a hope.
The time of its fulfillment is drawing near.

وما تولى الا شطار الذي ذريعة

الى امل قد آن تود جنبيه 1

Al-Radī seems to be anxious and unhappy that poetry is a kind of offense from a religious point of view. It is very likely that he was worried about the Qur'ān's statement in which poets were denounced as liars inspired by the devil.² He promised that he would give up composing poetry if he obtained his goal. He says:

Should God will that I shall attain my aspiration,
I would surely pledge myself to abandon verse
and it's sin.

رايتني اذا ما بلغ الله مني

فكنت له كقول التريص وهو به 3

Al-Radī, as we have already seen, refrained from reciting his praise in the presence of caliphs and princes. In addition, he blamed himself because he felt that he was like other poets, used to saying that which he would not do.⁴ However, the poet was, to some extent,

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 108.

2. In the Qur'ān the Ayah runs as follows: "And the poets -- the perverse follow them; hast thou not seen how they wander in every valley and how they say that which they do not?", see Arberry, The Koran Interpreted, London 1955, Vol. II, p. 75.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 108.

4. D. R. Vol. II, p. 646.

consistent with the principles he set himself in dealing with poetry. He made full use of his panegyrical odes as a means to an end. He praised caliphs, princes and other rulers but refused to accept money in return.

As for al-Radī's eulogy and its artistic development in regard to form and content, two stages can be discerned. The first could be termed the stage of imitation and the second the stage of maturity. It is difficult to draw a clear-cut line between these two stages, which sometimes appear to overlap. However, it is safe to assume that the first ten years of al-Radī's poetical career is the span of his first stage. It began in the year 369/979.

2 - The stage of Imitation

The first difficulty in tracing the course of al-Radī's poetical evolution is the fact that he revised his poetry. In addition, he dropped some of his early odes which may have escaped those who collected his verses after his death. However, what remained of the poetry which was written in his early life is the only basic source we have to study and judge the early poetical period of our poet. Al-Tha'ālibī in his Yatīmah states that al-Radī borrowed his poetical meanings from al-Buḥturī, Ibn al-Rūmī and al-Mutanabbī.¹ However, it is likely that the poet drew on Jāhilite and early Islamic poetry in his eulogy and other themes. He himself likened

1. Yatīmah, Vol. III, pp. 138-153.

his skill to that of the Jāhilite poet Zuhayr.¹ In addition, there are points of similarity between al-Radī and Abū Firās al-Hamdānī's poetry.² As for Abū Tammām's poetry its artistic impact on al-Radī is apparent.

Abū Tammām was rebuked by Arab critics because he had a keen interest in complicated and far-fetched metaphors. He was criticised by them with regard to the extensive use of al-Jinās (assonance), al-tibāq (antithesis), and al-muqābalah (comparison). In addition, the poet fully showed off his historical erudition and overloaded his poetry with names, events and various philosophical terms.³ Although Abū Tammām succeeded, to some extent, in recasting his historical and philosophical terms in a poetic form shrouded with embroidery, conservative critics blamed him on the grounds that he broke with poetical conventions. Abū Tammām, in the Arab critics' view, sacrificed the splendour and radiance of his poems and meanings in his anxiety to employ tibāq and other metaphorical figures which he used in his poems.⁴ This characteristic of Abū Tammām's poetry finds its parallel in the early stages of al-Radī's eulogy. His odes abound with Jinās and tibāq. In addition, remote and complicated metaphors

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 818.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 49; see Abū Firās, Dīwān, ed. Sāmī al-Dahhān, Beirut 1944, Vol. II, pp. 22-25.

3. Dayf, al-Fann, p. 359.

4. G. E. Von Grunebaum, A Tenth Century Document of Arabic Literary Theory and Criticism, Chicago 1950, p. 51. See also al-Amidī, op. cit., p. 61.

made their appearance. In one of his odes which was written when he was about eleven years old, he used Jinās and Tibāq twenty five times. In one line of this ode he squeezed six of these ornamental forms.¹ In another ode which was written in 375/985 when the poet was about sixteen years old, he seems to be still obsessed with poetic embellishment. He used Tibāq and Jinās twenty seven times in this ode and overloaded it with many complicated and tasteless metaphors.² In general, his odes prove that he failed to come up to Abū Tammām's level in creating remote metaphorical figures. He borrowed, for instance, one of Abū Tammām's metaphors which was frequently criticised by Arab critics. Abū Tammām's figure of speech runs as follows:

Do not give me to drink the water of blame
for I am an ardent lover and have tried to
sweeten the water of my weeping.

لا تقي ماء المذم ذائبي
حب قد استغيت ماء بكائي 3

When al-Radī borrowed the application of this metaphor he put it as follows:

In your face the water of glory is diluted
when you are deposed,
and the face of the one who has been appointed
is dull.

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 236-240.

2. Ibid., pp. 216-220.

3. D. Tm. Vol. I, p. 25; see al-Āmidī, op. cit., p. 119.

بوجهك ماء الفّر في الفّر زائب
 ووجه الذي وليّ من الماء جامد¹

It is clear that al-Radī filled the above-mentioned line with Jinās and Tibāq. The poet used once again the same metaphorical figure. He says:

I am in my time amongst people,
 the nature of whose friendship is a water of hatred.

وإني في زماي من رجال
 مزاج ودادهم ماء التقالي²

Another point of similarity between Abū Tammām's poetry and al-Radī's is the use of historical references in their composition. This artistic characteristic made its appearance early in al-Radī's panegyrical odes and in other themes as well. It became a firmly established aspect of his poetry in his stage of maturity. Although al-Radī failed to make use of his historical erudition artistically as Abū Tammām did, he succeeded in using these historical references to support the arguments which he tried to put forward.³

The second poetical source from which al-Radī borrowed his meanings, and to some extent, on which some of his odes were modelled, is al-Buhturī's poetry. Although the influence of this poet is less important

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 237.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 694.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 238, Vol. II, p. 634, 776.

and effective than that of Abū Tammām, the points of similarity can be traced between them in regard to the poetical structure of both poets and the pleasant and harmonious rhythm which characterised their odes.¹ Al-Radī, for instance, took one of al-Buhturī's meanings and tried to improve upon it. Al-Buhturī says:

And if the minbar should desire to
undertake a task beyond its power;
it would come to you of its own accord. 2

ولو أن منبراً تَطَلَّفَ غَدَاً
في ربيعٍ لعلَّ إليه المنبرُ 3

It is clear that al-Buhturī's line is loaded with exaggeration. Al-Radī took it and composed another unnatural and extravagant line. He says:

When they mentioned him in the presence of the
caliph, pulpits looked forward towards him.

إذا ذكروه للحفاة لم تنزل
تطلع من شوق رقاب المنابر 4

The most important poetical source from which al-Radī drew his inspiration was al-Mutanabbī's poetry. A close examination of their Diwāns reveals to us how closely al-Radī followed al-Mutanabbī's model and how he drew upon his meanings and imitated his poetical method.

1. Yatīmah, Vol. III, p. 153; I. 'Abbās, al-Sharīf al-Radī, pp. 191-192; see also Mārūn 'Abbūd, al-Ru'ūs, 2nd edn. Beirut 1959, p. 259.

2. Von Grunebaum, A Tenth Century Document, p. 15.

3. D. B. Vol. I, p. 212.

4. D. R. Vol. I, p. 346.

The introductory lines which al-Mutanabbī used were imitated by our poet. When al-Radī modelled his odes on those of al-Mutanabbī he applied the same metres and rhyme-letter as well.¹ In addition, al-Mutanabbī's spirit with its dark outlook and his sharp comments on people, rulers and life in general infiltrated al-Radī's poetry. He found much in common with this leading poet.

Al-Radī, in his imitation of al-Mutanabbī, went to the length of paraphrasing the meanings of his favourite poet and many times repeated them. In one of al-Radī's odes which was written in his early life he borrowed the idea of one of al-Mutanabbī's opening lines and used it with slight alteration. Al-Mutanabbī says:

Judgement comes before the courage
of the courageous; the former is first, and the
latter in second place;
So when they are combined in a haughty spirit,
the spirit reaches every place of elevation. 2

الرأي قبل شجاعة الشبان
هو أول دهي المحن الثاني
فإذا هما اجتمعا لنفي مرة
بلغت من العلياء كل مكان 3

Al-Radī's two lines are as follows:

These lances would have been sticks of Dāl
and Salam, but for the thrust of judgement
and resolution; verily lean lances and pens
are means to sublimity for Arab and non-Arab kings.

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1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 610; D. M. Vol. III, p. 199; see also D. R. Vol. I, p. 207 and D. M. Vol. II, p. 167.
 2. The two lines were quoted from Arberry, Poems of al-Mutanabbī, p. 82.
 3. D. M. Vol. IV, p. 389.

لهذي الرماح عصي الفضل والقيم
لولا طائفة الأعداء والجسم
إن الذوابل والاقلام أرسية
إلى السلاسل للوك القرب والعجم¹

In al-Radī's odes in which he praised al-Ṣahib b. 'Abbād in 375/985 many of its meanings can be traced back to one or other of al-Mutanabbī's odes.² The following line may illustrate the clear-cut points of similarity between them. Al-Radī says:

From your closeness I hope for an action with which to infuriate the envious collectively and individually.

وإني لأرجو من جوارك فطة
اغبط بها الحاد فني وموهدا³

He repeated the same meaning in another ode. He says:

Rid me of the greed of enemies with a mighty blow.
For there is no peace without prolonged fighting.

أزل طمع الأعداء عني بفتكة
فد بلم أن يهول قتال⁴

It is clear that al-Radī looked at al-Mutanabbī's meaning which runs as follows:

End for me the envy of the envious by humbling them, for it was yourself who made them envious of me. 5

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 816.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 216-220, compare with D. M. Vol. II, pp. 3-18.

3. D.R. Vol. I, p. 219.

4. D. R. Vol. II, p. 609.

5. Arberry, Poems of al-Mutanabbī, p. 82.

أَزَلَّ حَمْدَ الْحَادِ عَنِّي بَلْبَتَهُمْ فَا نَتِ الَّذِي صَبَّرْتُمْ لِي حَمْدًا

Al-Mutanabbī used to express his love for his praised prince Sayf al-Dawlah. The poet in his odes reveals his affection for his patron as the lover yearns for his beloved. In al-Tha'ālibī's view, al-Mutanabbī distinguished his panegyrical odes by addressing his praised kings as though they were his beloved.¹ In one of al-Mutanabbī's odes he addresses Sayf al-Dawlah as follows:

Why do I conceal a love that has wasted
my frame, when all the nations make claim to
love Sayf al-Dawlah? 2

مَا لِي أَلْتُمُ حُبًّا قَدْ بَرَأَ جَدِّي
وَتَدَّعِي حُبَّ سَيْفِ الدَّوْلَةِ الْأُمِّ 3

This expression of allegiance took place in al-Raḍī's early panegyrical composition and lasted to the stage of maturity when it became an established aspect of his eulogy.⁴ In one of his odes in which al-Raḍī praised the Caliph al-Tā'i' in the manner of al-Mutanabbī he expressed his love of the Caliph as follows:

Why am I in love with someone
I cannot behold?
Someone whom I have no means to fulfil
the hope of meeting.

مَا لِي أَحِبُّ حَبِيبًا لَا أَسَاهِدُهُ
وَلَا رَجَائِي إِلَى لِقَائِهِ مَمْدُودٌ 5

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1. Yatimah, Vol. I, p. 207.
 2. Arberry, Poems of al-Mutanabbī, p. 70.
 3. D. M. Vol. IV, p. 105; see also Vol. I, pp. 9, 320. Vol. III, p. 160.
 4. D. R. Vol. I, p. 438, Vol. II, p. 602, 605, 781.
 5. D. R. Vol. I, p. 210.

In another ode al-Radī addresses the same caliph as if he were his beloved. He says:

A look from you would let the sap
flow in my body, spreading out my shade,
causing green grass to grow.

نَهْرَةٌ مِنْكَ تَرْسِلُ الْمَاءَ فِي عُرِّي
وَيَرْطِي ظِلِّي رَنْبَتُ تَرْبِي¹

It is worthwhile to analyse the artistic structure and the internal harmony of al-Radī's odes in the early stages of his poetical development. We have three panegyrical odes among others written in this period. In one of them which was supposed to have been composed in 371/981 al-Radī dropped the amatory preface (nasīb) with which Arab poets used to open their panegyrical odes. He began his opening lines by self-praise which occupied twenty four lines out of seventy eight, then he proceeded to praise his father and attack his political enemies, then he came back to praise his father to the end of his ode.² In another ode in which the poet praised al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād in 375/985, he opened his ode by prolonged introduction of self-praise which consists of eighteen lines. He proceeded from it to praise al-Ṣāhib then inserted a traditional poetical part in regard to his imaginary journey to his praised person. Traditionally, this part was supposed to be in the introduction from which the poet should proceed to deal with his other major subjects. However, al-Radī returned to praise his

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 39.

2. Ibid., pp. 236-240.

patron and closed his ode with lines relating to his wisdom.¹ In general, al-Raḍī's odes in the early stage were characterised by a lack of internal unity. Their rambling and discursive style is due in part to their length. Nevertheless, the poet began to find his own poetical approach and became gradually less dependent on his poetical sources which have already been mentioned. He outgrew some of his poetical shortcomings with regard to the use of metaphors and borrowed meanings from other poets. Meanwhile the stamp of al-Mutanabbī's poetry maintained its hold on al-Raḍī's panegyrical odes and other themes as well.

As for the poetical introduction of al-Raḍī's odes in this period he usually preferred to open his odes by expressing his self-pride.² The amatory preface (nasīb) was used as an introduction to many of his odes as well. However, it is surprising that the poet in his youth was fond of speaking on gray hair (al-Shayb) and describing it. It seems that he was anxious about its early appearance. This point became a major subject of the poetical preface to many of his odes.³ It was limited later when al-Raḍī came to use various sorts of poetical introduction. It is probable that grayness (al-Shayb) spread early in al-Raḍī's hair. He seems to be anxious about it that time, then he became reconciled to it.

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 216-220.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 64, 207, 216, Vol. II, p. 636.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 48, 80, 99, Vol. II, p. 607, 631.

3 - The Stage of Maturity

To deal with al-Raḍī's panegyrical odes of this stage, it is convenient to examine and analyse their content and then to proceed to their artistic form. First of all, it must be borne in mind that the poet in developing his panegyrical odes did not make any radical changes. Like other poets, he failed to free himself from the rigidity of poetical conventions. Nevertheless, he treated the ancient models with regard to content and form skilfully, preserving the old style with some modernisation and variation.

The list of persons on whom the poet lavished his praises includes two 'Abbāsid caliphs: al-Ṭā'ī' and al-Qādir, and three Būwayhid princes: Sharaf al-Dawlah, Bahā' al-Dawlah and his son. He praised many famous political figures of his time. Moreover, his father during his life time received almost forty panegyrical odes. In the manner of other traditional poets, al-Raḍī endowed his praised personalities with traditional virtues which were - and still are - adored by the Arabs. The list of these qualities is too long to be enumerated in full. It includes courage, bravery, decency, generosity, lavish hospitality, protection of the weak and so on. Like others, al-Raḍī attributed these unlimited values to anyone he praised, with slight alteration. Consequently his portrait of those he praised lacks individuality and to some extent is unconvincing and unrealistic. The weak and dispirited Caliph al-Ṭā'ī', for instance, seems to be

the defender of Islam, merciful, steadfast and courageous, as al-Raḍī portrays him in his panegyrical odes.¹ Al-Raḍī's friend, Bahā al-Dawlah who was described as a greatly parsimonious and tyrannical ruler, has an illustrious picture in al-Raḍī's praises.² Moreover, the Būwayhid period with its instability, anarchy and serious economic conditions was introduced in al-Raḍī's panegyric as a time of peace and prosperity. He says:

O, sons of Būwayh; you are
the rains and the people the fields
In the nights there is nothing but you
who gladden the eyes.
Had it not been for you, no life
would have remained
in the branch of hope.

أَلْ بَوَيْهٍ أَنْتُمْ الدَّمْعُ طَارَ النَّاسُ الْخَضِرُ
مَا فِي اللَّيَالِي غَيْرُكُمْ شَيْءٌ بِهِ الْعَيْنُ تُورِ
لَوْلَاكُمْ لَمْ يَبْقَ نَبِي عَوْدَ الرَّجَاءِ مُنْقَضُ

3

It is ironical that the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Qādir who suffered a great deal of encroachment at the hand of the Būwayhid rulers and lost his legitimate authority over the Islamic lands at that time, was described by the poet as follows:

O, sons of 'Abbās, the honour of the
caliphate this day was renewed.
This one's hands have exalted its lofty fabric,
the other it was who laid the foundations.

1. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 762, 779, 931, 983.

2. Ibid., p. 731, 783, among others.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 320.

This peak has been kept in time's store
from that firm crag. 1

شرف الخلافة يا بني القباسي اليوم جددته أبو القباسي

هذا الذي رخصت يداه بناءً ما لا حالي وذاك موصد الآس
والطرد بقاء الزمان زهيدة من ذلك الجبل العظيم الراسي²

In the light of what we have already mentioned and cited, al-Radī's panegyrical odes are to some extent misleading in their information and their historical value must be treated cautiously. Al-Radī, for instance, mentioned a certain rebellious movement which took place in Bahā' al-Dawlah's time. It emerged in al-Basrah and al-Ahwāz under the leadership of Abū al-'Abbās b. Wāsil who occupied a large amount of territory of southern Iraq and brought trouble to Bahā' al-Dawlah. He defeated many expeditions sent by the Būwayhid ruler till the rebellious leader was captured by a trap laid by Bahā' al-Dawlah's supporters.³ Yet in al-Radī's panegyrical odes Ibn Wāsil was timid, ungrateful and treacherous. The defeat of Bahā' al-Dawlah's armies was portrayed as a great victory which was celebrated by al-Radī in many odes.⁴

Broadly speaking, the poet distinguished himself in his praise from other professional poets by two characteristics. First of all, al-Radī utilised his panegyrical odes to serve his aim. Consequently, the political function

1. Dhayl, p. 217, the lines were slightly modified.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 417.

3. Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 236; Ath. Vol. VII, p. 226.

4. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 40, 48-51, Vol. II, p. 618, 951.

and implication of these odes is clear. It gave them vitality and made them interesting despite their contradiction with historical sources and also their over-estimation of persons and events. Moreover, his praises in general help us to examine his political career and his father's political life. In addition, his occasional congratulatory poems and others which were addressed as solace to those who had lost positions or suffered from rulers' disfavours give us an account of those outstanding figures on the political scene at that time. His odes throw light on their ups and downs, their rôles and activity. The other distinguishing aspect of al-Radī's praises is that unlike the majority of Arab poets at least in his time, al-Radī's arrogant and strong personality made itself felt in his panegyrical odes. Consequently, he succeeded in establishing his theme of self-praise as an important part of his panegyric. In this respect there are points of similarity between him and al-Mutanabbī, but al-Radī outdid al-Mutanabbī and asserted his self-praise to the extent of challenging and annoying caliphs and others. He used to declare himself on equal terms with the two caliphs he praised.¹ In one of his odes in which he praised the Caliph al-Qādir he says:

I crave indulgence, Commander of the
Faithful!
We are not borne on different branches of
the tree of glory!
On whatever day we may vaunt our
honours, no difference shall appear between us:

1. D. R. Vol. II. p. 544, 927.

We are both firmly rooted in our illustrious rank.

The caliphate alone makes a distinction between us;

You wear the noble collar, I do not. 1

عظماً أمير المؤمنين فإنا في درجته الطيار لا نفرق
ما بيننا يوم القمار تفادت أبداً علانا في الماي سرق
الداخذنة صيرتك فإني أنا عاصن من رانت طوق 2

It is surprising that al-Radī used the same manner of address when he praised his maternal uncle who became annoyed and upset by al-Radī's hint of challenge to his own status. The poet found himself compelled to apologise for the implication of his ode.³ However, al-Radī went to the length of challenging his father when he praised him. He says:

There is no difference between us in the day of reward save that he struck the path in front of me.

وما بيننا يوم الجزاء تفادت
سوى أنه خاض الطريق أماً 4

Al-Radī's excessive self-praise was toned down in all the odes devoted to his patron Bahā' al-Dawlah. The poet seems to be tactful and careful in this respect from the political point of view, but he is far away from those ideal principles which he laid down and to which he tried

1. Ibn Kh. Vol. III p. 119.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 544.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 80.

4. D. R. Vol. II, p. 847.

to live up. However, he had realised that his political future lay in Bahā' al-Dawlah's confidence and favour. Consequently, not only had he to restrain his self-pride in these odes but also expressed his loyalty to this Būwayhid ruler in a slavish manner. In one of his odes he addressed his patron as follows:

It is a wonder that you build me up
by your generosity, yet destroy me by
disfavour.
I am the slave of your favour which
enlivens my hope and whose glory makes
my weakness strength.

من العجائب أنت بالدهان تبني ربالدعاض تهديني
أنا عبد ألقك التي نطقت ألي داهن عزها مني¹

In another ode he expresses his loyalty in the same manner, he says:

I am only a sapling which you planted,
and the worthiest sapling is that whose
soil was cultivated by your hand.
I found no maker other than you;
I know no benefactor amongst the people
but you.

أنا غرس غرسه واجل ال غرس ما قررت ثراه يداكا
لم اجد صانفاً سواك رداك سرف في الناس منجاً سواكا²

As for the artistic structure of al-Radī's panegyrical odes, he adopted a traditional method at least in regard to the introductory part of his ode. However, he did not imitate it blindly. He dropped certain parts of it and

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 874.

2. Ibid., p. 589.

improved upon its details. It is well-known that the ancient model of the qasidah was considered a standard which poets should follow and observe in their praises. Ibn Qutaybah summarised the main principles which must be maintained in panegyrical odes as follows:

"I have heard", says Ibn Qutaybah, "from a man of learning that the composer of odes began by mentioning the deserted dwelling-places and the relics and traces of habitation. Then he wept and complained and addressed the desolate encampment, and begged his companion to make a halt, in order that he might have occasion to speak of those who had once lived there and afterwards departed; for the dwellers in tents were different from townsmen or villagers in respect of coming and going because they moved from one water-spring to another, seeking pasture and searching out the places where rain had fallen. Then to this he linked the erotic prelude (nasīb) and bewailed the violence of his love and the anguish of separation from his mistress and the extremity of his passion and desire; so as to win the hearts of his hearer and divert their eyes toward him, and invited their ears to listen to him, since the song of love touches men's souls and takes hold of their heart ... Now when the poet had assured himself of an attentive hearing, he followed up his advantage and set forth his claim: thus he went on to complain of fatigue and want of sleep and travelling by night and of the noonday heat, and how his camel had been reduced to leanness. And when, after representing all his discomfort and danger of his journey, he knew that he had fully justified his hope and expectation of receiving his due need from the person to whom the poem was addressed he entered upon his panegyric Madīh." 1

The major part of panegyrical odes in the Jāhilite and Umayyad period answers to this description which was regarded as time-honoured and traditional. In addition, classical poets in general ran the risk of copying the

1. Ibn Qutaybah, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 20-21; the English version was quoted from Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

model of the ancient erotic preface, ancient feelings, imagery and other conventional aspects which were applied repeatedly.¹ As for the 'Abbāsid period, a close examination of the diwāns of the outstanding poets Abū Tammām, al-Buhturī and al-Mutanabbī shows us that the development and modifications of the erotic preface and other poetical introductions which were made by these poets are of some importance. Abū Tammām, for instance, cut out certain parts of the traditional erotic preface in some of his panegyrical odes. In others he dropped it entirely and entered upon his main subject directly.² Although he was fond of dwelling on his beloved's effaced encampment, he often used to open his odes by describing the departure of his beloved and expressing his pain and anguish. Al-Buhturī, like Abū Tammām, opened some of his panegyrical odes by describing the effaced encampment of his beloved, in others he depicted the following up of her caravan with anguish and longing.³ In addition, he paid full attention to developing two interesting parts of the traditional erotic preface. The first was the description of the beloved's phantom (al-tayf). This part was enlarged and enriched by the poet. He made it a complete and independent poetical preface and discarded other parts.⁴ The second was the description of

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1. A. KH. Kinany, The Development of Gazal in Arabic Literature, Damascus 1951, p. 304.
 2. D. Tm. Vol. I, pp. 7, 45, 205, 240, Vol. II, p. 99, Vol. III, p. 31.
 3. D. B. Vol. I, pp. 16, 70, 81, 101, 210, Vol. II, pp. 78, 100.
 4. D. B. Vol. I, pp. 7, 31, 55, 84, 135, Vol. II, pp. 76, 103.

lightning" (al-Barq) which was often compared to the smile of the beloved. Al-Buhturī used such description as the whole erotic preface in some of his odes and dropped the other parts of the traditional preface.¹ Al-Mutanabbī in the manner of his predecessors concentrated on describing the effaced encampment of his beloved,² but he made a further advance in dropping the erotic preface entirely and entering upon his subject-matter directly.³ In one of his panegyrical odes he made it clear that regardless of the fact that poets used to open their odes by the nasīb he decided to break with this convention.⁴

Al-Radī made use of each part of the traditional erotic prelude. But he separated this prolonged introduction into various independent prefaces, applying each one as a complete poetical preface. In general he succeeded in developing and elaborating some of them. In a notable number of his panegyrical odes he opened them by describing the encampment of his beloved and dropped other parts. In regard to the journey which was described by poets on their way to meet their patrons, al-Radī imitated the established traditional method. Like al-Mutanabbī, he began his praise directly in some of his odes, in others he spoke about his bravery and

1. D. B. Vol. I, pp. 52, 113.

2. D. M. Vol. I, p. 61, Vol. III, pp. 140, 455, Vol. IV, p. 59.

3. D. M. Vol. I, p. 154, Vol. II, pp. 3, 223, Vol. IV, pp. 89, 122.

4. D. M. Vol. IV, p. 89.

courage. In addition, he pursued al-Buhturī's method in describing lightning. (al-Barg) and introduced many detailed and vivid pictures of it when he encountered it in the desert. The vivid picture of the beloved's caravan travelling through the desert took place in al-Radī's introductory nasīb and the description of his beloved's phantom was applied as an erotic prelude as well.¹

Al-Radī's contribution to the development of the poetical prelude and panegyrical odes in general lies in the fact that he elaborated the harmony and interconnection of the opening lines and the main subject of his odes. He succeeded in organising some of his panegyrical odes well, building up the poetical introduction in conformity with other parts. He sometimes observed the special occasion for which his odes were written and made his opening lines suitable. In one of his odes in which he praised the Caliph al-Qādir, the occasion was that of the Caliph receiving the pilgrim caravan of the people of Khūrāsān. The poet made his poetical introduction harmonise with the subject-matter of the occasion. He says:

Whose are the howdahs, tossed
about by the camels, and the caravan which
now floats, now sinks in the mirage?
They are crossing the sides of al-^ʿAqīq:
One goes to Syria, whose fancy drives
his mounts that way; another to Iraq.
They have left behind a prisoner (the poet himself)
not to be redeemed of his passion, and a seeker
who never attains his goal. 2

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1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 8, 39, 69, 220, 240, 417, 456, 459.
Vol. II, pp. 514, 541, 544, 623, 742, 746, 779, 949.
 2. Mez, p. 274.

لَمَّا الْخُدُوعُ تَهَزُّهُنَّ الدِّيقُ وَالرَّكَبُ يَطْفُو فِي الرِّبَابِ وَيَفِرُّ
 تَطْنُ الْحَرَّاضُ الدِّيقَ فَتُشْمُ يَحْدُو رَكَابِيَةَ الْفَرَامِ وَصِرَقُ
 ابْتَوَا أَسِيرًا بَعْدَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَدَى جَمًّا يَجْنُ رَطَابًا لَا يُلَاقَى¹

It is clear that the poet made his erotic prelude relevant to his final subject. He proceeded to it smoothly as well. In other odes he applied the same method skilfully.²

Al-Radī also succeeded in maintaining a suitable bridge between his poetical prelude and the other main parts of his odes. This helps him to proceed smoothly from one part to another. He borrowed ancient oaths which were often used by the Jāhilite poets, such phrases as "by God", "by God's life" or "I swore by God" and so on. Al-Nābighah used such an oath in a simple way in one of his odes. He says:

I swore - and I left no doubt in
 your mind - and a man has no recourse
 beyond God -"

عَلِمْتُ فَلَمْ أَتْرُكْ لِنَفْسِي رَيْبَةً³
 وَلَيْسَ وَرَاءَ اللَّهِ لِلْمَرْءِ نَزْهَبٌ³

Such sorts of oath became common from the Islamic period onwards. However, al-Radī dealt with them in a different way. He enlarged and enriched them. He began to swear

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 541.

2. Ibid., p. 542; for another example see Vol. I, p. 189, 225, 459, Vol. II, p. 929.

3. Arberry, Arabic poetry, p. 34; see Mu'allāqāt, p. 167.

by camels which were driven to Mecca, then he vividly described their journey. He also depicted the desert scenes throughout his oath, mentioning many Hijāzite sites to adorn his poetry. Then he passed from this preparatory part to a statement which he wanted to stress. It is sometimes connected with his patron's generosity, bravery, wisdom and so on.¹ It is possible that the frequent use of this artistic method is due in part to al-Radī's acquaintance with desert life through his journeys to Mecca.

Al-Radī paid great attention to improving and elaborating the opening lines of his panegyrical odes. Meanwhile, the closing lines received the same attention. The poet often used to express his sincere wishes to his praised patron. This expression of supplication of God became favourite closing lines in al-Radī's panegyric.² He was on the side of al-Mutanabbī who was fond of using such sorts of expression as poetical epilogues to his panegyrical odes.³ Arab critics regarded this sort of closing line in panegyric as a sign of weakness in poetry. Nevertheless, they excused those poets who used it when they praised kings.⁴ Al-Radī seems to be in line with

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 317. Vol. II, pp. 873, 950, 964, among others.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 45, 216, 325, 459. Vol. II, pp. 516, 620, 954.

3. D. M. Vol. II, p. 391. Vol. III, p. 56, 107. Vol. IV, pp. 243, 258, 309.

4. ⁶Umdah., Vol. I, p. 160. See also Sinā'atayn, pp. 157-159. He regarded such kinds of expression an outstanding aspect of letters and sermons.

the critics' request, while al-Mutanabbī used such expressions indiscriminately. Al-Radī, in praising Bahā' al-Dawlah says:

Then may your life be prolonged, as long
as life is delightful and continuity good.
Verily the fates are your soldiers and time
your slave.

ثُمَّ دُمَّ مَا هُنَّ الْمَيِّتُ وَمَا طَابَ الدَّوَامُ
إِنَّمَا الْقَدَرُ حَبْنٌ لَكَ وَالْهَفْزُ غُلَامٌ¹

Broadly speaking, al-Radī through his poetical development began to decrease the use of Jinās and Tibāq in comparison with the first stage of imitation. He also showed a great deal of mastery in dealing with artistic embellishments. In addition the previous complicated and unnatural metaphors were largely abandoned. In general, the combination and the implication of his poetical pictures and meanings seem to have much connection with desert life and scenes. The increasing use of shorter metres is another poetical aspect which became more apparent.² However, the poet in this respect, like his contemporaries, was inclined to apply lighter and shorter metres but that does not mean that he abandoned completely the long metres with which he had dealt from the early stage of his poetical life.

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 733, see also p. 746.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 39, 316, Vol. II, pp. 546, 615, 729, 783, 850, 929, among others.

4 - The Ikhwāniyyāt of al-Radī

Broadly speaking, poetical friendly correspondence and congratulatory odes were considered a part of panegyric. But as Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī suggests, they did not occur in the Jāhilite poetry.¹ This characteristic praise differs from traditional panegyric on two points. The first is that the rigidity of poetical conventions does not rule so much. Secondly, the poetical friendly correspondence and other friendly odes (al-Ikhwāniyyāt) are, to some extent, liberated from the traditional poetical structure of the panegyric odes and almost devoid of the poetical prelude (nasīb). In addition, in poetical correspondence the senders and the recipients in their replies apply the same metre and rhyme letter and often concentrate on the same subject-matter.² In the Yatīmah of al-Thaʿālibī the author has handed down to us many friendly letters, some of which are a mixture of prose and poetry.³ In general in this poetical sub-theme the artificiality and formalities which were often observed by encomiasts in addressing and praising their patrons were to a large extent replaced by sincerity and true sentimental elements. The subject-matter of the Ikhwāniyyāt was friendly concerns such as congratulations, consolation, expressions of gratitude, apology for lapses between friends and sometimes literary

1. Dīwān al-Maʿānī, Vol. I, pp. 91-92.

2. Yatīmah, Vol. I, pp. 113, 267-268, Vol. III, pp. 171-172.

3. Ibid., pp. 254, 257, Vol. II, pp. 318-319.

questions.

Al-Radī composed almost forty odes relating to this theme. In some of them he adopted the traditional method of panegyric prefacing them with the erotic prelude (nasīb). In others he dropped the nasīb. Al-Radī exchanged much poetical correspondence with his brother al-Murtadā and his firm friend Abū Ishāq al-Sābī. They applied the same metres and rhyme letters.¹ The poet also wrote congratulatory odes to his friends on the birth of their children, on obtaining official or high positions, on returning from journeys, and on other occasional events.² It is interesting to note that the birth of a daughter was a suitable occasion in al-Radī's eyes for congratulation. The poet wrote two odes to his brother in which he celebrated the day of his daughter's birth.³ In one of these odes the poet says:

The chargers of good-luck have
come prancing on a bright happy day.
A little child - all who see her beauty kiss
her.
and you the envied one held her in your arms.

الآن جاءت خيول العدا رافضة
تجري بيوم نضي الوجه بحدود
مولودة "زهب الراون بجبتنا
لنا وعانقتنا في ثوب محود 4

A close examination of al-Radī's friendly poetical

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1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 246-247, Vol. II, pp. 531-534, 942-945.
 2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 26, 83, 84, 251, 359, 385.
 3. Ibid., pp. 243, 359.
 4. Ibid., p. 245; see Mez pp. 364-365.

correspondence and other relating to the Ikhwāniyyāt shows us that although he had many acquaintances, his close friends (including his brother) were few. In general, his relationships with these friends suffered many lapses and severences. His relationship with his brother al-Murtadā suffered the same fate, as al-Raḍī's poetry indicates. It is not surprising that al-Raḍī had such poor relationships with his friends. He was sensitive, with emotional instability. In addition, he built up his own idealistic world and tried to judge friends and friendship in accordance with it. Consequently, he had a great deal of trouble. He suspected his friends and doubted their friendship while considering himself loyal and faithful. In one of his odes he says:

It is sad enough that I am a friend
and faithful, but I have no friend
among people.

كفى حزناً أني صديقٌ صادقٌ

رما لي ما بين الدنام صديقٌ¹

The only friend with whom al-Raḍī maintained his relationship smoothly and peacefully was Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābī. The poet described his brotherly and friendly relationship with al-Ṣābī as follows:

Our two hearts are intermingled as
in brotherhood.
So seekers for the same goal are
brothers.

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 583.

تَمَازَجَ قَلْبَانَا بِزَاجِ أَهْوَاةٍ
وَمَلَّ طَلُوبِي غَايَةَ أَهْوَانِ¹

Such a firm relationship between al-Radī and al-Ḥabī is natural owing to the fact that the latter encouraged his friend's aspiration to be caliph and overestimated his qualifications. However, al-Radī had another longstanding friend called al-Battī. He was a boon companion of al-Radī. The poet tells us that he was very eager for his friend's company and often invited him to attend his assembly. Al-Radī seems anxious and cautious to maintain a smooth relationship with al-Battī. When lapses occurred he tried to bring the condition back to normal. It is interesting that al-Radī, in addressing this friend applies the language of lovers, looking at him as if he were his beloved, expressing his tender emotion and longing when this friend was far away. He says:

I feel jealousy when you are in the company
of others, just as a lover is jealous
for his beloved
Once you are away from me
I no longer enjoy the beauty
and goodness of time.
I feel longing as I recall you when you
are far,
I rejoice when you are
close to me
To me, you are the home-coming
of promised hope.
You are the dawning of near relief.

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 944.

أَخَارُ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ خَلَوَاتٍ غَيْرِي كَلَا غَارَ الْمَجْتُّ عَلَى الْحَبِيبِ
رَمَا أَعْطَى إِذَا مَا نَجَبْتُ عَنِّي بَحْنِي لِلزَّمَانِ وَلِلْبُطْهِيبِ
أُسَاقُ إِذَا ذَكَرْتُكَ مِنْ بَعِيدٍ رَأَيْتُكَ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُهُ مِنْ قَرِيبٍ
كَأَنَّكَ قَدَمَةُ الدَّلِّ الْمَرْجِيَّ عَلَيَّ رُحْلَةً الْفَرَجِ الْقَرِيبِ¹

In general the Ikhwāniyyāt in al-Radī's poetry well express his opinion and his understanding of friendship. They are characterised by his profound and sincere feelings towards his firm friends, marred by anxiety and suspicion. His style is quite genuine and simple and devoid of artificiality.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 154.

CHAPTER VII

AL-RADĪ'S SELF-PRAISE

I aspired to honours, but they
repelled my advances; the beloved
always repels the lover.

رُفَّتْ الْمَالِي فَأُتِفِقْتُ وَلَمْ يَزَلْ
أَبْدًا يُبَاغِ عَائِقًا حُوقُ

al-Radī

1 - General remarks

The words 'glory' or 'boasting' (fakhr) and 'bravery' or 'chivalry' (hamāṣah) have inter-related meanings as far as Arab poetry is concerned. In our dictionaries the word fakhr means to enumerate or recount one's deeds and glorious qualities or magnify oneself. Hamāṣah has the meaning of courage, fighting and chivalry.¹ Some Arab anthologists who took an interest in collecting and choosing poetical anthologies often applied the word hamāṣah as a title to their collections. It is likely that Abū Tammām was the first to use it as a title for the first section of his anthology and it came to be applied as the title of his whole work. Abū Tammām gave no reason for the use of this word. However, a close examination of his anthology shows us that he applied this word 'hamāṣah' to that Arabic poetry which has a close connection with tribal war, fanaticism, description of the battlefield, bravery, chivalry, endurance and other warlike virtues.² In the manner of Abū Tammām, al-Buhturī and Ibn al-Shajarī (d. 542/1147) among others applied the term hamāṣah to their anthologies.³

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1. al-Jawharī, Ismā'īl, al-Ṣiḥāh, ed. by Ahmad al-ʿAṭṭār, Cairo 1377/1957, Vol. II, pp. 779, 917. See Ibn Manzūr, Lisān al-ʿArab, Beirut 1956, part VI, pp. 57-58; part V, pp. 48-49.
 2. al-Marzūqī, Sharḥ Diwān al-Hamāṣah, anthology of Abū Tammām, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Ḥārūn and Ahmad Amīn, Cairo 1951, see intro. pp. 6-7, part I, pp. 22-480, part II, pp. 484-780.
 3. al-Buhturī, Diwān al-Hamāṣah, ed. Kamāl Muṣṭafā, Cairo, 1929; Ibn al-Shajarī, Kitāb al-Hamāṣah, Hyderabad, 1926.

As for Arab critics, they almost all preferred to use the word fakhr - 'pride' or 'self-praise'. When Ibn Sallām al-Jumahlī (d. 231/845) enumerated the major poetical themes in Arab poetry he mentioned self-praise among them.¹ Other critics distinguished this established theme but they made it clear that there was no difference between self-praise (fakhr) and eulogy (Madīh) save that the poet in self-praise confined his praise to himself. Those critics did not mention the hamāsah. However, they indicated that in self-praise poets used to boast of their decency, wisdom and other glorious deeds both of themselves and other people.² This means that they applied the word fakhr in its broadest sense. It is very likely that the hamāsah was considered a military aspect of self-praise.

Modern Arab scholars who take an interest in classical Arab poetry differ on the use of the words hamāsah and fakhr. Some of them consider the hamāsah an independent section in Arab poetry standing by itself, while others make no distinction between these two words. Yet in the eyes of some others, the word hamāsah had a vast and an expanding meaning covering some aspects of different

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1. Ibn Sallām, Tabaqāt Fuḥūl al-Shu'arā', ed. Muḥammad Shākir, Cairo 1952, p. 319.
 2. Sinā'atayn, p. 131; see also Diwān al-Ma'ānī, Vol. I, pp. 76-91; 'Umdah, Vol. II, pp. 114-117.

poetical themes.¹ However, it is possible to draw a distinction between these inter-related words fakhr and hamāsah. Self-praise (fakhr) is one of the established poetical themes in Arab poetry in which poets boasted of themselves, their deeds, qualities, virtues and the illustrious record of their peoples or nations. When poets confined their self-praise to describing their chivalrous qualities, bravery in battle and war-days the self-praise became a sort of war-poetry: Hamāsah. Accordingly, the word self-praise (fakhr) in this study is used in its widest sense: this encompasses pride in oneself, one's family, tribe, party and nation. It includes war-poetry (Hamāsah) as well.

Self-praise occupied a large and outstanding place in the Jāhilite poetry which represented a real record of Arab life at that time. Poets expressed their feelings of hatred, love and admiration, enumerating their deeds and virtues and celebrating their victorious days. It is natural that in tribal and bedouin society tribal warfare loomed large in poetry and poets deemed it their duty to stand by their own people by words and deeds. Meanwhile, their personalities received great attention. They celebrated their own unshakeable courage, steadfastness, loyalty, firmness and so on. A glance at the Mu'allaqāt shows us that poets of ignorance spoke proudly of their

1. Ahmad Badawī, Usus al-Naqd al-Adabī 'ind al-'Arab, Cairo, 3rd edn. 1964, p. 286-289; Shalash op. cit., p. 142; Hannā Fakhūrī, al-Fakhr wa al-Hamāsah, Beirut n.d. intro. and pp. 43-89.

personalities, breathing a spirit of warlike courage and superiority; but they also took much pride in their clans' glorious deeds and fame. In the Mu'allaqah of 'Amr b. Kulthūm, al-Hārith b. Hillizah and Labid, for instance, the common topic can be traced to self-praise in the broadest sense. They recorded their tribal wars and heroic deeds of their people among others.¹ Even Tarafah who expressed his sorrow at his tribe's hostile attitude towards him felt sad because his people wronged him. As for 'Antarah, who had his own love problem, he gave a vivid picture of himself as a soldier with high moral qualities and martial prowess.

In the early Islamic period poets took pride in their new religion, criticising and attacking those who were still "ignorant". Apparently, tribal fanaticism died away but its spirit persisted in this poetry. In addition, this early Islamic period witnessed many poets who had sung in the time of ignorance and continued for the most part to sing under Islam. However, the wonderful conquests of the new faith in the North and West became an inexhaustible subject to be celebrated.² Consequently, war-poetry formed a remarkable section in self-praise. By the advent of the Umayyad era, the ancient traditional customs were revived and tribal fanaticism became a motivating force in poetry. Moreover, political strife between many religious and political sects and parties

1. Mu'allaqāt, pp. 105-109, 110, 139-144.

2. James Lyall, Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry, London 1885, intro. p. XXXIII.

came on the scene and poets were deemed the mouthpieces of these various sects. The Kharijite poets were a case in point. They coloured their self-praise with religious elements mingled with gloomy sentiment and the welcome of death. In general, self-praise was expanded and fertilised by religious and political trends. Meanwhile, the tribal elements found a suitable atmosphere to come to the surface again and received full attention.¹

During the 'Abbāsid period, in comparison with the previous era, self-praise in general and hamāsah in particular underwent limitations. This theme virtually lost some of its inspiring sources such as tribal war, fanaticism and the Islamic conquests, which came to an end. This was also due in part to the new social structure and the urban life of this period in which Arab heroism lost its dominance.² However, self-praise, which had taken on a national tone, now increased. Non-Arab poets like Baḥshār b. Burd in the early 'Abbāsid era and Abū Nuwās took a pride in their original nation and race and in deriding the Arabs.³ This national side in self-praise received great attention in the fourth Islamic century, as we have already seen. The famous 'Abbāsid poets Abū Tammām and al-Buhturī amongst others took pride in their poetical talent, intellect, wisdom and continuous and

1. Hannā Fākhūrī, op. cit., pp. 38, 46. See also Iḥsān al-Nuṣṣ, al-'Asabiyyah al-qabaliyyah wa Atharuhā fī al-Sh'ir al-Umawī, Beirut 1964, pp. 353-364.

2. Shalash, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

3. 'Alī, Mihyār, p. 244.

prolonged travels which they made to earn a living.¹ In their praise there is a sort of war-poetry when they celebrated their lords' courage, fighting and firmness on the battle fields.² In general, these two poets did not engage themselves in self-praise. Al-Buhturī composed only three odes devoted to praising himself and his tribe,³ while Abū Tammām wrote six odes, three of which were devoted to celebrating his tribe's glorious deeds. In others he spoke of his constant determination to travel and to earn a living.⁴

The fourth Islamic century witnessed the revival of self-praise and war-poetry at the hand of al-Mutanabbī and Abū Firās al-Hamdānī. Both attached themselves to the chivalrous prince Sayf al-Dawlah. They described his victorious campaigns and courage. Self-praise in their poetry is an independent theme, embodied in warlike pictures and bellicose words. It is due in part to the fact that both were warriors. Al-Mutanabbī, as he tells us, accompanied his lord Sayf al-Dawlah in his fighting⁵ and Abū Firās was one of the Hamdānid war-leaders. He was captured on the battlefield and imprisoned. The

1. D. Tm. Vol. I, pp. 96, 112; see also D. B. Vol. I, p. 182, Vol. II, p. 77. See Diwān of Abū Tammām, Beirut n.d. pp. 470-472.

2. D. Tm. Vol. I, p. 45; D. B. Vol. I, pp. 22, 32, 157, Vol. II, p. 85.

3. D. B. Vol. I, pp. 96, 182, 183.

4. D. Tm. Beirut, n.d. pp. 470-480.

5. D. M. Vol. I, p. 87 among others.

period of his imprisonment gave birth to a unique theme in his poetry known as al-Rūmiyyāt. In general, al-Mutanabbī and Abū Firās in their self-praise used the traditional method of boasting of tribal deeds and warlike virtues.¹ In addition, al-Mutanabbī took pride in his poetical talent and his masterly command of Arabic. He wrote many independent odes devoted to his self-praise particularly in his youth but as time passed he set a limit to this poetical trend and reduced it to a part of his panegyrical odes.² Broadly speaking, both poets succeeded in reviving the traditional type of Arab self-praise and a warlike aspect became an outstanding feature of this theme.

2 - Al-Radi's self-praise

Al-Radi, though he was a resident of Baghdad and a peaceful man of letters, tried to ignore city life and often seems to live in a world of fiction and dreams which he created through his poetry. In his self-praise in particular and other themes in general he found a breathing-space in which he expressed himself and depicted his own "utopian world". The poet, as we have already seen, did not participate in any battle and had no first hand experience of war. However, tribal warfare loomed largely in his self-praise and many fictional battles and invasions were described. He stressed bedouin virtues and chivalrous

1. Abū Firās, Diwān, Vol. II, pp. 13, 14, 29, see pp. 103-123; see D. M. Vol. II, p. 16.

2. D. M. Vol. IV, pp. 194-211, see p. 378 among others.

deeds which were always attributed to himself, his father, his real and fictional supporters. This made war-poetry (hamācah) an interesting aspect of his self-praise.

It is natural to a man like al-Raḍī to make his self-praise an ever-present aspect of every theme of his poetry. His life in every stage, his family, his Prophetic descent, his emotional instability and his overestimation of himself, all drove him to speak proudly of himself and fill his poetry with self-praise. What motivated him was his fanciful ambition to be caliph which occupied his mind and feelings, leading him later to frustration and pain combined with arrogance and high self-esteem. In al-Raḍī's panegyrical odes, as we have already seen, self-praise occupied a notable section in many of these odes. The poet paid attention to this theme in his dirges as well.¹ Even in his love-poetry, in which poets should be tender and subservient, al-Raḍī did not cease to boast of his deeds and valour.²

Al-Raḍī wrote forty odes devoted entirely to self-praise. Unfortunately most of these odes are undated. This makes it difficult to trace the development of this poetical theme as has been attempted in his panegyrics. However, in analysing these odes the aim will be to give general remarks on the artistic form and the content. In addition, we will endeavour to outline and clarify our understanding of the idealistic world in which he lived

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 117, 121, 129 among others.

2. Ibid., p. 151, Vol. II, p. 883.

through his poetry. At the same time an attempt will be made to explain how and why al-Raḍī built up his own utopian world and rejected reality.

Concerning the artistic form of al-Raḍī's self-praise odes, it seems to be traditional. Some of his odes have a similar poetical preface to that which al-Raḍī applied to his panegyrics. The description of the effaced encampment of the beloved was used as a favourite amatory preface, (nasīb).¹ In other odes al-Raḍī entered upon his basic subject directly.² The poetical pictures, metaphors and similes were drawn from desert life. Although al-Raḍī's odes in self-praise were overloaded with repetition and clichés, he was successful in maintaining the unity of purpose in them.

As for the content of al-Raḍī's self-praise odes, he borrowed his meanings from many poets beginning with the Jāhilite period down to al-Mutanabbī. Points of similarity can be found between al-Raḍī and 'Antarah, Tarafah and 'Amr b. Kulthūm.³ In addition, he did not escape the influence of other poets like Bashshar b. Burd, Abū Tammām, Abū Firās and Ibn Nubātah.⁴ However, al-Mutanabbī's poetry was one of al-Raḍī's favourite sources for his self-praise. Points of identity between them are many.

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 647, 812.

2. Ibid., pp. 805, 835.

3. Ibid., p. 877; Vol. I, p. 200, Vol. I, p. 85. See Mu'allaqāt, pp. 119-120, 129, p. 84.

4. Shalash, op. cit., p. 250; see also Zakī Mubārak Abqariyyat al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, Cairo 1952, 2nd edn. Vol. I, p. 28; Yatīmah, Vol. III, p. 152.

It seems as if they had both started from similar points in their early odes of self-praise. They were both preoccupied with soaring ambitions.¹ But they differed later on: whereas al-Mutanabbī concentrated through his poetry on his own personal deeds, his poetical talent and his valour and integrity, al-Raḍī found many inexhaustible sources for his self-praise; among which were his descent from the prophetic family, his 'Alid genealogical tree, his belonging to Quraysh and also his personal qualities. At the same time al-Mutanabbī and al-Raḍī did not lose their self confidence meeting failure and disappointing situations. On the contrary, they both came to conclude that the time was unfair and everyone was against them and everything had gone wrong. Consequently, they felt isolated among a society of corruption and injustice.² Here they differed again. Al-Mutanabbī became, to some extent, a professional poet and lent himself to patrons of different races and positions. Consequently, self-praise became a subordinate theme in his poetry. Al-Raḍī paid great attention to his self-pride in all his poetical themes. Through his odes which were devoted to this theme he tried to rid himself of the world of reality in which he suffered frustration and pains and built up his utopian world. This idealistic world had its own principles, people and moral values. It was a kingdom of escapism. But al-Raḍī took pains in his imagination

1. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 835-839; see also D. M. Vol. IV, pp. 310-311.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 726; see also D. M. Vol. IV, pp. 244-245.

to make the image of his fictional world active and the people in it ready to wage war and struggle to destroy the reality in which he suffered failure and sorrow.

Al-Radi came to conclude that the urban life of his time was filled with corruption and hypocrisy, and marred by immoral principles. Consequently, it was natural to a noble man like him to find it difficult to get on in such an atmosphere. In his self-praise, Baghdad represents a symbol of city-life with its corruption and moral decline and desert life represents the purest life with its high standard of values. The poet describes the uncomfortable life in Baghdad as follows:

My night in Baghdad is restless,
it is as if I had sore eyes.

ليالي بغداد لا أقرُّ به
كأنني فيه ناظرُ الرمدِ ١

In other odes he says:

Why do I not hate a city which wants to add to the
number of those who envy me?
Means of living are no longer to be found in al-Karkh.
No necklace of glory adorns Baghdad's neck.

طالٍ لا أرغبُ عن بلدةٍ ترغبُ في كثرةِ هادي
الرزق في الكرخِ مقيمٌ لا طوقَ الصلَى في جريدِ بغدادِ ٢

The evil picture of Baghdad and the ugly image of its inhabitants and rulers has not been completed yet. The poet denied its rulers any kind of values and principles.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 233.

2. Ibid., p. 229.

He says:

We are in the midst of a band who
regards oppression as justice and who calls
error the home of guidance.

نحن في عصبة ترى الجور عدلاً
وتسي الضلّ دار رشاد 1

Even from his religious point of view city life became
unbearable. He says:

How can praying be performed in a land
where all places are directions to immorality?

وكيف تتيمّ في بلد صدرة
وكلّ بقاعه قبل الفجور 2

In al-Radī's view time is also against nobles. There
are no changes in favour of those who deserve respect and
high position. He himself as a man of noble extraction
suffered from the agony of unfulfilled hopes. He once
persuaded himself that a magical change would come and
kings would be no longer kings and rulers no longer rulers.
But unfortunately his promising hopes faded. He says:

Are fates not to be set in motion and start
throbbing again?
Are sultans and kings not to be deposed?
Time has concluded a truce so that it has no
power to strike.
Calamity puts its head low so that
it is motionless.
Did the seven heavens change their paths?
Did they lose their courses, are the celestial
bodies locked?

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 230.

2. Ibid., p. 341.

أَمَا تُحَرِّكُ لِلزَّمَانِ نَابِضَةً أَمَا يُفَيِّرُ جَنَاطُنْ دِلَالِكَ
 قَدْ هَادَنَ الدَّهْرُ حَتَّى لَا تَبْرَحَ لَهُ دَا طَرَقَ الْخَطْبُ حَتَّى مَابَهُ هَرَكُ
 أَهْلَتِ السَّبْعُ الطَّيَارُ أَهْلًا أَمْ أَهْلَاتِ نَجْمًا أَمْ كَسَّرَ الطَّنْجُ ١

Once again al-Radī pointed his accusing finger at a time which stood against his aspiration and hopes. He says:

If you looked at time you would
 find it a trouble for the noble and a comfort
 of the ignoble

وَاذَا نَظَرْتُ إِلَى الزَّمَانِ رَأَيْتُهُ
 تَعَبَ الثَّرِيفِ رَاحَةَ الْخُرُوفِ ٢

Al-Radī now found no convincing reasons, at least in his imagination, to adapt or adjust himself to reality. Consequently, he was driven to escape from this harsh condition and eventually to create his own utopian world in which he could find comfort and consolation and also to indulge himself in his own dreams which he never saw come true. The scene of his idealistic world was the desert and the atmosphere was bedouin life in which he found a breathing-space to live with his fictional aim. This imaginary bedouin life had its own fascination in al-Radī's eyes. In one of his odes he says, addressing his beloved:

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 595.

2. Ibid., p. 520.

The foam in the mouth of the mounts is
sweeter than your lips.
The desert shrubs are more appealing
and pleasant than you.

لَنَامُ الْمَطَايَا مِنْ رُضَائِكَ أَغْذِبُ
وَنَبْتَ الْبَيَاضِ مِنْكَ شَيْءٌ رَاطِبُ¹

He preached that horses were the only means to rid oneself
of humiliation and to come nearer to sublimity. He says:

Draw the horses near that they may ward
off the raid, that they may turn the abode of
humiliation into a worthy abode.
select their pedigree that, with the
lances they may bring glory.
Not produce foals.

قَرَّبُوهُنَّ لِتُفْعِدَنَّ الْمَفَارَا وَبَيَّرْنَ بَرَاءَ الْهَوْنِ دَارَا
رَاطِبُوهُنَّ لِيَتَجَنَّ الْعُلَى بِالْمَرْحَلِ لِيَتَجَنَّ الْمَهَارَا²

Moreover, he identified himself with bedouin life as
follows:

The dearest of my two
friends is a cutting sword.
The most pleasant of my homes is
a pitched tent.

أَحَبُّ خَلِيلِي الصِّبْنِ صَارِمُ
رَاطِبُ دَارِي الْجَاءِ الْمَطْبُ³

Al-Radī peopled his imaginary world with imaginary
supporters and friends. They are skilled horsemen of
chivalrous deeds and martial prowess, used to experiencing
roughness of life and difficulties. In general, they rid

1. D. R. Vol. I. p. 60.

2. Ibid., p. 372.

3. Ibid., p. 60.

themselves of the affluence and softness of city life and attach themselves to bedouin life and the desert. Their courage and firmness in the battlefield are beyond doubt and their loyalty is pure and unique. He describes them as follows:

Cavaliers who attained their goals by their lances,
and reached their objectives by their swords.

نَوَاسِيْ نَالُوا الْمُنَى بِالْقَنَا رَصَانُوا الْغُرَاصِمَ بِالضَّمَا₁

In another ode he describes them as follows:

Of every man with a bright forehead,
his face shrouded with dust, in his quest for
glory, the dust still unremoved.
He went on dashing in the midst of the cloud
of dust, among lances and coats of mail.
Not warding off the heat of
the mid-day sun as he marched, save by the
shadow of lances or a passing dust storm.

نَ كُلِّ أَبْلَجٍ قَدْ تَلَمَّ وَجْهَهُ بِالْفَقِّ فِي طَبِيعِ الْمُنِيرِ
مَا زَالَ يَخْطُرُ فِي غَمَامَةِ قَطِي بَيْنَ الْمَوَالِي أَوْ قِيصِ تَنْوَرِ
لَا يَتَّقِي السَّيِّئَ الظَّاهِرَ إِسْرَى إِلَّا بِظُلْمٍ قَنَاءٍ عَارِفِهِ عَجَبِ₂

Al-Radī came to find many convincing reasons for invading and destroying Baghdad which was considered a symbol of corruption and an obstacle in his way to obtaining his goals. He always threatened to attack in his imagination. It is surprising that the poet seems to be hesitant even in his fictional world. In some of

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 197.

2. Ibid., p. 363.

his odes he tells us that his plan to invade and storm Baghdad by his cavaliers was a "possibility". Yet he never put his intention into action.¹ It is a pity that our poet was not able to find a breathing-space even in his imagination. Consequently, his idealistic world could not release his agony and sorrow. This made his self-praise shrouded with complaint and disappointment. He often blamed himself and seemed to be suffering from self-reproach.²

With all these sorrows, frustration and self-reproach, the poet did not lose his self-confidence and his high esteem of his personality, as his odes tell us. He frequently gives full attention to his personal deeds and qualities. Although he well enumerates his family's brilliant record, he considers his personality the major topic in his self-praise.³ In addition, he pretends that he gives no heed to those who underestimate his qualifications or fail to regard his unique qualities. In one of his odes he spoke of himself as follows:

I am the pure gold which is treasured,
If put to the test by the critic's hand

أَنَا الزَّهَّاءُ الَّذِي يُضَيَّبُ بِهِ
لَوْ تَلَبَّيْتُ بِمِثْلِهِ فَتَقَبَّلُ ٤

Before closing our observations on al-Radī's self-praise, it is necessary to see what sort of values and

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 163, 198, see Vol. II, pp. 814.

2. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 825, 847, among others.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 95, 162, 269, Vol. II, pp. 934-935 among others.

4. D. R. Vol. I, p. 233.

principles he adored and to outline his inclinations and convictions which revealed themselves in this theme of his poetry. We have already seen that the poet admired and adopted bedouin life, to which he attached himself in his effort to break away from city life. Moreover, he seems to appreciate many extreme and primitive values which were attributed to his fictional supporters, in his imaginary world. He wanted his supporters to be savage and aggressive. He gave them full rein to destroy, pillage and even ravage and enslave women. They were in general blood-thirsty fighters.¹

Al-Radī himself went to the length of alleging that he was about to adopt the Jāhilite life with all its implications. What prevented him from this extreme step was his belief in Islam. He says:

Would not the life of the "Days of Ignorance"
give us greater protection?
Would it not keep us farther away from a
state of greatest dishonour?
But for God and our fear of him
we would have relapsed into our primitive nature.

نَرَى الْجَاهِلِيَّةَ أَهْمًا لَنَا وَأَنَايَ عَنِ الْمَوْقِفِ الْارْذَلِ
نَلْوِلُ إِلَهَهُ وَتَخَوُّفَهُ رَهْبًا إِلَى الطَّابَعِ الْإِذَلِ

2

The poet in his self-praise reveals his tribal fanaticism as well. In his view the glory of Quraysh is unrivalled among Arab tribes and the tribe of ʿAdnān

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 197.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 714.

and Yaman can not come up to the level of Nizār to which al-Raḍī belongs. Although al-Raḍī based his assumption on the grounds that the Prophet is a descendent of Qurash and consequently of Nizār, he did not conceal the Jāhilite superiority of his tribe.¹ Religious elements made themselves felt in al-Raḍī's self-praise as well. His descent from the prophet Muḥammad and the deeds of his 'Alid family occupy a notable part in this theme. He made it clear that none could challenge or be equal to the sublimity of the 'Alid household. In his eyes all people were greatly honoured to be followers of his "grandfather" the prophet and consequently protégés of his heirs. He says:

In us they were honoured, for the cause
of our grandfather they were born.
Where they were counted, they were our
protégés.

شَرُّنَا بِنَا وَجَدْنَا مُلِقُوا
رَهْمٌ ضَائِعًا إِذَا عُدُوا²

Al-Raḍī also stressed his pride in Arabism at a time when foreign rulers had the upper hand and non-Arabs in general dominated the Arab nation. As we have already seen, non-Arab poets took pride in their nation and challenged the Arabs even in their homeland. Al-Raḍī declared his Arab identity and took pride in it. Moreover, he was pleased and proud that Arabs in the name of God and under the banner of Islam had swept away the Persian

1. D. R. Vol. I. pp. 266-67.

2. Ibid., p. 313.

rulers and established themselves in their land. He was also longing for the return of those glorious days of conquests and victories.¹

Al-Radī's circumstances and character combined to provide almost inexhaustible sources for his self-praise. His noble descent, the high positions held by members of his family and al-Radī himself, his unbounded ambition, his self-esteem, his taste for the desert and for traditional Arab virtues and ways of life - all these provided elements in his fakhr. He once came to imagine himself a caliph whose illustrious glories were unrivalled. He says:

This is the Commander of Faithful,
Muhammad (al-Radī).
Noble is his origin, honourable is his birth.
Is it not enough for you that your "mother" is
Fāṭimah (Prophet's daughter), your "father"
Haydarah ('Alī) and your forefather
ʾAḥmad (the Prophet).

هذا امير المؤمنين محمد
كبريت مفارقه رطاب المولد
أدما كفالك بأن الملك ناظم
دابوك هيدرة رهدك احمد 2

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 313.

2. Ibid., p. 314.

CHAPTER VIII

AL-RADĪ'S ELEGY

Every day I turn my glance, time and again,
after a life-companion like unto a star breathing
its last breath.

في كلّ يومٍ أكرّ الطرفَ مُلْتَمِتًا وراءَ نجمٍ بنِ الأقرانِ مُنْضَاعٍ

al-Radī

1 - General remarks

In Arab poetry the medieval critics drew no clear line between elegy and panegyric. In their eyes, the same method must be applied to both themes. The only obvious distinction being that elegy is the eulogy of the dead and panegyric the eulogy of the living. This distinction suggests two points: Firstly, the poet who used to lavish praise on the glorious deeds and fine qualities of his patron, must do much the same in his lamentation. Consequently, the individual portrait is lost in dirges as it was in praises. Secondly, critics attached no great importance to personal feeling of loss and expression of sorrow in Arabic elegy. They concentrated on the importance of enumerating the deceased's virtues and deeds.¹

Al-Raḍī, like other Arab poets, did not break with these poetical conventions in composing his dirges as far as the main principles of traditional dirges are concerned. Yet at the same time he struck new personal notes as we shall learn later. Consequently, al-Raḍī's contemporary al-Tha'ālibī highly esteemed his elegy. In the Yatīmah he came to the conclusion that al-Raḍī was the master of elegy. In al-Tha'ālibī's eyes none of al-Raḍī's contemporaries dealt with dirges as skilfully as he. However, this estimation of al-Raḍī's dirges is rather vague and

1. Qudāmah b. Ja'far; Naqd al-Shi'r, ed. by S. A. Bonobakker. Leiden 1956, p. 49; Sinā'atayn, p. 131. 'Umdah, Vol. II, p. 117.

al-Tha'ālibī himself gave no more details, closing his remarks by citing many specimens of al-Radī's elegy.¹ Generally speaking, our poet in the course of literary history was acknowledged as a master of elegy. Some critics used to liken al-Radī in his dirges to the woman mourning her own son.²

2 - al-Radī's elegy

Al-Radī composed forty eight dirges. The poet, as we have already seen, started writing poetry on self-praise and panegyrics as early as 369/979, while he first tried his hand at elegy in about 376/986, when he wrote his dirge on the death of the Caliph al-Ta'ī's son. The ode is a mixture of consolation and praise rather than a lamentation.³ In the following year the poet wrote only one elegy in which he elegised the famous grammarian Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī. In this ode he enumerated the deceased's qualities but he scarcely expressed his sad feeling at the loss of al-Fārisī.⁴ In the year 378/988 also al-Radī composed one dirge. He elegised the mother of the vizier Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan. Al-Radī confined this dirge to comforting the vizier and praising him.⁵ A year later the Būwayhid prince Sharaf

1. Yatimah, Vol. III, p. 149.

2. al-Wāfi, Vol. II, p. 374; al-Kutubī, op. cit., fol. 12.

3. D.R. Vol. I, p. 14.

4. Ibid., p. 445.

5. D. R. Vol. II, p. 833.

al-Dawlah died. This ruler, as we have already seen, released al-Radī's father from prison in Fāris and honoured him. The poet expressed his deep regret at the prince's death and mentioned his benevolence to al-Radī's family.¹

From the year 380/990 onwards the poet was destined to lose a number of relatives, acquaintances and friends. Consequently, his dirges increased in number till they reached their peak when this loss of loved ones coincided with the harsh conditions in which he suffered disappointment in his political life. He continued to write elegies to the last years of his life. However, the list of deceased persons whom al-Radī lamented is too long to be enumerated, and the motivating factors which stimulated the poet to shed his tears on them vary. Accordingly, the deceased persons whom al-Radī lamented can be categorised to explore the motives and factors governing al-Radī's feelings, attitude and opinions towards his family, relatives, friends and acquaintances.

The list of his dirges falls into five groups, with some exceptions. In the first he lamented a number of members of his family among which were his father, mother, sister, maternal uncle² and two young daughters of his brother al-Murtadā.³ In his dirge on his father he paid great attention to enumerating his father's deeds and

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 839.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 18, 129, 118. Vol. II, p. 736.

3. Ibid., pp. 125, 127.

qualities. Moreover, his family's previous record made itself felt when al-Raḍī spoke proudly of his people's glory. In the same manner he lamented his maternal uncle. As for dirges on his mother and sister, an account will be given when al-Raḍī's dirges on women are discussed in some detail.

The second group of his dirges were composed on the death of the caliph, princes and other statesmen. Al-Raḍī elegised the dethroned Caliph al-Ta'i' (d. 393/1002) in two dirges. This Caliph died in confinement in a room of the Caliph al-Qādir's palace. However, al-Raḍī was true to his principles of friendship. He gave no heed whether his dirges would annoy the existing caliph or not. He made it clear that he had been indebted to the previous caliph's favour. Yet he also expressed his regret that he was unable to ward off the Caliph's enemies when he was attacked and dethroned in barbaric circumstances.¹ Al-Raḍī also lamented his patron and friend the Būwayhid ruler Bahā' al-Dawlah in two dirges. He deemed his death a heavy blow to himself, expressing his deep regret and sorrow at his departure.²

Among others, al-Raḍī elegised two great statesmen. The first was al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād. Al-Raḍī praised him in his life and lamented his death but he never met him. His dirge on al-Ṣāhib is one of al-Raḍī's lengthy odes in his Dīwān. The other statesman was the vizier 'Amīd

1. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 666-668, 681-683; see also Ath. Vol. VII, p. 217.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 474, Vol. II, p. 591.

al-Jiyūsh who died in 401/1010.¹ Among religious personalities and judges, the poet lamented the "judge of judges" Abū Muhammad b. Ma'rūf (d. 381/991) and the 'Abbāsid naqīb Abū al-Qāsim al-Zaynabī (d. 384/994). He lamented another 'Abbāsid personality called Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Manṣūrī (d. 391/1000).²

In the third group of dirges al-Radī eulogised Arab princes and tribal leaders. Among them were two Hamdānid princes and two 'Uqaylid leaders.³ These dirges show us that the poet had political and friendly relationships with many leaders whose tribes and peoples possessed some political leverage on the capital Baghdad at that time. Al-Radī did not praise them elsewhere in his Diwān and never met them, as his dirges indicate. It is likely that he strengthened these links when he was about to put his ambitious claim to the caliphate into action and considered them a strong backing. These leaders were Shī'ite as well.

The most important bedouin leader whose death was a heavy blow to al-Radī was Abū al-'Awwām b. Laylā. This man was supposed to be al-Radī's propagandist. He was killed on his mission to win supporters to al-Radī's claim to the caliphate. The sad day of his death left a deep sorrow in the poet's memory for many years. He composed seven dirges in which he mourned his friend and regretted

1. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 670-676, Vol. III, p. 111.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 487, Vol. I, p. 114, Vol. II, p. 877.

3. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 175, 283, 477, 482, 489.

the loss of his hopes. He also mentioned this friend in other odes when he felt disappointed and alone. The last dated dirge on this bedouin friend was written in 393/1002.¹

The fourth group of his dirges was devoted to his intimate and firm friends. He lamented the loss of his teacher and friend Ibn Jinnī and of the outstanding friend of his youth Abū 'Alī al-Battī.² The loss of his favourite friend Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābī caused the poet deep sorrow and lasting pain. He lamented him in 384/994, but the sad memory of this loss lasted for many years. He remembered his friend in 387/997 when he passed by his tomb shedding tears and expressing his affection for him. In 393/1002 the poet lamented al-Ṣābī for the third time. He recalled the passing days in which the poet enjoyed the company of his friend. He also called al-Ṣābī his brother. The final dirge on him is filled with as much deep sorrow and profound longing as is reflected in the first dirge which had been written nine years before.³

Dirges on women occupy a notable section of al-Radī's elegy. We have already mentioned that the poet lamented his mother, sister and two daughters of his brother. In addition, he composed many consolatory odes in which he comforted his acquaintances on the loss of their daughters and mothers. Although the death of women

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 565, see also Vol. I, pp. 182, 431, 446, Vol. II, p. 759 among others.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 138, Vol. II, p. 562.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 294, Vol. II, pp. 571, 975.

in classical Arab poetry in general received less attention than that of men, our poet showed a keen interest in this subject in his dirges, as we shall learn in more detail later.

The list of dead persons who were lamented by the poet includes the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz. It is strange that al-Raḍī expressed his sorrow on the death of this Caliph despite the long and deep-rooted antagonism between the 'Alids and the Umayyads. However, the poet justified his dirge on the grounds that the Umayyads used to vilify the Imām 'Alī in the Khutbah and when 'Umar ruled he abolished it.¹ Al-Raḍī also elegised the Carmathian agent in Baghdad who lost his powerful position and influence in the capital in the final stage of his political life. Al-Raḍī appears faithful in his relationship with this man. He lamented his friend and disparaged the lack of loyalty among the deceased's friends. He mentioned that only three men followed the dead man's bier, one of whom was the poet himself.² The poet Ibn al-Hajjāj, who specialised in obscene poems filled with sexual references, received al-Raḍī's attention in his life and after his death. Our poet admired his poems and made a selection of his better ones. His death was recorded by a dirge written by al-Raḍī in which he expressed his sincerity and affection towards Ibn al-Hajjāj.³

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 169.

2. Ibid., p. 384.

3. D. R. Vol. II, p. 862.

The above simple classification of al-Radī's dirges shows us some interesting aspects of his elegy and also sheds light on the nature of his relationships and his real feeling towards family, friends and acquaintances. First of all, the poet seems to have lost a great number of those from the year 380/990 onwards. This loss coincided with an increase in his disappointment in his political career. In addition, al-Radī as an 'Alid had already inherited his family's historic sorrow and pains; and he showed signs of emotional instability and recurrent pessimism. All these motivating factors played their part in colouring his dirges with the touch of sorrow and tears.

Al-Radī deemed death, which caused him to lose his dear friends and family, one more great enemy attacking him in the course of his life. As a pessimistic man he always considered death and the vicissitudes of fate as his own enemies which waged constant war against him. In one of his elegies he says:

Will fate lay bare my bones every day.
Will it continue to devour my flesh bit by bit?

أَفِي حُلَّةٍ يَوْمَ يَفْرَقُ الدَّهْرُ عَظْمِي
وَيَنْسُقُ لِي جَانِبًا بَعْدَ جَانِبٍ ١

In another dirge he says:

Every day I turn my glance, time and
again, after a life-companion like
unto a star breathing its last breath.

فِي حُلِّ يَوْمِ أَكْرَ الظَّرْفَ مَلْتَقًا
وَرَاءَ نَجْمِ الدَّقَائِنِ ضَلَاخٌ

1

In his dirge on his sister he complained that fate would not cease causing him the loss of those whom he loved.

He says:

So how long shall I pass the night, with this
sin that the fates have committed against me? 2

فَلَمْ أَبَيْتُ رَعْنَدِي لَذِي الْمَقَادِيرِ ذَنْبٌ

3

The list also shows us that al-Raḍī gave great attention to his friends and companions who backed and encouraged him in his ambition to be a caliph. It seems as if the loss of intimate and firm friends caused him much more pain and sorrow than that of a number of his relatives. He lamented his mother in one dirge. Although the ode reflects his affection and love for her and bears his mournful feeling, he buried his sorrow after that and never remembered her again in his dirges. He did the same with regard to his father, sister and maternal uncle. However, in al-Raḍī's eyes, the death of his propagandist Abū al-ʿAwwām deserved seven dirges. This suggests that the loss of this man had a lasting sad memory in al-Raḍī's life. The death of al-Raḍī's friend the Ṣabeian writer Abū Ishāq caused al-Raḍī the same lasting pain.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 478.

2. Arberrry, Arabic Poetry, p. 107.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 133.

As we have already seen, he lamented him three times and made it clear that intimate friendship might be considered of much more importance than family ties. He addressed al-Ṣābi as follows:

You may not be one of my family and tribe,
but surely you are closer to my affection than anyone
of them.

إِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ مِنْ أَسْرَتِي وَعَشِيرَتِي
تَلَوْنَتْ أَعْلَقِي بَرًّا بَرْدَادِي

At the death of this friend al-Raḍī describes his tearful feeling as follows:

After him life no longer tastes sweet,
nor is rain-water cool anymore,
Your death turned everything into darkness
in my eyes.
My sight is lost, it is as if my pupils
have been washed away.

لَا مَطْعَمَ الدُّنْيَا بَعْدَهُ أَبَدًا لَا مَادَ الْهَيَا بَعْدَ
سَوْدَتْ مَا بَيْنَ الْقِيَامِ وَالْمَوْتِ وَفَعَلَتْ مِنْ عَيْنِي كُلَّ مَرَادٍ 1

The list and classification of al-Raḍī's dirges also reveals to us his openmindedness and tolerance as far as religious and sectarian differences were concerned. Ibn Khallikān tells us that when al-Raḍī composed his first dirge on al-Ṣābi the public rebuked him for his ode because he who was a Sharīf (a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad) had lamented the death of a Ṣabeān. But he replied, "It was his merit alone the loss of which I lamented".² However, al-Raḍī in comparison with his contemporaries,

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 294-298.

2. Ibn Kh. Vol. I, p. 32.

did not let religious and sectarian fanaticism drive him towards an intolerant attitude both in his life, in his relationships and in his poetry. In his elegy he lamented two 'Abbāsid personalities adding to his two dirges on the death of the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Tā'i'. He made it clear that he highly respected the family ties between the 'Abbāsids and 'Alids, although the former were considered by the Shī'ites and 'Alids the usurpers of the 'Alid right to the caliphate. It is strange that al-Radī regretted what had happened between these two branches.¹ In another elegy he lamented the 'Abbāsid Abū 'Abd-Allāh al-Mansūrī not only because he had been of 'Abbāsid descent but because he was also his friend. The poet declared again that he attached much more importance to his friendly relationship than to his family ties. He says:

My friends are my relatives and my
 companions are my family and my fellows are
 my brothers.

أصدقائي أقاربي وأهل
 في قبلي وأهوتي إخواني 2

Moreover, al-Radī, despite his religious position and Prophetic descent which demanded cautious conduct and exemplary behaviour, respected his literary relationships elegising the poet Ibn al-Hajjāj as follows:

I weep for you and those wide-
 spread verses whose words are filled with meaning.
 Let time long lament your loss
 You were the light spirit of the time.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 117.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 882.

بَيْتٌ لِلرَّادِّ السَّائِرِ نَ تَجِبُهُ الْفَاتِحَةُ بِالْمَدَنِ
 لِيَبْلُغَ الزَّمَانُ مُرِيدَ عِلِيلٍ فَقَدْ كُنْتُ خِفْتُ رَوْحَ الزَّمَانِ¹

Concerning the content and the artistic form of al-Radī's dirges, it is convenient to give an account of the sources of inspiration in his elegy, then to proceed to discuss the established artistic aspect of this theme. Al-Mutanabbī's dirges had an influence on al-Radī's elegy. Our poet, for instance, modelled one of his dirges on one by al-Mutanabbī. A close examination of those two dirges shows us that both used the same metre and rhyme letter. Moreover, our poet borrowed meanings from al-Mutanabbī's dirges. Even the subject-matter seems, to some extent, similar. Al-Mutanabbī elegised the prince Sayf al-Dawlah's mother and al-Radī lamented his daughter.² In another dirge al-Radī looked at the famous dirge of Ibn al-Rūmī on his son's death and borrowed meanings from it and improved upon them. He also used the same metre and rhyme letter that were applied by Ibn al-Rūmī.³

Al-Radī's elegy shows us that the poet had a wide acquaintance with the Hudhalite poetry. Many dirges of the Hudhalite poet served as models for his elegies when he lamented his bedouin companion Ibn Laylā. He was intent on making these dirges in word and spirit suitable

1. Ibid., pp. 863-864.

2. Ibid., pp. 679-680, compare with D. M. Vol. III, pp. 170-185.

3. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 291-292; see also Kāmil, Kaylānī Diwān Ibn al-Rūmī, Cairo 1924, pp. 29-31.

to his subject. Al-Radī in one of his dirgees on Ibn Laylā says:

By the life of the birds, on the day of Ibn Laylā's death, verily they bent on noble flesh.

1 لَمَرَ الطَّيْرُ، يَوْمَ تَوَيَّ ابْنُ لَيْلَى
لَقَدْ عَلَنَتْ عَلَى لَحْمٍ كَرِيمٍ

The above line was borrowed from Abū Khirāsh al-Hudhalī who says in one of his dirgees:

By the life of the father of the birds, gathering around Khālid, verily they fell on flesh.

2 لَمَرَ أَبِي الطَّيْرِ الْمَرْبَةِ فِي الْفِي
عَلَى خَالِدٍ لَقَدْ رَتَقْنَ عَلَى لَحْمٍ

In another dirge Abū Khirāsh says:

I knew not who throw his cloak over him, except that he was verily of illustrious and pure stock.

3 وَلَمْ أَدْرِ مَنْ أَلْفَى عَلَيْهِ رِدَاءَهُ
عَلَى أَنَّهُ قَدْ سَلَّ مِنْ مَاجِدٍ مَحْضٍ

Al-Radī also borrowed this idea and put it as follows:

Oh Ibn Laylā, I swear that your cloak is embraced with intact dignity.

4 وَأَتَمُّ أَنْ تَوَكَّبَ يَا ابْنَ لَيْلَى
لِجَمْدٍ عَلَى عَرْضِي سَلِيمٍ

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 759.

2. Mahmūd Abū al-Hafā, Diwān al-Hudhaliyyīn, 1st edn. Cairo, 1948, Part II, p. 154.

3. Ibid., p. 158.

4. D. R. Vol. II, p. 760.

Moreover, al-Raḍī not only borrowed many meanings from the Hudhalīto poetry but he also made use of their odes as models for his dirges.¹

The other important source from which al-Raḍī drew the inspiration for his dirges was Nahj al-Balāghah. Al-Raḍī in his poetry used to muse about time, the vicissitudes of fate, death and life and preach his opinion of the futility and misleading aspects of man's short life. His outlook is quite dark and pessimistic, with religious streaks. In this respect, points of similarity can be traced between al-Raḍī's ideas and the contents of the Nahj al-Balāghah which were collected and arranged by al-Raḍī himself, as we have already seen. Elements of despair, grief and deep sorrow, together with a cautious and suspicious outlook on life are evident in the Imām 'Alī's sayings and sermons.² The same spirit coloured al-Raḍī's poetry in general and his dirges in particular. The following examples illustrate the points of similarity between them. The Imām 'Alī deems this world a thoroughfare and the next the abode of permanent stay. He says:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا الدُّنْيَا دَارُ مَجَازٍ وَالْآخِرَةُ دَارُ قَرَارٍ .
3

Al-Raḍī used the same meaning in almost similar words. He

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1. Dīwān al-Hudhaliyyīn, Part II, pp. 18-29; see D. R. Vol. I, pp. 446-449; Ihsan 'Abbās, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī p. 220.
 2. Khulūṣy, Shī'ism, p. 100.
 3. Nahj al-Balāghah, ed. by Abū al-Faḍl, Vol. II, p. 3. see p. 191.

says:

منزلي دَلْعَةٌ رَلْبَتْ فُحْذاً كُ مجازاً لنا و هكذا فُتْراً

1

The Imām describes the life and people as follows:

إنما المرء في هذا الدنيا غرضٌ تنقل فيه المنايا
وربَّ تبارزه المصائب .

2

He also says:

إن الموت طالعٌ حثيثٌ لا يفوته المقيم ولد
يعزّه الحارب .

3

Al-Radī says:

وهل نحن الدّ راوي السام نجفها نابل دائب
هبائى للدمر صبرته نرد الى هذبا الحارب

4

In another dirge the poet also says:

نعم إننا الدنيا سمامٌ لطائم دهن لطارب رهم لطارب
نصدي لنا قرب المراميه ذي الهوى ديتنا كيد العدو المجانب

5

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 385.

2. Nahj al-Balāghah, ed. Abū al-Fadl, Vol. II, p. 350.

3. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 285, see Vol. II, p. 191.

4. D. R. Vol. I, p. 112.

5. Ibid., p. 119.

Al-Raḍī was keen on musing on life and death in his poetry in general. He made use of the contents of the Nahj al-Balāghah, repeating the same implication and similar words. He says:

فَأَوْلْنَا النِّسَاءَ إِذَا ضَلَّيْنَا
إِلَى الدُّنْيَا، دَأَخَرْنَا الزَّهَابَ¹

This line was quoted from the Imām 'Alī's saying which runs as follows:

مَا أَصْبَحْتُ مِنْ دَارٍ أَوْلَتْهَا نِسَاءً دَأَخَرُهَا نِسَاؤُ.²

In the Imām 'Alī's eyes, people of this world are asleep while they are driven towards their fate. He says:

أَهْلُ الدُّنْيَا لِرُكْبٍ يُأْتِيهِمْ رُكْبُهُمْ نِيَامَ.³

Al-Raḍī has a similar meaning. People in his eyes also are driven on by the driver of their fate. He says:

يَوْفَقُ لِلْقَادِرِ سَائِقُ تَنْلُبُ⁴

Generally speaking, al-Raḍī in his dirges not only borrowed meanings from the Nahj al-Balāghah but also assimilated the spirit of pessimism and disappointment of this work.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 101.

2. Nahj al-Balāghah, ed. Abū al-Faḍl, Vol. I, p. 150.

3. Nahj al-Balāghah, ed. Abū al-Faḍl, Vol. II, p. 320, see also Vol. II, p. 187.

4. D. R. Vol. I, p. 130.

In this respect there is much in common between them.

As for the artistic aspects of al-Radī's dirges, the first outstanding feature is the length of his elegiac odes. His dirge on al-Sāhib b. 'Abbād, for instance, numbers 112 lines. He also composed many odes with more than eighty lines. The poet paid such attention to the length of his dirges that, when he composed a short elegy, he excused its shortness.¹ It seems as if the prolonged and detailed dirges indicated the importance of the dead man on whom the lamentation was composed. However, the prolongation of his dirges led to undeniable shortcomings. First of all, he found himself constrained to speak round about the basic subject to the extent of taking away the attention from the main issue in his dirges. Secondly, the repetition of meanings, poetical pictures and even metaphors and similes became a noticeable feature of his dirges.

He opened his elegy on his friend al-Sāhib with a lengthy introduction in which he spoke of death and fate, then he drew on his historical erudition, reviewing those great persons who had passed away before his friend. These two points exhausted about fifty lines of the 112 which his dirge contains. The poet proceeded to enumerate the elegised person's deeds and qualities.² In his dirge on his maternal uncle he started speaking of the speedy passage of time and the inevitable end of one's life.

1. D. R. Vol. I. p. 491.

2. D. R. Vol. II. pp. 670-679.

then he expressed his pessimistic opinion of life and its misleading aspects. This introduction took sixteen lines out of 77. Then he found consolation in remembering those who had died, concluding that there is no escape from death. About twenty lines of this dirge were devoted to enumerating his family's virtues. Finally, he came to express his mournful feelings and describe the heavy blow he had received in losing his maternal uncle.¹

Repetition is another aspect of al-Raḍī's dirges. The poet seems to be particularly fond of certain meanings, expressions and descriptions which were abundantly applied. He used to compare a great person to a towering mountain in regard to his sublimity in his lifetime. When this person died his death is to be likened to a mountain's collapse. This traditional poetical picture can be seen in many of al-Raḍī's dirges. The second line of his dirge on al-Ṣābi runs as follows:

Like unto a mountain which tumbled down
Had it fallen into the sea, the sea
would have raged in incessant foam.

جبلٌ كهُوى لو هَرَّ في البحرِ اغتدى
من وقته فتابعَ اليزباد

A similar idea was applied again in the opening line of al-Raḍī's dirge on al-Ṣāhib in 385/995 - the poet says:

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 118-123.

2. Ibid., p. 294.

أَكْذَا الْمَنُونُ تُقْفَرُ الدُّبَالُ

أَكْذَا الزَّمَانُ يَضْمَعُ الدُّبَالُ¹

When the Caliph al-Tā'i⁴ died in 393/1002 the first line of al-Radī's dirge on him implies the same idea. The poet says:

أَيُّ طُودٍ ذَلِكَ بِنِ إِيْ جِبَالٍ

لَقَيْتُ أَرْضَهُ بِهَ بَعْدَ جِبَالٍ²

The death of al-Radī's father was likened to the collapse of a mountain as well. The poet says:

Today I have sheathed the sword
into moist ground and buried the mountain
of Maṭāli⁶ and Yalamlam.

الْيَوْمَ أَغْشَدْتُ الْمِغْدَ فِي الثَّرَى

وَدَفَنْتُ لَهْبَ مُتَالِجٍ وَيَلَمْلَمٍ³

Al-Radī in expressing his affection and love towards those who passed away, used to say that their images had a lasting memory in his mind and occupied his heart. This expression became a favourite and repeated picture in his elegy. In one of his dirges he says:

My eye can no longer see you,
but you filled my entire heart.
It is as if you had been removed from
my sight, only to dwell within my heart.

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 670.

2. Ibid., p. 666.

3. Ibid., p. 737.

فهد منك طرني راحلا منك فاطري

كأنك من عيني نطقت الى قلبي

1

When he lamented his sister he said:

If the eye is empty of you, yet
the heart has been filled with you.

لئن فهد منك طرفي

لقد قلبي منك قلب

2

The same meaning was applied in other odes and al-Radī transferred it from one poetical theme to another.³

Al-Radī in one of his works came to the conclusion that he preferred to compare death and the vicissitudes of fate to a violent raiding army when he wanted to describe the atrocity of death.⁴ He proved it practically and used such a simile many times in his dirges. When he wrote one of his elegies in 377/987 this description made itself felt. He says:

These days are but like cavaliers
chasing us, and calamities are like horses.

وما هذه الأيام الا فراس

تطاررنا ، النبايات قول

5

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 138.

2. Arberrry, Arabic Poetry, p. 104; see D. R. Vol. I, p. 133.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 392, see pp. 138, 139.

4. Majāzāt, p. 31.

5. D. R. Vol. II, p. 662.

In the course of his poetical development al-Radī improved upon this poetical picture and enlarged it as well. Then he made it an aspect of many of his dirges. He often described death as if it were a stormy attack against himself and those whom he loved. He also wished that it were possible to repel death and fate from overtaking them. In his dirge on his sister he says:

If thrusting and striking could have
repelled from you the hasty fates
A sharp lance-point would have penetrated
into them, and a keen sword hit (the joint),
And sturdy-armed, thick-necked men
would have stood in the way
of doom.

لو ردّ عنك المنايا دار مجال طعن وضرب
لما ضاع منها سنان حاضيه رجلي غضب
وقام دون الروى غد ظ الرعد غلب

1

The expression of defending deceased persons in al-Radī's dirges has also close connections with his theme of self-praise in which he constructed his imaginary world and mentioned some imaginary chivalrous supporter. In his elegy he did not miss the opportunity of describing his heroes as well. However, al-Radī in his lamentation often regretted that he was not able to defend the dead and repel fate from them.²

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 132, ed. by Arberry, Arabic Poetry, p. 102.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 18, 114, 295, 479, Vol. II, p. 880 among others.

The other artistic aspect of al-Raḍī's dirges is the increased use of the interrogative forms when he intends to enumerate the virtues and qualities of the dead. This traditional method can be traced to the Jāhilite and early Islamic period.¹ In general, in Arab dirges questions are anxiously asked: who will now make a firm resolve, protect the people, help the poor, overcome the enemy and entertain strangers.² This sort of question is introduced to confirm that the deceased's virtues and the abilities which he had possessed in his life were great and unattainable. In the 'Abbāsid poetry this traditional expression was still alive, for instance, in al-Buḥturī and al-Mutanabbī's poems, but these two poets economised in the use of this sort of expression.³

Al-Raḍī increased the use of this sort of question in his dirges and also improved upon it. He applied it in two ways. The first is that he used to open his dirges by astonishing and repeated questions addressed to listeners. The use of this interrogation is to attach a greater importance to the statement he wants to put forward in the opening lines of his dirge in which he announces the departed man's death. His dirge on al-Ṣābī is a case in point. It begins as follows:

1. al-Khaṣā' Diwān, ed. by Karam al-Bustānī, Beirut 1951, pp. 27, 63, 95.

2. Nicholson op. cit., p. 126.

3. D. B. Vol. I, p. 215. Vol. II, p. 257; see also D. M. Vol. I, p. 300, Vol. III, p. 21.

Have you known whom they bore aloft
on the bier?
Have you seen how the light of our
assemblies is extinguished?

أَعْلَمْتَ مَنْ حَمَلُوا عَلَى الدُّنُودِ أَرَأَيْتَ كَيْفَ هَبَا فِيهَا، الْفَادِي¹

He applied this form of opening in his dirge on al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād and repeated it six times.² He used it in many other odes as well.³ Secondly, when the poet enumerated the virtues and glories of the dead, like traditional poets he applied the repeated questioning form to number the deceased man's qualities and lament on them. Al-Raḍī in his dirge on his friend and teacher Ibn Jinnī used long and repeated questions when he made references to his teacher's special gifts. He says:

Who will now undertake to lead the
refractory camel of speech to drink?
Who will now fling words like
piercing darts?
Who is there now to deal with
poetical conceits which were flung in
sacks before him?
Who would unlock the secrets of such
conceits? 4

فَمَنْ لِّدَوَائِي الْقَوْلِ يُبْلِغُ عِزًّا
وَيُخَفِّضُ هَذَفَ الْبَنَاءِ الْهَوَارِقِ
رَحْنٌ لِلْعَائِي فِي الْأَلَمِ الْقَيْتِ
إِلَى بَاقِرٍ غَيْبِ الْمَائِي وَمَاتِ⁵

1. D. R. Vol. I. p. 294; Ibn Kh. Vol. I. p. 32.

2. D. R. Vol. II. p. 670.

3. D. R. Vol. I. p. 111, 114, 269 among others.

4. Mez. pp. 273-274; see I. C. Vol. VI. 1932, pp. 150-151.

5. D. R. Vol. II. p. 564.

Questions beginning with where, when and who are frequently introduced in al-Raḍī's dirges and this artistic aspect forms a notable section in many odes written by him in all stages of his poetical development.¹

Another distinguishing aspect of al-Raḍī's dirges is that he was successful in making his dirge suitable in word, spirit and content to the person on whom he lamented. It is likely that al-Tha'ālibī in the Yatimah referred to this point when he stated that al-Raḍī dealt with his dirges skilfully. Although al-Raḍī was fond of talking around his basic subject, he succeeded in concentrating, to some extent, on the qualities and gifts of the dead, and generally made his dirge in harmony with his subject-matter with regard to style, metaphors, similes and words.

In his dirge on the poet Ibn al-Hajjāj who specialised in obscenity and jokes, al-Raḍī abandoned the traditional method which he used to apply in his elogy. This dirge seems to be lighter and simpler than others. He only expressed his personal sorrow and described the poet's gift, considering him a light spirit of time. When he lamented the bedouin leaders he drew his similes and descriptions from bedouin life and desert scenes. He adopted this method when he lamented his companion the bedouin Ibn Laylā as we have already seen. He also did the same in elegising other tribal leaders. The opening lines of his dirges on these leaders breathed the spirit

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 175, 285, 296, 379, 474.
Vol. II, pp. 592, 665, 670, among others.

of the desert. Tribal fanaticism made itself felt in them as well.

In one of his dirges on the 'Uqaylid leader al-Muqallad, the poet addressed the tribe of the dead as follows:

Oh 'Amir you are not up to today's
fight, nor tomorrow's,
since al-Muqallad died you have
been girdled with shame till the end
of time.
After your glory, you have become
like a muzzled beast which
marches (obediently) in humiliation when
it is driven.

أُعاذُ ! لا لليوم، أنتَ ولا الغد،
تقلدتَ ذلَّ الدهر بعد القلْد

واصبحتَ كالمنحطوم من بعد عزّة
نقى 'خيدٌ مائة على الضم يُنقد¹

In the rest of his dirge the poet depicted the dead man as a cavalier with all the qualities which were admired in desert life. In the same manner he lamented many other tribal leaders. In one of his dirges on them the opening line runs as follows:

Oh places of pasture, there
is no longer protector or guardian.
Death took away the mighty man of the
long lance.

منابت القب لأحياء ولا راع
مضى الردى بطويل الرمح والباع

2

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 285.

2. Ibid., p. 477.

When he lamented the Hamdānīd prince Abū Ṭahir b. Nāṣir al-Dawlah he also adopted the same method. He addressed the dead man's tribe as follows:

Oh Rabi'ah b. Nizār, lay
down your arms.
Death has caused to perish your great and
daring leader.

ألفي السلام ربيعة بن نزار
أودي الردي يقرصه المنصور¹

The style in the above dirge is of a high standard of eloquence according to Arab traditional taste and the desert spirit made itself felt on every line. The famous grammarian Ibn Jinnī admired this ode among others and appreciated its eloquence and richness of meanings. He wrote a commentary on it.

3 - Dirges on Women

In ancient Arab poetry, poets in general attached scant attention to lamenting women.² Lamentation on mother, sister, wives or other female members of the family did not form a notable section in elegy, at least down to al-Radī's time. It is likely that such kind of mourning might be considered a sign of weakness.³ However,

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 378.

2. Among Arab poets who lamented women are: Ḥassān b. Thābit in the early Islamic periods and Muslim b. al-Walid in the 'Abbāsīd era, see Ḥassān b. Thābit, Diwān, Beirut 1961, p. 199 and Sharḥ Diwān al-Ḥamāṣah, op. cit., part II, p. 942. See D. M. Vol. IV, pp. 288-299; Ibn al-Rūmī, Diwān, pp. 80, 305.

3. Zakī Mubārak, 'Abqariyyat al-Sharīf al-Radī, Cairo 1952, Vol. II, p. 70.

in the eyes of the critic Ibn Rashīq, dirges on women are rather difficult.¹ It is probable that poets did not find established traditional principles to follow in this respect.

Al-Radī paid noticeable attention to dirges on women. This may have been due in part to his mother's influence. Al-Radī himself in his dirge on his mother broke with tradition and exposed his weakness at the loss of his mother. He says:

(Because of you) I lost my firmness and
forebearance and forgot my glory and strength.

فَارَقْتُ نِيلَ نَسَائِي وَجَبَلِي رَنَيْتُ نِيلَ تَفَرُّزِي رُبَانِي

In his mother he saw the ideal image of the devoted woman which can be equal if not superior to man. He says:

Had every woman been devoted like
you, sons would have been content with a
mother rather than a father.

لَوْ كَانَ نَيْلُكَ كُلُّ أُمٍّ كَبْرَةٍ
غَنِي الْبَنُونَ بِهَا عَنِ الْآبَاءِ ٢

Such a high estimation of his mother as a woman may have had some bearing on al-Radī's opinion of women in general. It may provide an answer to the reason for about ten dirges which our poet devoted to them.

1. 'Umdah, Vol. II, p. 124.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 19. Compare with al-Mutanabbī's dirge on Sayf al-Dawlah's mother, D. M. Vol. III, p. 182.

Al-Radī lamented Taqiyyah bint Sayf al-Dawlah, the woman who had admired his poetry and requested a copy of it. Mothers and daughters of his friends and acquaintances were elegised as well as his brother's two daughters. The poet seems to have had some difficulties in dealing with this subject. Apparently, he had little to say about the basic point and much more to say around it. In general, he preferred to introduce his opinion of life and death, adding to the praise of the family or tribe of the dead woman, and combining them with consolation. In his dirge in which he lamented the vizier Abū Mansūr's mother he devoted only three lines to the dead woman and the rest is a mixture of praise and consolation to the vizier himself.¹ In the same manner he elegised the sisters of another vizier. He referred to the deceased in just three lines and used the remainder of his dirge to comfort and praise this vizier.²

Al-Radī in his dirges on his mother and sister had many things to say relating to the subject-matter. He expressed his sorrow and tearful feelings but the length of his dirges drove him to swell them by rambling round the basic point. His dirge on his sister, for instance, consists of seventy six lines. It begins with a description of lightning which takes up twelve lines. The poet then speaks of his departed family, of his tribe and people during the course of time, aiming to comfort himself that there is no escape from death. Musing takes

1. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 833-835.

2. Ibid., pp. 677-679.

twenty two lines of his dirge. Then he proceeds to speak of fate and the vicissitudes of time. He devotes to this point seven lines. The poet has already exhausted more than half of his dirge dwelling round his basic subject before beginning to address his sister.

In general, the lines in which he expressed his sad feeling are genuine and filled with deep sorrow and pain. They illustrate his affection and sincere brotherly ties. He says:

My sister! a calamity that assailed
you was a calamity indeed,
And a misfortune which struck me down,
being far from you, was hard to bear.
After you, grief and distress are my
bed-fellows. 1

شقيقتي إن فطماً عدا عليها لظلماً
وإن رزواً راني بالبعد منك لصباً
بيت في رضى هي الجوى والكرب

He also says:

It is as though every day my heart
yearns more strongly for you,
And as soon as the wound is healed, a fresh
scar is formed on my heart.
The falling of my glance is weary of other
than you, and grows dim. 2

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1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 132, the English version is quoted from Arberrry, Arabic Poetry, p. 102.
 2. Arberrry, Arabic Poetry, p. 104; D. R. Vol. I, p. 132.

كَأَنِّي كُلُّ يَوْمٍ قَلْبِي إِلَيْكَ أَصَبُّ
 وَكَلِمَاتِي أَدُلُّ قَرْمِ عَادَ قَلْبِي نَدَبُ
 بِكَلِّ رَاتِعٍ طَرَفِي مَحْنِ هَوَاكَ وَنَيْبِ

In general, al-Radi dealt with elegy skilfully, with many personal and individual touches in the details. In comparison with his predecessors and contemporaries, his lamentations on women form a distinct section of his elegy which deserves attention.

CHAPTER IX

SHĪ'ISM IN AL-RADĪ'S POETRY

We are a people doomed to
misfortune,
we gladly accepted our fate

نحن قومٌ قسمَ الله لنا
بالزأيا، مرضينا بالقسم

al-Radī

1 - Shi'ism in History

Shi'ism made its first appearance on the political and religious scene in the form of the Imām 'Alī's supporters when Muslims split on the question of the prophet's successor. Those who advocated and supported 'Alī's right to succeed the Prophet formed the early Shi'ites.¹ There is no doubt that Shi'ism originated on genuine Arab soil. As time passed Shi'ism swelled with extremist trends and also outlandish elements. The Messianic doctrine of the saviour appeared in the Shi'ite circle probably owing to Jewish-Christian influences. The Shi'ite form of opposition became welcome to clients in general and the Iranians in particular. These readily identified themselves with this movement and from their old inherited ideas of a divine kingship developed the theory of the divine right of the 'Alids to the caliphate.²

Shi'ites themselves divided into different sects when they disagreed over the personality of each subsequent Imām after the martyrdom of al-Husayn. Many extremist branches now appeared among which were the Kaysāniyyah and the Saba'iyyah. The moderate wing, the Zaydite, made its appearance under the leadership of the Imām Zayd b.

1. E. I. art. Shi'ah. See also Duhā, Vol. III, pp. 208-209.

2. Goldziher, Mohammed and Islam, tr. by Kate Chambers Seelye, New Haven Yale University Press 1917, p. 256. Compare with J. Wellhausen The Arab Kingdom and its fall, tr. by Margaret Graham Weir, Beirut 1963, p. 68. See Nicholson op. cit., 1969, p. 214.

'Alī. In the 'Abbāsid period the Imāmites became a distinguished Shī'ite sect¹ which has persisted up to the present day. In the political struggle the Shī'ites under the leadership of the 'Alids and other pro-'Alid leaders continued a deadly strife and revolt against the Umayyads who were considered usurpers. The list of 'Alid martyrs increased during the course of history. The Umayyads treated them cruelly and put them down mercilessly.² Consequently, grief, disappointment, hatred and anger coloured their life and left deep impressions on their memories. They had a short period of relief when the 'Abbāsid kingdom was established in the name of the Hāshimite victory. But the Hāshimite party which consisted of the 'Alids and 'Abbāsids now split and the latter deemed themselves the legitimate heirs of the Prophet, denying the right of the 'Alids. The 'Alids with the support of their partisans resumed their unsuccessful struggle against their cousins the 'Abbāsids who exemplified the continuity of oppression and injustice and became the new usurpers of the 'Alid's right to the caliphate as 'Alids and Shī'ites believed. So cruel was the 'Abbāsid treatment of their cousins that the latter were soon to consider the Umayyad treatment of them as just, by comparison.³

1. Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan. Tārīkh al-Islām al-Siyāsī, 2nd edn., Cairo 1948, Vol. I, pp. 308-316.

2. Duhā, Vol. III, pp. 277-279.

3. Duhā, Vol. III, 1936, p. 381. See also Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 113-129.

Before the advent of the fourth Islamic century the 'Alid revolution in the political field seems to have come to an end both in theory and practice. As far as the Imāmites in Iraq were concerned, though they carried on a sort of passive opposition to the ruling class, they made no significant effort to risk their necks in claiming the caliphate through revolutionary means. Even in the Būwayhid period when the Shī'ites enjoyed a prosperous and tolerant time they concentrated their activities in the theological and intellectual fields while their 'Alid leaders contented themselves with the privileged position which they had acquired. The political struggle which had carried on between the 'Alids and the 'Abbāsids was mostly replaced by sectarian disputes between their followers the Sunnites and Shī'ites. Each sect raked up the past and lived on the memory of its celebrated champions. The Shī'ites for their part revived the "day of the Ghadīr" on which they alleged that the prophet had appointed 'Alī his successor. They also observed the "day of 'Ashūrā'" on which al-Husayn was martyred, shedding their tears and expressing their loyalty and lasting sorrow.

2 - Shī'ism in Poetry

Shī'ite poetry was a vivid and living record of the Shī'ite movement in its first appearance, development, division and failure. This poetry portrayed the tragic side of Shī'ism and the unfortunate 'Alid leadership.

It also dramatised the events which occurred in the course of Shī'ite strifes. Moreover, Shī'ite doctrines, convictions and feelings made themselves felt in this poetry. Among the first pro-⁶Alid poets was Abū al-Aswad al-Dū'allī. He was the Imām 'Alī's friend and remained unwavering in his Shī'ite convictions.¹ He praised the Imām 'Alī in his life and lamented his death. His poems reflect the early Shī'ite conviction in its simplicity and spontaneity. The poet expressed his love and affection for the Imām praising his Islamic virtues and his close connection with the prophet. In his dirge Abū al-Aswad adopted the method in which traditionalist poets used to praise their tribal leaders. In general, there is no room in this poetry for extremist trends or outlandish elements.²

Al-Husayn's martyrdom after his abortive rebellion against the Umayyads marked a turning point in the Shī'ite movement as well as in Shī'ite poetry. Mourning for al-Husayn became a permanent and tragic aspect of Shī'ite poems. Meanwhile, the Shī'ites, who called the Imām al-Husayn to come to their town al-Kūfah and then betrayed him, bore the brunt of repentance. This tendency made itself felt in an off-shoot of Shī'ite poetry which is called "Shī'r al-Tawwābīn", the poems of repentance. In this poetry there is also a call for revenge and retaliation

1. Jurjī Zaydān. Tārīkh Adāb al-Lughah al-⁶Arabiyyah. 3rd edn., Cairo 1936, Vol. I, p. 235.

2. Aghānī, Vol. XII, pp. 321-329. See also I. A. 'Alī, Malāmīh qasīdat al-Tashayyū' wa Taṭawwurahā fī al-qarn al-Rābi', Majallat al-Jāmi'ah al-Mustansiriyyah Baghdad 1970, No. I, p. 98.

on the 'Alids' enemies.¹ In the meantime, the extremist branches in the Shī'ite movement were represented in poetry. The two extremist poets al-Sayyid al-Himyarī (d. 173/789) and Kuthayyir 'Azzah (d. 105/723) advocated the extreme Shī'ite school which is called al-Kaysāniyyah. They believed that the son of 'Alī, Muhammad b. al-Manafiyyah was alive and never died and that he would return at the right moment.² This messianic side of Shī'ite poetry became a permanent aspect from this time onwards as we shall learn later.

Shī'ite poetry in the Umayyad period was also characterised by its polemical tone. Poets put forward statements against those who deprived the 'Alids of their right to the throne as the Shī'ites believed. These statements in the poetry of the extremists like al-Himyarī, for instance, were combined with the abuse of the early Orthodox Caliphs and the expression of hatred towards them because they were considered usurpers of the 'Alid right. In addition, the Imām 'Alī's personality and also those of his heirs were clothed with legends and myths. Al-Himyarī and Kuthayyir represented this trend openly.³ This fictitious side of Shī'ite poetry continued down to the fourth Islamic century and established itself in this sort of poem.

1. Yūsuf Khulayf, Hayāt al-Shī'r fī al-Kūfah ilā Nihāyat al-qarn al-Thānī al-Hijrī, Cairo 1968, pp. 377-378. See also Khulayf op. cit., p. 300.

2. Aghānī, Vol. IX, p. 14.

3. Aghānī, Vol. VII, pp. 244, 256, 262; see Vol. IX, p. 14.

The moderate Shī'ite sect "the Zaydites" had its own advocate. The poet al-Kumayt b. Zayd (d. 126/744) according to the Zaydite doctrines never attacked the Orthodox Caliphs and the prophet's companions as the extremist poets used to do. He paid great attention to vindicating the truth of the Shī'ite articles of faith and supported the vindication by logically argued proofs.¹ This distinguishing feature of his poetry was inherited by Shī'ite poets and became a traditional section in their poetry. The Hāshimīyyāt of al-Kumayt are also characterised by their political implications. The poet criticised the Umayyad rule describing its corruption and oppression, and considered this family perverted according to the Shī'ite point of view. Meanwhile, he advocated the legitimate right of the 'Alids, shedding his tears on the tragedy of the prophet's home.² In general, Shī'ite poetry in the Umayyad period represented the different sects and also mirrored their tendencies. It is also characterised by anger and hatred shrouded by deep feelings of grief and sorrow. Its political function was obvious as well.

The advent of the 'Abbāsid period was celebrated by Shī'ite poets who also called on the rulers to revenge the 'Alids on the remains of the defeated Umayyad family. Meanwhile, a considerable amount of inflammatory poetry was composed against the defeated rulers, mostly by the

1. Al-Kumayt b. Zayd, Sharh al-Hāshimīyyāt with commentary by Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Rāfi'ī, Cairo 1912, pp. 34, 39, 71; see also Khulūsy op. cit., p. 226.

2. Al-Kumayt op. cit., pp. 26, 68, 69, 81.

poets Sudayf b. Maymūn and Ibrāhīm b. Haramah.¹ But the days of peace between the two Hāshimite branches the 'Alids and the 'Abbāsids did not last long. Shortly after their victory hostility broke out. Consequently, the poets of this period also divided into two main camps: the pro-'Alids and the pro-'Abbāsids. The former advocated the 'Alid divine right to the caliphate and the latter deemed the 'Abbāsids the legitimate successors of the Prophet.² The 'Alid tragedy continued and became more serious at the hands of the 'Abbāsids. The Shī'ite poets also pursued their struggle against the so-called new usurpers of the 'Alid right, shedding their tears on the martyrdom of the 'Alid leaders.

The passionate Shī'ite poet Di'bil al-Khuzā'i (765-860) well exemplified the development of Shī'ite poetry and its traditional aspect which came down through two centuries. His odes in general show us that the political implications of this poetry were still important. The poet severely criticised the 'Abbāsid caliphs exposing their deviation from the right path of Islam. He described the Caliph Hārūn as the worst of men and the 'Abbāsids as a whole as even more unworthy of the caliphate than the Umayyads.³ He made it clear that people in the 'Abbāsid period seem to have been estranged from their

1. Aghānī, Vol. IV, pp. 346-347.

2. Duhā, Vol. III, pp. 306-308; see also I. A. 'Alī, Malāmih Qasīdat al-Tashayyū', pp. 102-103.

3. E. I. art. Di'bil, written by A. Schaade.

rulers.¹ The tragedy of Karbalā' held a noticeable position in Di'bil's poetry and the praise of the 'Alids' virtues was given attention as well. Meanwhile, the theme of the Imām's return which had occurred in early Shī'ite poetry re-emerged in his poetry.²

In the fourth Islamic century the 'Alid strife to gain the caliphate seems to have faded after the collapse of many attempts. Their followers' hopes fell back on expectation of the Imām's return. The Imāmites or Twelvers who formed the most important Shī'ite sect in Baghdad and Iraq in al-Radī's time believed that the twelfth Imām al-Mahdī disappeared in his own home. He did not die but went into concealment from whence he would return at the end of time.³ The Shī'ite Imāmites lived on their hope and their leaders also laid down their arms.⁴ Consequently, the messianic hope became frequent in the Shī'ite poetry of the fourth Islamic century. They pinned their hopes of revenge on the 'Alids' enemies on the Imām's return from his concealment.⁵

The other distinguishing feature of Shī'ite poetry in the fourth Islamic century was the increased use of

1. al-Amīnī op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 249, 356, 375.

2. Yāqūt, Vol. IV, p. 196; see Khulū'ey op. cit., p. 282.

3. Kāmil Muṣṭafa al-Shaybī, al-Silah Bayn al-Tasawwuf wa al-Tashayyū', Baghdad 1963, Vol. I, pp. 242-243. See also the footnote to p. 243; see Von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam, p. 193.

4. 'Abd al-Razzāq Muhyī al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 73.

5. D. T. Vol. I, p. 145, Vol. II, p. 29, see D. R. Vol. I, pp. 35, 377.

legends and myths which clothed the personality of the Imām 'Alī and his sons. This legendary aspect of Shī'ite poetry can be traced to the poet al-Sayyid al-Himyārī but it became limited during the course of time until it was abundantly revived in al-Radī's day. Many Shī'ite poets paid great attention to the versification of some of supposed Prophetic traditions which were related by Shī'ite transmitters serving the 'Alids' claim and the Shī'ites' convictions. These and other accounts portrayed the Imām's personality as superior to human nature and clothed it with mythical power and supernatural attributes. The poets Mihyār and al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād were fond of depicting this fictitious side in their poetry. Among many legends which these Shī'ite poets often repeated was one telling that on 'Alī's account the sun was caused to remain in the horizon without setting. Another recounted that the Imām killed the 'Afreets during the battle of Badr.¹

The sectarian struggle and intensive antagonism between the Sunnites and Shī'ites made itself felt in Shī'ite poetry. Meanwhile, the Sunnites and their champions received acute criticism and frequent heavy attacks. The Sunnite poets defended their cause and champions in return. The two poets and famous writers al-Khawārizmī and Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadānī gave vivid examples of polemical poems in which they attacked each other and both argued

1. al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād, Diwān, ed. Muhammad Husayn Al Yāsīn, Baghdad 1965, p. 69; D. Y. Vol. III, p. 115.

on sectarian and religious points of view.¹ Mihiyār was also considered among Shī'ite poets who used to curse the Sunnites and their champions while 'Alī b. 'Yasā al-Sukkarī was called the poet of the Sunnites because he used to glorify the Orthodox Caliphs and oppose the Shī'ites.² Al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād was also involved in this poetical dispute, as his Diwān reveals.³

Another noticeable aspect of Shī'ite poetry in this period is that most of it was composed on the scenes of the 10th of 'Ashūrā', the day of al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom, to describe its tragedy and horror. The day of al-Ghadīr was also celebrated by Shī'ite poets. They considered it their religious festival because the Prophet had assigned 'Alī as his successor on that day. A glance at Shī'ite poetry in the fourth Islamic century shows us that many odes were written on the anniversaries of these two events. In addition, among the poetical works of the Shī'ite poets there are many odes which are suitable for reciting in a public lamentation on al-Ḥusayn. Here is an example of al-Radī's odes which is still used for this purpose up to the present. He says:

Oh Karbalā' you are still a misfortune
and calamity, what the sons of al-Muṣṭafā (the prophet)
suffered with you.
How much blood was shed upon your soil,
when they were murdered? and how many tears were
spilled?

1. Yāqūt, Vol. I, pp. 114-116.

2. Jaw. Vol. VIII, p. 10; Ibn Kathīr op. cit., Vol. XII, p. 15; Ibn Shahrāshub op. cit., p. 148; see D. Y. Vol. IV, pp. 202, 236.

3. al-Ṣāhib, Diwān, pp. 97, 170.

كُرْبِلَا لَدُنِّي كَرَبًا دَبْلَا
 مَا لَقِيَ عِنْدَكَ آلُ الْمُضَنَّى
 كَمْ عَلَى تَرْجِيٍّ لَمَّا صُرِعُوا
 مِنْ دِيْمٍ سَالٍ مِنْ دَعَجٍ جَرِي

1

In the Diwān of al-Sāhib there are many odes which were composed with a view to their being sung by al-Sāhib's favourite singers called al-Makkī and al-Kūfī. He often ended his Shī'ite dirges with a specific request to them to sing or recite his poems.²

3 - Shī'ism in al-Radī's poetry

Al-Radī, as we have already seen, was an Imāmite in the broadest sense and a descendant of the Prophet's family. It is natural that, like other 'Alid heirs, he felt aggrieved from his birth. He also inherited the sense of tragedy of his family and shouldered the burden of its sorrow and oppressions, which came down to him through centuries of suffering and victimization. Moreover, al-Radī not only believed in the superiority of the Imām 'Alī and his heirs and their divine right to the caliphate, but also considered himself one of those heirs who was destined to suffer and to strive to regain this legitimate right. He considered himself the most able in his time to take on this responsibility.³ It is clear that his 'Alid background played its part in

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 33.

2. al-Sāhib, Diwān, pp. 114-119; see also M. A. Mu'īd Khān, art. al-Sāhib I.C. 1943, p. 197.

3. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 660, 836, 847, 848.

stimulating his aspiration towards the caliphate.

Shi'ite convictions, terms and doctrines found their way into al-Radi's poetry in close connection with his own personal aims and concerns. Furthermore, his failure to attain his goal led him to the conclusion that the continuity of oppression and injustice was much the same as it had been before as far as the 'Alid family and al-Radi himself were concerned. In his eyes, loss of faith and renegation of promises made in the past still existed in his time and those who broke their promise and treated the Prophet's heirs mercilessly had their counterparts in his time.¹ Apparently, he accepted his misfortune and fate but he did not conceal his profound sorrow and grief. He referred to his family's calamities as follows:

We are a people doomed to misfortune,
we gladly accepted our fate.

نحن قوم سقم الله لنا بالزاياء رضينا بالقسم
2

Al-Radi in this line very likely refers to the calamities of the Prophet's family which had been foretold both in the Prophetic traditions and 'Ali's sayings which were handed down by Shi'ite transmitters. These accounts imply that misfortunes would await the 'Alid family.³

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 282-283, Vol. II, p. 660.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 849.

3. Muhammad b. Ali b. Babawayh, Amali al-Shaykh al-Saduq Najaf 1970, pp. 100-103; see also Goldziher, Mohammed and Islam, p. 226.

In general, Shī'ism made itself felt in different poetical themes of al-Raḡī's poetry. It can be shown in eulogy and self-praise, as we have already seen. There are also references to it in his dirges. In his eulogy he made use of Shī'ite accounts which were intended to magnify the 'Alid family. He made them serve his cause and his claim to the caliphate. In one of his odes he praised his father, mentioning the day of al-Ghadīr¹. In addition, in line with Imāmite convictions he came to the conclusion that there was no doubt about the superiority and the supernatural qualities of the Imām 'Alī. He reiterated that he was the son of Muḥammad and 'Alī and his mother was Fāṭimah the Prophet's daughter. He says:

Is it not enough for you that your mother
is Fāṭimah, your father Ḥaydarah ('Alī) your
forefather the Prophet.

أرما كناك بأنك ناهم
وأبوك عبدة ربهك أحمد²

The poet also made use of Shī'ite accounts and traditions for his own political purposes of claiming the caliphate and to make it known that those who held power were unworthy rulers. He did not identify those rulers. However, it is likely that he meant all leaders who assumed power and neglected the 'Alid right. He says:

Bring back the heritage of Muḥammad
bring it back.
The staff (of the caliphate) is not yours,
neither is the garment (of the Prophet)

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 330.

2. Ibid., p. 314.

رَدُّوا ثَوَاتَ خَدِّ رَدِّ
لِي الْقَضِبُ لَكُمْ رَدُّ الْبَرْدِ¹

In the same poetical piece al-Radī made use of the Imām 'Alī's saying in which he considered the people in general his protégés. The poet took this point to strengthen his claim to the caliphate and considered the people protégés of the 'Alid heirs, as his line indicates. He says:

In us they were honoured, for the cause
of our grandfather they were born, where they were
counted they were our protégés.

سَوْنُوا بِنَا رَجُلَنَا خَلِقُوا² رَهْمُ ضَائِقُنَا إِذَا عُدُّوا²

Al-Radī portrayed the Imām 'Alī as the noblest hero of Islam in history, endowed with supernatural qualities and powers. Like other Shī'ite poets, he believed that the Imām 'Alī had no rival in bravery, decency, courage and wisdom; proofs which were observed in his life and in every battle in which the Imām performed his heroic deeds. Al-Radī also referred to 'Alī's mythical power and superhuman personality. He mentioned in his poetry that on account of the Imām 'Alī the sun was caused to remain without setting. The poet also enumerated 'Alī's virtues not for only historical sectarian purposes as other Shī'ite poets did, but to attribute these deeds and glories to himself as one of 'Alī's heirs. He often

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 313.

2. Ibid., p. 313, see also the intro. p. 56.

came to conclude that he was the best among people in accordance with his inheritance.¹

Al-Radī often identified the Imām 'Alī by the term executor (al-wasī) which means, according to the Imāmite belief, that the Prophet appointed him his successor on the "day of al-Ghadir". Al-Radī repeated the term al-wasī frequently making it serve his own purpose as well. When he boasted of himself with reference to his unbounded ambition he always stated that he was the son of both Muhammad and his executor. He says:

I am the son of the prophet of God
and the son of his executor
It is glory excelling its counterpart and equal.

أَنَا ابْنُ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ وَابْنُ وَصِيٍّ
نَحَارُ عِلًّا عَنْ نَزْوٍ وَضَرْبِهِ ٢

Broadly speaking, al-Radī succeeded in creating and maintaining a close connection between Shī'ite convictions and opinions with regard to the 'Alid family and his own aspiration and aims. He made it clear that the 'Alid tragedy was his own and this caused him profound sorrow and pain. He also deemed the glorious 'Alid heritage as his own and this gave him an inexhaustible theme for his poetry.

Al-Radī's opinion of the Imām al-Mahdī's return seems to be obscure in his Shī'ite and other poetry.

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1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 194-195; see p. 278 among others.
 2. Ibid., p. 108; see also Vol. I, p. 89, Vol. II, p. 819 among others.

This important dogma in Imāmite circles, as we have already said, implies that the twelfth Imām, al-Mahdī, would return from his concealment to re-establish justice and remove the oppression which had been imposed on the 'Alids and their adherents. Shī'ite poets, as we have seen, often referred to this Imām's return. Al-Radī in one of his odes enumerated the twelve Imāms according to Imāmite belief and mentioned al-Mahdī as the final one for whom people would await. This implies that the 'Alids and their adherents could feed on this dream and there was no need to fight or to revenge the 'Alid family as the saviour would come to re-establish justice. However, al-Radī in many other odes pledged himself to fight to revenge his 'Alid family and restore the caliphate to himself. The poet threatened to wage a bloody war to obtain his goal and assume the caliphate. He made it clear that he would not consider himself the son of the Prophet's daughter if he ceased to fight.¹ He never mentioned the Mahdī's return again in his poetry.

This revolutionary element in his Shī'ite belief implies a contradiction to the Imāmite dogma of the Imām's return. It is clear that the Zaydites conceived of their Imām as an active fighter and belligerent leader of believers, while the Imāmites considered their Imām a passive leader attaching themselves to the Hidden Imām's return and pinning their hope on his reappearance.²

1. D. R. Vol. I. p. 377, Vol. II, pp. 660, 848.

2. Goldziher, Mohammed and Islam, p. 262; see al-Shahristānī, al-Milal wa al-Nihal, ed. Ahmad Fahmī, Cairo 1948, Vol. I, pp. 284-287.

Al-Raḍī, in his poetry in general, and his Shī'ite odes in particular, seems to have inclined to the Zaydite opinion in regard to this point. His aspiration to the caliphate and his effort to obtain it implies that the way was still open to fighting to restore the right of the 'Alids to the caliphate. Moreover, in his Shī'ite poetry, his belonging to the Prophetic family forms the cornerstone of his ambition. In one of his dirges on al-Husayn he made it clear that he would lead his cavalry troops to revenge the 'Alid martyrs.¹ In another he pledged himself to take the responsibility of fighting for the sake of the 'Alid right which had become his own. In this respect the poet was consistent with his political ambitions - taking advantage of his family tree. Accordingly, he seems to be closer to the Zaydites than the Imāmites as far as the Imām's return and its implication are concerned.

Al-Raḍī in his Shī'ite poetry differs from other Shī'ite poets of his time in regard to his attitude towards the orthodox Caliphs "Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān". Poets contemporary with him used to make historical statements according to the Shī'ite conviction. They often traced the continual succession of the 'Alids' suffering and persecution to the question of the caliphate after the Prophet's death. They also considered these three caliphs the first to deprive 'Alī of his divine right to succeed

1. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 660, 848.

the Prophet.¹ On this point al-Radī did not abuse the Prophet's companions and never considered them usurpers or deviators as many of his contemporaries did. Al-Radī seems to be nearer to the Zaydite doctrine. This moderate wing in the Shī'ite movement did not share the absolute condemnation of the companions of the Prophet which was wide-spread in Shī'ite circles.²

Al-Radī in his Shī'ite poetry and in his references to his 'Alid family and its calamities did not attack the 'Abbāsids openly while his contemporaries used to do so. In his time Shī'ite poets accused the 'Abbāsids of injustice and ill-treatment of the 'Alids. Meantime, the Shī'ite rulers of the Būwayhid family had the upper hand in Baghdad and the caliph was weak. However, al-Radī's attitude reflected his openmindedness and his refraining from indulging himself in accusing and cursing the 'Abbāsid family. It is also probable that this moderate opinion was due in part to two motives. Firstly, our poet as a politician tried to maintain a formal relationship with the palace. In this respect he was in line with the Būwayhids' policy which deprived the caliph of his real authority, yet they publicly kept feigning respect to him. Secondly, al-Radī was polite and respectful. He also held a religious position which demanded exemplary conduct in his public and private life.

Al-Radī's poetry was also characterised by its

1. D. Y. Vol. I. p. 299. Vol. III. p. 50 among others.

2. Goldziher, Mohammed And Islam, p. 263.

indifference to sectarian struggles and religious antagonism, which had become wide-spread in the fourth Islamic century and always resulted in bloody skirmishes between Sunnites and Shī'ites. As we have already seen, poets of different sects attacked and cursed each other. Our poet made no references to these points. On the contrary, he appreciated his father's effort to bring peace between the Sunnites and Shī'ites.¹ Furthermore, al-Radī in one of his odes took pride in his family tree mentioning that there was kinship between his family and Abū Bakr and paid respect to the family's ties.² In general, al-Radī's opinion of the Prophet's Orthodox Caliph and his attitude toward sectarian disputes seems to be moderate.

Al-Radī composed five odes relating to the observance of the 'Ashūrā', the day of repentance and mourning in memory of the Karbalā' catastrophe. This memory became a public lamentation in the Būwayhid period under whose protection Shī'ite opinions and tendencies were openly expressed. The explanatory prefaces of these odes indicate that they were composed as laments on al-Husayn's martyrdom. The poet concentrated on the tragedy of Karbalā', portraying the horror and atrocity of the day. He also put forward an argument concerning the massacre of al-Husayn and his sons and heirs in the course of history. He tried to deal with it historically, tracing the hatred

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 69.

2. Ibid., p. 278.

of the Umayyads and their grudge against the 'Alids back to the days of the Prophet. The other aspect of al-Radī's dirges on al-Husayn is the close connection between the calamities of his 'Alid family and al-Radī himself. He deemed himself obliged to revenge the 'Alid martyrs and re-establish their right by force. He also mentioned his own ambitions and failures. When he reminisced about his family's tragedy he looked upon himself as another wronged figure of aggression in a long list of victims.

The first Shī'ite dirge of al-Radī was written in 377/987. The tragic aspect of the Karbalā' massacre occupies a large section of it. The poet also condemned the Umayyad Caliph Yazīd under whose direction the criminal operation against the Prophet's family was carried out. Al-Radī then expressed his personal and lasting sorrow at this event. He also depicted the sad memory of this terrifying day which made his life full of tears and pain.¹ The poet expressed his longing for the day of vengeance when those who had wronged his family would be punished. The above-mentioned aspects were repeated in his other Shī'ite odes. He composed an ode in 387/997 in which he evoked the day of al-Husayn's martyrdom referring to those who participated in this crime. He also described al-Husayn as a noble and courageous fighter and condemned those who deserted him in his hour of need. Our poet also pointed his accusing finger at the Umayyads making it clear that they had

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 376-377.

deviated from the path of Islam and disobeyed the Prophet by ill-treating his family after his death.¹

The poet in this ode asserted the close connection between the tragedy of al-Husayn and his own suffering. It seems as if the oppression came down to afflict al-Radī himself. In this respect he made it clear that injustice was still present in his own age. In his eyes the undeserving had the upper hand over the meritorious. He says:

How long has the oppressor had the upper hand and how long has the surpassed (al-mafdūl) held sway over the surpasser (al-fādil).

كم الى كم تطلو الضامة دكم
كم في كل ناضل مفضل²

Al-Radī did not identify those undeserving rulers or aggressive ones but it is likely that he meant himself when he was speaking of the wronged and excellent people. In the same ode he indicated that he was the noblest one and that others were of no importance.³ The poet is referring to the continuity of injustice as an oblique accusation of those who wronged the 'Alids in the course of history. He mentioned this point but he did not identify them. He says:

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 659.

2. Ibid., p. 660

3. Ibid.

Verily the practice of the former,
despite its severity, is not much more evil than
that of the latter.

ألا ليس نضال الأولين دأباً على
على قبح نضال الآخرين بزائر¹

The tragic side of al-Husayn's martyrdom was well portrayed in al-Radī's odes and the terrifying and horrible picture was presented in detail. It is filled with blood, sorrow and tears. The poet's profound pain was expressed and a feeling of repentance seems to overcome him. In one of his odes he first addressed the day of 'Ashūrā' as follows:

Oh day of 'Ashūrā' on which the companions
gave no support and people offered
no resort.

Oh son of the Prophet's daughter, men
broke their promise.

Verily the keepers of faith are few.
They disobeyed the Prophet in you and
vengeance leaned their lances
towards you.

يوم عاشوراء الذي لا إيمان
صعب فيه ولداً جار القين
يا ابن بنت الرسول ضيقت الص
رجالاً الكافون قليل
الطامعوا النبيّ منك وقدما
لن بأمامهم اليه الزهرك²

Al-Radī then presented the tragedy of Karbalā' in close connection with his own personal feeling. He says:

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 282.

2. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 658-659.

Would I care to protect my face.
 Would I find a sweet drink of water
 while over his face the horses were roaming?
 While the Imām's soul has not
 quenched its thirst?
 While maidens were being driven captive
 on highly-bred camels, their dresses
 split and torn?
 Their veils stripped from their faces,
 whose chastity was fair
 substitute to every veil.

أَتُرَانِي أَعْيُرُ وَجْهِي صَوْنًا رَعَى وَجْهَهُ تَجُولُ الْفَيُولُ
 أَتُرَانِي أَلَذُّ مَاءٍ رَمْلًا يُرَى مِنْ سَهْمَةِ الْإِمَامِ الْفَيُولُ
 وَالْبَايَا عَلَى الْخِجَابِ تَتَفَقُّ وَتَدْنَاكَ الْجِيُوبُ الْفَيُولُ
 قَدْ لَبِنَ الْقَتْلَ مِنْ لَدُنْهِ فِيهِ لِلصُّورِ مِنْ تَنَاحٍ بَدِيدُ

1

In al-Radī's eyes al-Ḥusayn was a great and supernatural hero in his life as well as in his death. The poet depicted al-Ḥusayn after he had been murdered as follows:

Thirsty he was, soothing his thirst
 with blood gushing from his stab wounds,
 not with a gulp of cool water, copious as a
 torrent.
 The flashing cutting swords snatching
 away his body, as if tongues of flame
 consumed a body of light.
 The hills bending affectionately over
 him with their shade,
 while the fringo of the whirlwinds
 concealed him from eyes.
 The beast of prey not daring to approach
 his fallen body
 though it lay there unburied three
 nights.

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 659.

طهَان سَأَى بِجَيْعِ الطَّمَنِ عَلَيْهِ عَنْ بَارِدٍ مِنْ حُبَابِ الْمَاءِ سُقُورٍ
 مَا نَ بَيْنَ الرَّاغِبِ وَكَوْنِهِ نَارٌ تَحْكُمُ فِي صَبٍّ مِنَ النُّورِ
 تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ الرُّبَى لَهْلَاءَ رَتْدِهِ مِنَ النُّوَاطِرِ أَزْيَالُ الْكَاصِرِ
 رَحَابُهُ الْوَقْتُ أَنْ تَدْنُو لِحُورِهِ وَدَ أَسَامُ مُدَاغِدٍ مَقْبُولِ

1

In general, al-Radī exploited fully the Shī'ite sources in regard to the massacre of Karbalā' which were mixed with myths and legends. He used them in the above-mentioned lines to introduce a vivid and terrifying picture of al-Husayn's day combined with tragedy and dignity. The fallen hero was great and venerable in his death as much as he had been in his life.

To sum up, al-Radī in his Shī'ite poetry did not miss the opportunity to express himself and find reasonable and close links between the 'Alid family's tragedy and his personal feeling and suffering. He also marked this poetry by his own personal conviction and his moderate understanding of Shī'ite dogmas in many respects. He proved himself openminded and forbade himself from indulging in the extremist wave which had become strong in Shī'ite poetry in his period. He seems to be consistent with the main principles of the Imāmites and made his own approach in understanding the details.

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 376-377.

CHAPTER X

AL-RADĪ'S LOVE-POETRY

My love-poetry is not due to anguish in
my heart,
but I weep and lament because of mytime.

وليس نبي أن في القلب لوعة
ولكني أبكي زمان راند

al-Radī

1 - Introduction

In the Arabic language the words love-poetry or amatory poetry are expressed by three overlapping terms: ghazal, tashbīb and nasīb. Our dictionaries draw no distinct line between these words. In al-Jawharī's opinion the word al-ghazal means to converse with women and tempt them. When he defines the word tashbīb he applies the word nasīb and vice versa. They both imply the mentioning of women in an amatory manner.¹ The same explanation is given in other dictionaries.² Medieval Arab critics have much the same difficulties with these words relating to love-poetry. Qudāmah b. Ja'far tried to make a distinction between nasīb and ghazal. He came to the conclusion that the former concerns the expression of grief, anguish and reminiscence of the beloved's abode. The ghazal in his opinion means to mention the conversation or circumstances occurring between the lover and the beloved.³ Al-'Askarī in al-Sinā'atayn prefers the word tashbīb. He gives it the same definition applied by Qudāmah to the word nasīb.⁴ As for Ibn Raḥīq he suggests that there is no difference between nasīb, tashbīb and taghazzul.⁵ However, as time passed on the term ghazal

1. Al-Jawharī, Sihāh, Vol. V, p. 1781, see also Vol. I, pp. 151, 224.

2. Ibn Manzūr, Lisān, Vol. I, pp. 480-481, Vol. XI, p. 492; see also al-Firūzabādī al-Qāmūs al-Muhīt, Cairo 1330/1911, Vol. I, pp. 85, 131, Vol. IV, p. 24.

3. Qudāmah, op. cit., p. 65.

4. Sinā'atayn, p. 129.

5. 'Umdah, Vol. II, pp. 94-102.

became more common than others and modern scholars tended to apply it to signify love-poetry or amatory poetry. Accordingly, in this study the two words love-poetry and amatory poetry are used to identify the Arabic word ghazal in its broadest sense encompassing all meanings given to tashbib or nasib as well.¹

The amatory section of odes was the first part with which Jāhilite poets commenced the Mu'allaqāt. They used to express their poignant grief, dwelling on the ruined abodes of their beloved. They also delineated the moral qualities and physical charms of their mistresses. Meanwhile, they frequently recollected their past love adventures and regretted the end of their days of youth. A great deal of emotion, tears and tenderness was poured into the description of the beloved's departure and the ruined abodes which they left behind.² The ideal lady was well illustrated in ancient poetry. She was characterised by her coal-black hair, clear bright face, smooth cheeks, big black eyes, dark lips and white well-set teeth. Her neck was long and white, her breasts full and round, her waist slender and her hips thick and swelling. Taken as a whole she was plump and tall.³

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1. Ahmad Badawī op. cit., pp. 140-143; see also al-Sibtā'ī al-Bayyūmī Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī, Cairo 1948, Vol. I, p. 110.
 2. Kinany, op. cit., pp. 100-101; Ismā'īl, op. cit., pp. 205, 261, 282; see also Mu'allaqāt, pp. 62-89, pp. 88-89.
 3. Kinany, op. cit., p. 101; see Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Munajjid, Jamāl al-Mar'ah 'ind al-'Arab, 2nd edn. Beirut 1969, pp. 25-30.

These descriptions were more sensual than aesthetic and stress was laid on the lady's physical charms. However, the pagan poets appreciated and admired their beloved's speech, noble birth and other moral qualities. As time went on such a description became fashionable in traditional Arab poetry, although this conventional image of the poets' beloved was further developed and elaborated. Nevertheless, the basic qualities remained almost unchanged for many centuries.

As for love-poetry in general, a close examination of al-Mu'allaqāt shows us two tendencies with regard to the poets' moral attitude towards their beloveds. Although these two trends are inter-related and rather vague, they can be discerned. The first is decency and courtesy mingled with a genuine feeling of grief. This can be sensed in 'Antarah's amatory prelude of his Mu'allaqah in particular, and his love-poetry in general.¹ Zuhayr and al-Hārith b. Hillizah also declined to make any sexual references in their amatory preludes of the Mu'allaqāt. They concerned themselves with their beloveds' ruined abodes and their departure.² Imru' al-Qays, Tarafah and 'Amr b. Kulthūm among others represented the second tendency in their love-poetry, that is, libertinism. They depicted their love-adventures and spoke of their

1. Mu'allaqāt, pp. 123-125; see also 'Antarah b. Shaddād, Diwān, ed. by Karam al-Bustānī, Beirut, 1958, pp. 28, 76.

2. Mu'allaqāt, pp. 88-89, pp. 135-136.

beloved in a sensual manner.¹

In the early Islamic period love-poetry came under religious restriction. The libertine trend and love-adventures faded for a while and poets did not go beyond the bounds of decency. It is related that the Orthodox Caliph 'Umar forbade the poets to sing of women's beauty and warned that those who did would be punished. The poet Humayd b. Thawr, for instance, addressed a tree as a symbol of his beloved instead of spelling out the name of his mistress. He says:

God forbade that this Sarḥah (tree)
should be outshone by any other tree of 'Idāt.
How pleasant is its fragrance! How sweet is the
freshness of its shadow when the sun rises! 2

أبى الله الد أن سرهه نالك
على كل أنان البضاة تروق
نبا طيب ربا برد ظليها
إذا جان من شى النهار تروق 3

In the Umayyad period three poetical trends of love-poetry can be distinguished. The first was the traditional amatory prelude preceding the panegyrical ode. Poets in this prelude walked the well-trodden paths of ancient poets. The second was the 'Udhrite poetry, an independent theme which was characterised by its decency, purity and profound grief. The third was the 'Umarite love poetry. 'Umar Ibn Abī Rabi'ah was the head of this

1. Mu'allagāt, pp. 64-67, 80-82, 108-109.

2. Kinany, op. cit., p. 133.

3. 'Umdah, Vol. I, p. 214.

school. He and his colleagues developed a light and playful love-poetry, making it an independent theme. They also succeeded in mirroring the depth of social life of al-Hijāz at that time, depicting a vivid picture of the aristocratic class, with its polish and affluent life.¹

‘Umarite poetry, however, did not lack traces of its connection with pagan love-poetry. It did not emerge unheralded and unconnected with the libertine trend which had been represented by Imru’ al-Qays and other ancient poets. Love-adventures and love-affairs in general which were depicted simply in al-Mu‘allaqāt were cultivated by the skilful hand of ‘Umar, who had acquired first hand experience in this respect which inspired him to elaborate much more. ‘Umarite poetry is characterised by its playful and optimistic spirit filled with details and novel pictures of woman's indoor life at that time. In the Diwān of ‘Umar love-adventures are numberless, daring and clever. The season of pilgrimage was a season of love and the mosques of Mecca and other religious sites were suitable places in which the poets took advantage of the opportunities to choose their beloveds and approach them. Like ‘Umar, many other poets had love-adventures which were reflected in their poetry.²

1. Dayf, al-Tatawwur, p. 234; see Tāhā Husayn, Hadīth al-Arabi‘ā, Cairo 1937, Vol. I, p. 233, pp. 235-340.

2. Dayf, Tatawwur, p. 237; see D. U. pp. 28, 40, 52, 80, 86 among others; see also Kināny, op. cit., pp. 206-207.

'Umar's diction in his love-poetry is marked by its simple narrative manner and the use of dialogue. The style is elegant, simple and genuine. However, it must be borne in mind that 'Umar did not strike a new path unconnected or free from the rigidity of the poetical conventions of Arab love-poetry. Although the woman he loved seems to be intellectual, civilised and clever, her physical charm is in harmony with the traditional standard of beauty which was adored by the ancient Arab poets. 'Umar's similes and images were almost all drawn from the ideal image of woman which had come down from the pagan period and become time-honoured standards.¹ 'Umar also did not make any radical changes in the structure of his amatory poetry. Like others, he dwelled on the ruined abodes of his beloved describing her departure and litter.² However, his personal touches are undeniable, as was his first hand experience. It may be said that he put new wine into the old bottle.

In 'Udhrite love-poetry there is no room for love-advantages and playful spirit. The physical qualities of woman received very scant attention. The poets took love much more seriously and considered it their foremost concern and inevitable doom. They were chaste, puritanical and faithful in their love without any traces of sexual pleasure. Jamil Buthaynah represented this

1. D. U. pp. 128-136.

2. Ibid., pp. 22, 26, 42, 71, 143, 144 among others.

poetical trend well. He summarised the ultimate goal of his love as follows:

I am pleased with very little things
accorded to me by Buthaynah.
If it were known by a calumniator
he would not be annoyed with my love for her.
I am pleased even when she says: 'no' or
'I cannot' and when she makes me live on a
promise, the one who
waited for it was disappointed.
I am pleased with a quick glance at her
and even with spending a whole year without our
meeting, neither at the beginning nor at the end.

رأى لذى من بئنة بالذي
لوا بيرة الواشي لتت بليله
بلا ربان لا استطع رباني
ربانظره السبيل ربالحول ينفي
أراقرة لا نلتقي رأدائه 1

'Udhrite poets were destined to suffer in their love and to bear lovesickness and frustration, accepting this fate submissively. Many factors contributed to bolster and nourish the development of this puritanical trend in Arab love-poetry. It is out of the scope of this introduction to review them in detail. Stress, however, must be laid on the fact that traits of decency and profound grief in love-poetry can be traced back to the ancient poets and the early Islamic age. Religious elements had their bearing on this trend. It is likely that chastity and the puritanical spirit in 'Udhrite love reflected a sort of compromise between love and religion. Furthermore, the refined and wealthy society of al-Hijāz

1. The English version quoted from Kinany op. cit., p. 180, with some alterations, see D. J. p. 168.

which fostered the 'Umarite poetry provided suitable soil for the 'Udhri trend to grow as a spontaneous reaction against the libertine tendency.

The classical amatory prelude of the early Islamic period and Umayyad age still held its place in the beginning of panegyric odes. It was, however, not the main subject of the ode. Traditional poets treated it within the boundary of the ancient conventions as far as the basic principles were concerned. Accordingly, these poets, more or less, represented the continuation of the ancient form and the old scheme of the qasidah. The picture of their beloved's physical beauty was similar in many points to that drawn by the Jāhilite poets; while the desert seems to have remained the scene of their love-poetry.¹ Nevertheless, a mutual influence took place between the classical amatory prelude, which was pursued by traditionalist poets, and the two independent trends in love-poetry, 'Udhrite and 'Umarite. In Jarīr's amatory prelude, for instance, traces of religious elements, profound passion, a spirit of decency and even a tinge of love-sickness can be sensed.² Meanwhile, 'Umarite love-adventures and daring remarks on love-affairs found their echoes in the Diwān of al-Farazdaq.³ Jarīr,

1. Kinany, op. cit., p. 310; al-Munajjid, op. cit., 35, see also Jarīr, Diwān Cairo 1313/1895, Vol. I, pp. 24, 33, Vol. II, pp. 160-163 among others; al-Farazdaq, Diwān, ed. Karam al-Bustānī, Beirut, 1960, p. 23, pp. 66-67, 144, among others.

2. Jarīr, Diwān, Vol. I, pp. 15, 29, 41, 65, Vol. II, p. 161.

3. al-Farazdaq, Diwān, Vol. I, pp. 209, 287-289.

engaging in a polemic poetical struggle with al-Farazdaq criticised his opponent's scandalous life and referred to it in his satire.¹

The 'Abbāsid age witnessed radical changes in all walks of life compared with the previous period. Arab power grew fainter while foreign elements of different races mixed with the Arab to form a new Islamic civilization. As time passed new values, customs and cultures gained a footing and established themselves. The time-honoured Arab virtues suffered a setback, or were modified and adjusted to the new social life. In such a new atmosphere love-poetry as an independent theme breathed the spirit of the age and reflected many sides of it. In these days, when non-Arab elements dominated the social and political scene, Arab women played a less important rôle. Slave girls became the stars of parties and assemblies and consequently the idols of love-poetry. Meantime, an aberrant tendency towards boys became epidemic in the society and poets reflected this sort of debauchery in their poetry.

From the early 'Abbāsid period independent love-poetry which had been brought to life by 'Umar b. Rabi'ah and his colleagues was cultivated and elaborated to a noticeable degree at the hand of the poets Bashshār b. Burd, Muṭī' b. Iyās and Abū Nuwās. It became more brilliant, daring and sophisticated in images and style.

1. Jarīr. Diwān, Vol. II, p. 137.

filled with clever hints and overloaded with sexual remarks and obscenities.¹ These three poets led gay lives and had first hand experiences. They mirrored their joyful and libertine lives in their love-poetry, in which the traditional standards of beauty and the ideal woman were also changed in many respects. Slave girls of different coloured races became recurrent subjects in love-poetry and the image of woman in general was different from that of the bedouin type. The gazelle was no more beautiful than her and she was not like the sun but the sun resembled her. Poets also paid attention to describing the intellectual qualities, behaviour and cleverness of their mistresses.²

In the fourth Islamic century the above-mentioned poetical trend in love-poetry became widespread. In addition the aberrant tendency towards boys was still common. Even the lady's charms were likened to those of boys. A glance at the Yatimah shows that these trends reached their peak in the fourth Islamic century. Poets of both high and low standing spoke out boldly of their sexual experiences and loves filling their poetry with obscenities. The decent trend in love-poetry in the 'Abbāsid period seems to have faded. Al-'Abbās b. al-Ahnaf was among the very few poets in the 'Abbāsid period to confine himself to his love and maintain the spirit

1. Dayf, al-Fann, pp. 63-67.

2. al-Munajjid, op. cit., pp. 55, 57, 62, 69-81.

of 'Udhrite love within it.¹ He was only concerned with his beloved and seemed to be a stranger among the numerous libertine poets of that time. Nevertheless, some traditionalist poets in the 'Abbāsid period still clung to the old poetical conventions. They retained the amatory prelude, with some modification and adjustment. Abū Tammām and al-Buhturī among others well represented this poetical trend. They also seem to be nearer to the decent trend and the desert spirit rather than the libertine trend. In the fourth Islamic century there was a sort of reaction against urban life and its values. This tendency was reflected in poetry in general and also mirrored in the amatory preludes of these poems. Al-Mutanabbī was at the head of poets who expressed their admiration for and attachment to bedouin life and the desert. He stressed his detestation of urban life and also urban women. Although love seems to be a subordinate issue in his poetry, he made it clear that the beauty of urban women was artificial and lifeless and that of the bedouin was genuine and natural. He often expressed his nostalgia for the desert in the amatory preludes of his odes, making no sexual remarks in them.² Decency can be considered a visible aspect in it in comparison with the current poetical trend at that time. Our poet al-Radī not only followed al-Mutanabbī in his attachment to bedouin life and values in his love-poetry but he went

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1. 'Atikah wahbi al-Khazrajī, Dīwān al-'Abbās b. al-Ahnaf, Cairo 1955, see intro., pp. 15, 16, 55; see also Tahā Husayn, Ḥadīth, Vol. I, pp. 373-374.
 2. D. M. Vol. I, pp. 127-129, 186-190, Vol. II, p. 62, among others.

further as we shall see later.

2 - Al-Radī's love-poetry (Ghazal)

Al-Radī composed two types of love-poetry, the first being the amatory preludes by which he used to open his panegyrical odes and the second consisting of about forty amatory odes called al-Hijāziyyāt. In the later odes al-Radī treated love-poetry as an independent theme. In addition, he wrote some poetical pieces, most of which related to his Hijāziyyāt both in spirit and subject-matter. He also composed some odes at the request of his friends. In one of these odes he described a black slave-girl while in another he depicted a Persian boy.¹ However, al-Radī in these two odes and in a few others demonstrated his descriptive talent in dealing with such a current subject of that time.

Generally speaking, al-Radī paid great attention to love-poetry as his Dīwān shows. He pretended to be like those who had fallen in love and suffered griefs and pains. However, there is no convincing evidence to show that our poet was in love with any lady at all and there is no ground for supporting the idea that he had a love affair in Baghdad, when he lived there, or elsewhere. Nevertheless, some modern scholars of Arabic literature attempted to find traces of real love through al-Radī's

1. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 722, 755, 888.

love-poetry.¹ Their conclusion is that they sense a heated passion in his poems. It is difficult to make such judgement on the basis of personal taste only. In addition, Arabic poetical language is often misleading owing to the fact that poets used to exaggerate and pretend love, allegiance and passion even if they had no real connection with them. It is rather unsafe to draw on al-Raḍī's poetry to trace the signs of his first hand experience in love, when our historical sources give us no information.

Al-Raḍī himself has his own ideas of love. In one of his odes he denied that he suffered from the ardour of love. He alleged that he only lamented on his fate in his amatory poems. He says:

My love-poetry is not due to anguish in my heart,
but I weep and lament because of my time.

رَبِّهِ نَبِيٍّ أَنْ فِي الْقَلْبِ لَوْفَةٌ
رَكَنِي الْبُكْيِ زَمَانِي رَانِدٌ

2

In another ode he has a different attitude towards love, limiting it to the level of mere admiration. He says:

I fell in love but God knows
I desire only to look, and lovers are of various kinds.

1. al-Baṣīr, fī al-Adab al-‘Abbāsī, pp. 433-436; ‘Alī Jawād al-Tāhir, al-Minhal fī al-Adab al-‘Arabī, Baghdad, 1962, pp. 36-37, see Zakī Mubārak, ‘Abqariyyat, Vol. II, pp. 77-99.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 61.

وَمَتَّ رَمَا لِي بِبِلَامِ اللَّهِ حَاجَةً

رَمَا لِي نَفَرِي رَالْمَا مُقَرَّنَ ضَرْبٍ¹

Al-Radī also seems to sustain a sort of inner conflict and contradiction. As a man of unbounded ambition he considered himself a lover of glory. Meanwhile, he also pretended to be a lover of beauty. However, he seems not ready to sacrifice the former for the sake of the latter, as his poetry indicates. He sometimes regarded his glorious goals as if they were his beloveds. He says:

I aspired to honour, but they repelled
my advance,
The beloved always repels the lover.

رَمَتُ الْمَالِي نَاقَتَيْنِ وَلَمْ يَزَلْ

أَبَدًا لِيَاخُ عَاشِقًا مُتَوَقِّ²

These alternate tendencies between love of glory and love of beauty or women in al-Radī's poetry sometimes led him to make a decision in favour of glory. He also expressed ideas of the irrelevance of woman and love. In one of his odes he says:

I have nothing to do with white-skinned women,
and my quest is through lances, horses and night.

رَمَا لِي عِنْدَ الْبَيْضِ يَا قَلْبِي حَاجَةً

وَعِنْدَ الْقَنَا وَالْحِنِّ وَاللَّيْلِ مَطْلَبُ³

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 141.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 550.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 60.

He suggested at times that love weakens his firmness and his chivalrous character. He says:

I lost love in order to maintain my
firmness; vorily love is preserved in the
heart of that whose determination is lost.

أَضَعْتُ الْهَوَىَّ مِنْظًا لِحُرِّيٍّ رَأَيْنَا
يُصَانُ الْهَوَىَّ فِي قَلْبٍ مِنْ ضَاعَ هَزْمُهُ¹

It is interesting to note that al-Mutanabbī and al-Radī have the same low opinion of woman and love when they are dwelling on glory, ambition and chivalrous deeds. Both express their preference for horses, lances and swords rather than love and women. Al-Mutanabbī, for instance, in one of his odes says:

May every mincing female walker be a ransom for
every easy-paced she.

أَلَا كُلُّ مَاشِيَةٍ الْخِزْلَى فِدَا كُلِّ مَاشِيَةٍ الْهَيْدَى

He also gives reason for this judgement saying:

But they are the cords of life, and trick the
enemy, and repel injury.

وَكُنَّ هَبَالُ الْحَيَاةِ رَكْبُ الْقَدَاةِ وَمِنْ الرَّدَى

2

Al-Radī put forward the same idea in preferring horses and mounts to woman, he says:

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 824.

2. Arberry, Poems of al-Mutanabbī, p. 116; see D. M. Vol. I, pp. 37-39.

The foam in the mouth of the mounts is
sweeter than your lips,
and the desert chrubs are more appealing
and pleasant than you.

لُفَاؤُ الْمَطَايَا مِنْ رُضَائِكَ أَغْذِبُ
وَرَبِيبَةُ الْبُيَاطِ نَظِيرُكُمْ أَهْجِبُ¹

He also says:

I desire not to shake hands with pretty women
while my fingers engage with the reins of (the mount).

وَمَا أَهْوَى مَصَانِعَ الْفَوَافِي
إِذَا ارْتَقَيْتُ بَنَانِي بِالْبُيَاطِ²

It is likely that such a preoccupation with glory and chivalry almost drove both poets to equate love of glory with love of women in their poetry. They found that to imagine a bedouin type of beloved was more suitable with their attachment to the bedouin life, and the desert and the decent spirit in love more consistent with the values that they pretended to adore.

Al-Radī has another problem in dealing with love-poetry. He found himself a captive in the rigidity of the conventions of his time. His religious position as a naqīb, his soaring ambition and his ideal moral principles, all demanded of him exemplary behaviour and a high level of conduct in both his public and private life. It is very likely that he suffered frustration in trying to harmonise his human instincts and his puritanical religion.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 60; see also p. 305.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 910.

moral ideals and integrity. Al-Radī tells us how he felt such an inner conflict between his reason and his desire. He says:

Love tries to make me bend down with rapture,
but I keep away from it.
And youthfulness draws me to it, but I
disdain.
Decency forbids me (from love) as
if there were a mountain between me and my desires.

يَعْبِلُ بِي الْهوى طَرْباً دَانَاً
وَيَجْزِبُنِي إِلَيْهَا غَزْلٌ نَائِي
وَيَنْقِي السَّنَاءُ كَأَن بَيْنِي
وَبَيْنَ مَا رَدِي مِنْهُ هَضْباً

1

Al-Radī also made it clear that he never knew fornication but by its description.² He used to be decent even when he imagined or described his love-affairs in his poetry.³ This suggests that our poet was denied the actual experience of love.⁴ He suffered his torment, longing for women and living in a dream of desire and hope rather than engaging his love.

Al-Radī lived in Baghdad where people of high and low classes enjoyed a tolerant and playful social life, as we have already seen. Men of letters, for instance, who led self-indulgent lives used to speak openly of them in their composition. Our poet found many reasons

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 73.

2. Ibid., p. 85.

3. D. R. Vol. II, p. 897, Vol. I, p. 501.

4. We are referring to love, not mere matrimony.

to deny this sort of life, seeking for compensation in his imaginary and utopian life which he found to be the simple, decent and bedouin type. It is likely that these were some of the factors that determined the directions of his amatory preludes and love-poetry in general. This tendency in his poetry assimilated the 'Udhri spirit rather than any other as far as the moral values are concerned, as we shall see later. Hijāz, Najd, religious sites and the desert in general are the scenes of love in his poetry rather than Baghdad and its suburbs. In this respect the poet is consistent with his reaction against and rejection of city life as he reiterated in his poetry.

3 - Al-Radī's amatory prelude

Al-Radī in his amatory preludes, like other traditional Arab poets, dwelt on his beloved's ruined abodes, following up her caravan in a long journey, longing for days that are gone, and describing his mistress's charms. The names of his imaginary beloveds are many among which are Lamyā', Zamyā', Umaymah and Laylā. Our poet almost always preferred to name his beloved Laylā and ascribe her to the tribe of Banū 'Āmir, the tribe of the famous 'Udhri poet Majnūn Laylā. It is likely that al-Radī made this reference to stress the close connection between his love-poetry and 'Udhri poems.¹ Places and sites like Najd, Hijāz, Zarūd, Rāmah al-Abraqayn, Naqā and Rāmah are recurrent in his amatory preludes as much as in his

1. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 524, 622.

other love-poetry. These sites not only indicate al-Radī's close connection with desert life, but also give his poems a sort of religious tone.

Al-Radī in describing the ideal woman whom he presented in his amatory poetry stressed her nobility and moral qualities. He says:

They were noble women (kept from the outside world),
chastity has taught them to keep procrastinating
and put off contact.

عَمَّا نَلَّ عَالَمِنَ الْمَنَا
فَرَصَلِ الْمَطَالِ رَمَطِ الرَّمَالِ

1

His imaginary beloveds also lived under the protection and guardianship of strong people and tribes. He describes their houses as follows:

(They are) houses in which their inhabitants give no rein to (anyone) by force,
and their residents are not humbled.

مَنَازِلُ لَا يُعْطَى الْبِيَارُ قُضْمًا
مُغَالِبَةٌ دَلِيلُهَا نَزِيلُهَا

2

As for the physical qualities of woman, al-Radī does not pay them great attention. However, when he presents the picture of woman he draws on the traditional image of the bedouin woman which recurs in classical love-poetry. The favourite ideal lady in al-Radī's eyes is of a bedouin

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 624; see also Vol. II, pp. 599, 650.

2. Ibid., p. 655.

nature. She does not adorn her neck with embellishments because she is satisfied with her own natural beauty. He likes to compare his mistress to a gazelle or Zabyah. Like other ancient and traditionalist poets, he found similarity between her eyes, her neck, her way of walking and those of a gazelle.¹ Her lips are dark, her hair thick and long, her skin white, her hips are always full and thick like sand hills. She is always tall with a slender waist. In this picture al-Radī did not break with the traditional image of woman in Arab poetry. He also did not make sexual remarks or obscenities; when he compared his mistress to a gazelle he used to call her a gazelle or zabyah. In general, al-Radī gave nothing individual as far as the physical charm of his beloved were concerned.²

Three recurrent aspects are visible in al-Radī's amatory preludes. The first is the connection between love and grey hair, the second the conflict between glory and love, which has already been discussed, the third his preference for meeting the imaginary image of his beloved instead of meeting his real mistress. These three artistic aspects are traditional and frequent in classical love-poetry. However, al-Radī found in them a sort of escape from indulging in love affairs and used them to avoid giving realistic details of love.

As for the grey hair, it is traditional that poets

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 114, 268, 434, Vol. II, p. 686.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 144, Vol. II, p. 520.

used to allege that the reason for the beloved's indifference to her lover was due to the emergence of greyness in his hair. Al-Radī also referred to the withdrawal of his beloved because of his grey hair. However, he sometimes welcomed this white hair, considering it as a sign of wisdom and reason. As a pessimistic man he also conceived a close connection between death and grey hair. In general he expressed his preference for al-shayb, grey hair, and found it a convincing reason to abandon love, as it indicated the end of the stage of youth.¹ He says:

Verily darkness (in hair), regardless of youth,
is blindness, while whiteness (shayb),
despite its weakness, is discernment.

إِنَّ الْوَادَّ عَلَى لَذَائِهِ لَعَيٌّ
كَأَلْبَيَاضٍ عَلَى عَدْرَتِهِ بَصْرٌ²

Al-Radī also seems to be careful to avoid any doubts of his decency and his puritanical attitude towards his imaginary love, as his amatory preludes indicate. He preferred to meet the nocturnal image of his beloved rather than have her actual presence. It is interesting to note that al-Radī's brother al-Murtadā wrote a book called Tayf al-Khayāl. In this work he traced the traditional description of the nocturnal apparition (al-tayf) in Arab love-poetry. He considered the visit of al-tayf a sort of enjoyment which had no connection

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 146, 404, 370, Vol. II, p. 714.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 404.

with shame and fornication.¹ He also devoted a section of his work to tracing the use of this poetical expression in al-Raḍī's love-poetry. His remarks suggest that al-Raḍī walked the well-trodden paths of his predecessors.² However, the section shows that our poet gave recurrent attention to this poetical aspect in his love-poetry. He also freed himself to meet his beloved, imagining his love adventures in his dreams, rather than meeting her in the flesh.³ He says:

How nice it would be if a nocturnal image
(al-tayf) guided by yearning set out from you to
my bed.
It spent the night giving me the honey of
its saliva, while I thirsted and have
never been quenched since.

يا حَبْدًا مِنْكَ خَيَالٌ سَرَى
فَدَلَهُ التَّوَقُّ عَلَى مَضْجِي
بَاتَ يُعَاظِنِي مَنِي ظَلَمِهِ
رَبَّتْ ظَهْرَانِ دَلِمَ أَنْتَقِعَ 4

Before closing the observations on al-Raḍī's amatory preludes, it is convenient to examine his success and failure in dealing with traditional images as far as love-poetry is concerned. The first is the description of the ruined encampment of the beloved and the second the litter of the poet's mistress and her journey. As for the first, it is obvious that the description of the

1. al-Murtadā, Tayf al-Khayāl, ed. by Ḥasan Kāmel al-ṣayrafī, 1st edn. Cairo 1962, pp. 5-7, 36-37.

2. al-Murtadā, Tayf, pp. 93-117.

3. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 260, 269, 453, Vol. II, pp. 542, 640.

4. D. R. Vol. I, p. 453.

ruined abodes of the beloved had become a hackneyed poetical image in Arab love-poetry. It had been treated frequently from the pagan poets onwards. Many poets, however, tried to improve upon it and so did al-Radī. He reproduced this traditional idea as follows:

I stopped at the vernal habitations of my friends,
but the hand of ruin had devastated their walls.
And I wept till my weary camel grew impatient
and my fellow-travellers rebuked my delay.
I then turned my eyes away from those
mouldering remains; yet when hidden
from my sight, my heart still turned towards
them. 1

وَلَقَدْ مَرَرْتُ عَلَى دِيَارِهِمْ وَطُلُوعِهَا بَيْدَ الْبَلْبِ نَهَبٌ
مَرَضَتْ هِيَ ضَجَّ مِنْ لَفِيفٍ نَضَوِي دَلَجٌ لَبْدِي الْكَرْبُ
وَلَقَدْ عَنَيْتُ عَيْنِي نَهْذَ هَيْبٍ عَمَّا الطُّلُوعُ لَقِيَتْ الْقَلْبَ 2

This poetical expression shows us how cleverly al-Radī approached the traditional images. His vocabulary in general is simple and genuine and does not lose eloquence. Metaphors are used in harmony with his state of feeling and the atmosphere of grief. The ravage of time, for instance is embodied and given the quality of a human being. The three lines are also characterised by the novelty and sequence of the scenes, well connected with the profound feelings of the poet.

Al-Radī shows his fair success in approaching another

1. Ibn Kh. III, p. 120.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 145.

ancient and traditional image related to the description of the beloved's caravan and her journey. The scenes which al-Radī reproduced reflect his experiences of desert life and its hardships. He gave a vivid picture of those who journeyed through the desert. He says:

She looked out - when night was all embracing, trailing its long garments - from the chinks of the Howdahs, while the driver's notes were sounding across a wide valley, And the necks of the travellers were bending from the remains of the drunkenness of sleeplessness.

At sight of her they raised themselves erect in their saddles, their gaze following the light (of her countenance). We were in doubt; presently I said to them: this is not the rising of the moon.

طَلَعَتْ وَاللَّيْلُ شَحَرٌ لَبِغَ الْأَذْيَالِ وَالْأُزُرِ
 مِنْ فَصَاصَاتِ الْفَيْطِ رَقْدٌ غَرَّدَ الْحَادِي عَلَى أُقْرِ
 وَرَقَابَةٌ الْقَوْمِ مَائِلَةٌ مِنْ بَقَايَا نَفْوَةِ السَّرِ
 نَا مُتَقَابِلَا فِي رَحَالِهِمْ يُنَبِّصُونَ الْفُؤَادَ بِالْغُرِ
 2 نَا مُتَقَابِلَا ثُمَّ طَلَعَتْ لَهُمُ لَيْسَ هَذَا مَطْلَعُ الْقَمَرِ

4 - al-Hijāziyyāt

The word al-Hijāziyyāt is a plural relative noun formed from Hijāz. It is applied in Arab poetry to denominate almost forty odes of love-poetry written by al-Radī. It is difficult to discover whether this word was first used by the poet himself or by those who

1. I. C. Vol. 6, 1932, art. Literature, Poetry, p. 151.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 394.

collected his poems. However, in many explanatory prefaces this word is used to distinguish two sorts of al-Hijāziyyāt. The first is called al-Hijāziyyāt and the second is called the 'supplements' or 'additions'. It seems that the second word was used to define some amatory odes which were written by the poet after his return from his pilgrimage. This indicates that the first comprises those amatory odes which were written during his stay in Mecca while performing the pilgrimage or during his return journey. Nevertheless, there is no difference between these two types except that in the additions (Lawāḥiq) he concerned himself much more with expressing his yearning towards Hijāz, Mecca and other religious and desert sites, revealing his profound grief and longing for the days he spent there.¹

In al-Hijāziyyāt al-Radī tells us that he fell in love with anonymous women who came to perform their duty of pilgrimage from different countries. They were due to leave at the close of the season of pilgrimage. Consequently, such a sort of supposed love was destined to come to grief as it always lasted too short a period. The scenes of this imaginary love were Mecca and other religious sites related to the process of pilgrimage. The remains of this repeated story are the feeling of profound longing and the pretence of love-sickness which lasted a long time.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 500, Vol. II, pp. 573-574, 721.

As we have seen already, al-Raḍī did not lack first hand experiences of desert life. Moreover, he visited Mecca many times as one of the leaders of the pilgrimage caravans of Iraq. Consequently, he became familiar with people who came to Mecca from different countries, and also became acquainted with the places and sites. However, we have no firm evidence to prove that the poet had any actual experience of love-affairs. He went to Mecca holding a position of high responsibility which demanded of him heavy commitments and exemplary conduct. In addition, he himself was too much concerned about his reputation and behaviour. These points do not support the theory that the poet had love-affairs or adventures in Mecca. Nevertheless, al-Raḍī as a human being and a poet with emotions and instincts did not lack the opportunity of admiring beauty and taking a liking for charming women. It is also likely that al-Hijāziyyāt provided al-Raḍī with a breathing space in which to stress his rejection of city life and to find reasons to express his attachment to desert life as he used to reiterate in his poetry as a whole.

The story in al-Hijāziyyāt, however, is not fresh or new. The 'Umarite poets were the first to deal with their love-affairs in Mecca and seize the opportunity afforded by performing the pilgrimage to gain access to women and indulge in love adventures sometimes shrouded in the joy and spirit of youth. Although al-Raḍī drew on their love-poetry he tried an individual approach.

The love adventures which comprise a recurrent aspect in 'Umarite poetry rarely shows itself in al-Hijāziyyāt. The joys and good humour are replaced by grief and sad sentiment. There is no minute description of love affairs nor references to daring words and hints as far as women are concerned. However, the scenes, the season and the elements of these simple love tales are much the same in al-Raḍī's love-poetry as in the 'Umarite poems. Al-Raḍī in the remaining aspects of al-Hijāziyyāt differs from the 'Umarite school and comes closer to 'Udhrite poetry which is characterised by chastity, intensity and despair. These aspects recur in al-Hijāziyyāt as we shall learn later.

Before analysing and assessing the artistic content and form of al-Hijāziyyāt it is convenient to cite a typical ode of this love-poetry. The poet says:

At Minā I fell in love with Lamyā',
 whose dark lips are slaying me.
 She went away with the gazelles,
 having played with my heart as she wished.
 Seeking requittal was she,
 but this sore soul of mine, who else
 wounded it?
 She is like the sun, on the day of
 parting.
 I kissed her neck but I dared not
 touch her lips.
 O, day when the companions parted
 with each other,
 would they ever return to meet again?
 Said they to me: her phantom shall
 visit you by night,
 coming from al-'Aqīq
 though it is so far.
 Then promise, while you are away to send your
 phantom,
 to eyelids trying in vain to sleep.

O, tree in a vale whose soil was not watered
 by anything other than my blood,
 forbidden unto me, neither its shade is
 coming nearer, nor its fruit.
 Shall my soul be wasted over you so,
 without ever attaining its hope?
 Where are the faces that I love?
 whose ransom I wish I were.
 The faces that I look for among those
 who return in the evening, never to see
 them again!
 Alas! and were it not for the blame
 of censors, I would have cried
 Oh!

لَمَّا نَ يَفْتَلِي لَهَا	إِنِّي عَلِمْتُ عَلَى مَنِي
لَسْتُ بِقَلْبِي مَا لَهَا	رَأَيْتُ مَعَ الْفَرْدَانِ قَدْ
الْقَرْيَةِ الْقَرِيبَةِ مِنْ رَمَاهَا	تَجَنَّبِي الثَّوَابَ مُصْرَجِي
يَوْمَ النُّوَى رَأَيْتُهَا	سُتِّي أَتَبَلُّ هَيْدَهَا
فَ تَرَى تَقُودَ لِمَنْهَا	يَا يَوْمَ فَتَرَقَّ الرِّمَاهَا
لَ مِنْ الْعَقِي عَلَى نَرَاهَا	تَالُوَا سِطْرَهُ الْخِيَا
إِنْ غَبَتْ تَصُحُّ فِي كَرَاهَا	نَعْدِي بِهَيْفِهِ مَقْلَةً
يَبْلُغُ بِفِرْدِي نَرَاهَا	يَا سِرْمَةً بِالْقَاعِ لَمْ
يَدْنُو إِلَيَّ دَلِيلَهَا	مَنْوَعَةً لِدَلِيلَهَا
فَنِي رَمَاهَا بَلَّغَتْ نَرَاهَا	أَلَا تَذُوبُ عَلَيَّ
رَأَيْتُ لِرَأْيِي قَدْ رَمَاهَا	أَيْنَ الْوَهْوَةِ أَهْبَاهَا
فِي الْعَائِدِينَ دَلِيلَهَا	أُصِي لَهَا ضَعْفًا
مُ الدَّائِمُونَ لَقَلَّتْ: آهَاهَا	رَمَاهَا لَوْلَا أَنْ يَلُو

Al-Radī in the above ode tells us that he fell in love with Lamyā'. He also indicates that this love started at Minā, the religious place where pilgrims should stay three days. The poet gives no minute details about his beloved and his love. He concerns himself with expressing his grief, pain and the suffering of deprivation in love. Moreover, he leaves the main point and turns his attention to the departure of those whom he loves. His decency and chastity show themselves. The pretence of lovesickness is also clear. In general, the ode does not express any sort of love adventures, meeting or real relationship with individual experiences. However, the poet pretends that he fell in love at first sight then he lives on his longing and profound yearning for his beloved after her departure. He also makes it clear that he would be satisfied with his beloved's phantom rather than her physical presence.

In al-Hijāziyyāt many interesting aspects recur. The first is the increasing number of references to religious and Hijāzi sites, with which pilgrims become familiar when they are performing their duty of pilgrimage. These references to religious and other desert sites have historic charms in the depth of the Arabs' memory, attracting them to the type of simple and decent life devoid of artificiality and corruption. Even up to today Arab people who lead an urban life express such an attachment.

Religious references and other phraseology related to the pilgrimage are visible in these poems. In one of them the poet says:

Woe unto my heart for three nights
at Minā,
that they passed away, leaving nothing but
the anguish of memory.
Alas for fair ones throwing the pebbles
with langour.
Alas they were only throwing live coals
into the bowels of lovers.
Said they: tomorrow is the date to
hurry our descent from Minā.
It displeased me that the
re-union should have come at the moment
we were due to depart.

نِيا دِينِ قَلْبِي مِنْ ثَلَاثٍ عَلَى بَنِي
مُضِينَ دَلِمَ يَبْتَلِنُ غَيْرُ هَوَى الذِّكْرِ
وَرَامِينَ دَهْنًا بِالْحَبَارِ دَانَا
رَكَّوْا أَهْلَاءَ الْمُحِبِّينَ بِالْحَبْرِ
وَقَالُوا: غَدًا مِمَّا دَنَا لِنَفَرٍ نَفِيٍّ
وَرَامَسْتَنِي أَنْ تَلْقَاءَ مَعَ النَّفَرِ ١

Al-Radī in these lines made reference to the three days which pilgrims spent at Minā. He likened the pebbles which were thrown by these women, according to the rules of performing the pilgrimage, to the live coals thrown into their lovers' bowels. He also mentioned the days of departing from Minā (Yawm al-Nafṣ). These references occur in al-Hijāziyyāt. Al-Radī, for instance, says:

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 394.

O gazelle between Naqā and al-Muṣallā.
 my armour no longer stands up to your darts.
 Whenever an arrow is pulled out of my heart,
 another dart of yours returns to hit painfully.
 You would not grant me your favour,
 on the day you left in a state of ritual
 consecration.
 O, tell me, who made it lawful for you to deny me?

بَا غَزَالُكَ بَيْنَ النَّقَا وَالْمُصَلَّى
 لَيْسَ بَقِيَ عَلَى نَبَالِكَ دَرْعِي
 كُلَّمَا سَلَّ مِنْ نُوَادِي سَهْمٍ
 عَادَ سَهْمٌ نَكَمَ مَضِيعِ الْوَرَعِ
 1 رَخِمْ جَنْتَ يَوْمَ رَحِمْتَ حَرَامًا
 مِنْ عَطَائِي فَكُنْ أَبَاهُكَ نَهْيِي

It is worth noting that 'Umarite poets used to make references to Mecca, the Ka'bah and other religious sites related to the performance of the pilgrimage. They often found these places suitable for their love-adventures at the season of pilgrimage. But when they used religious words they did not pretend to be possessed with religious sentiment as the 'Udhrites did. 'Udhri poetry is invested with religious character. Poets of this school turned towards God, imploring him to help them in their despair and love-sickness.² References to pilgrimage sites and other places in al-Hijāz sometimes occur in 'Udhrite poetry, but there is no connection between these religious places and love-adventures as the 'Umarite poets used to relate. 'Udhri poets mentioned them just to express their yearnings and profound longings

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 500-501.

2. Kināny *op. cit.*, p. 268; see also *Diwān* of Majnūn Laylā, annotated by 'Abd al-Muta'al-al-Sa'idī, Cairo, n.d. pp. 18, 37, 56; see D. J. pp. 74, 101, 112.

for the beloved's residences.¹ As for al-Radī he seems to have made a harmonious blend of certain aspects of the 'Udhrite and 'Umarite schools in his Hijāziyyāt. As we have already seen, there was a kind of imaginary love or perhaps real admiration for a beautiful woman which was developed by the poet's imagination into a love affair in the pilgrimage season. In this respect our poet came nearer to the 'Umarite trend of love-poetry. Meanwhile, his observance of chastity is obvious and al-Radī paid much attention to expressing his burning feeling and deprivation of love. He also coloured his poems with religious elements, grief and pain. In this respect he came closer to the 'Udhrites.

Al-Radī in these poems also seems to be on the side of the 'Udhrites as far as the world of wishes, hopes and visions is concerned. 'Udhri poets always observed chastity in their love while suffering the pangs of unrequited desire. Qays b. al-Mulawwah, for instance, consoled himself with the thought that the breeze coming from his beloved's abode still kept him in touch with her. Majnūn Laylā also contented himself with the same dream.² Jamīl looked at the sky in the hope that his beloved Buthaynah was looking at the same time so that both their looks might meet.³ Another 'Udhri poet addressed the breeze of Najd as follows:

1. D. J. pp. 130, 179; Majnūn Laylā, Dīwān, pp. 15, 17.

2. Aghānī, Vol. II, p. 26; see Dīwān of Majnūn Laylā, p. 73.

3. D. J. p. 92; see Kināny, op. cit., p. 283.

O breeze of Najd, when did you come
over from Najd? Your gentle
blowing fanned my burning passion. 1

ألا يا صبا نجد متى هبت من نجد
لقد زادني سراك رهداً على رهبر

Similar expressions of the 'Udhri spirit occur in al-Hijāziyyāt. Al-Radī, like the 'Udhrites, contented himself with a breeze passing over his beloved's lips and satisfied himself with a drop of liquor coming from his beloved's teeth. He says:

What a sweet breeze that passed to us
from your lips!
What a liquor into which
you dipped your teeth!

يا هبتاً نكهة رت بظف لي
رظفه نحت بنا ضاباك

2

Al-Radī sometimes comforted himself with something trivial from his beloved. He was pleased to meet those people who came from his beloved's district, to have some news about his mistress's abode and her people. He found it enough just to smell the fragrance of Najd which still lingered on the garments of those who had lately returned from there. He says:

O, my two friends! Stop and satisfy my
wishes: give me news of the land of Najd.
Is the enclose of Wa'cā' (the sandy grounds)
covered with flowers?

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1. Kināny, op. cit., 293; see al-Marzūqī, al-Hamāsah, Vol. III, p. 1298.
 2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 594.

Have the rains refreshed Khamilah al-Tah (the acacia), where flourished the willow and the laurel?
When they approach, the perfumes of Najd breathe from their garments,
so lately was it that they departed from that home.

يا صاحبي تفاني راقبياً رهراً
وخبيراً عن نجد بأخبار
هل روضت قاعة العشاء طربت
فيلة الطلح ذات البان الغار
نضوع أرواح نجد من ثيابهم
عند القدم لقرب الهد بالدار 1

Like the 'Udhri poets, al-Radī pretended to accept suffering and the deprivation of love. He did not ask more than to send his greeting to his beloved. He says:

O, you night-traveller speeding on your way,
will you carry a request from one who is
anguished and longing?
Give my greeting to the dwellers of al-Musallā,
for a greeting received is a part of reunion.

أيها الراح المفضّ تحمّل
هاجةً للفتى المشتاق
اقرب عني السلام هل الطلح
وبدع السلام بغير التلافي 2

'Udhri poets also suffered from lovesickness. They believed that their beloveds were the cause and the only cure of their unhappiness and lovesickness.³ 'Abd Allāh

1. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 119; compare with Ibn Khallikān Arabic version, Vol. IV, p. 46; see D. R. Vol. I, p. 398.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 574.

3. D. J. pp. 21, 32; see Aghānī, Vol. II, p. 20.

b. al-Dumaynah tells us that he tried everything to cure himself but in vain.¹ Al-Raḍī also pretended that he was afflicted by lovesickness and found no cure in Iraq. He wished that he would find it in Najd:

In vain I sought for my cure in Iraq.
Maybe you will find a physician to cure me
in Najd.

عَدَيْتُ دَوَائِي بِالْمَرَاقِ فَرَجًا
وَعَدَيْتُمْ بَعْضَ لِي طَبِيبًا مَدَاوِيًا 2

Many 'Udhri expressions found their way into al-Hijāziyyāt.³

The 'Udhri poet al-Ṣimmah al-Qushayrī, for instance, presented a vivid picture in which he described the moment of departure when he left his beloved's place.

He says:

I looked back towards my beloved's abode
for so long that my neck ached.

لَقَيْتُ خَوَالِي حَتَّى وَجَدْتَنِي
وَلَقَيْتُ مِنَ الرَّصْفَاءِ لَيْتًا رَأْفَةً 4

Al-Raḍī drew on this picture and put it as follows:

I took leave of you, looking
just once in front of me,
but looking towards you scores of times behind.

1. Kināny, op. cit., p. 293.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 967.

3. D. J. p. 176; see D. R. Vol. II, p. 691.

4. al-Marzūqī, al-Hamārah, Vol. III, p. 1213.

تَرَجَّهْتُ عَنْكُمْ لِي أُمَامِي نَظْرَةً
عِشْرٌ عِشْرٌ خَوْكُم لِي وَرَأْيَا
1

Al-Radī, like 'Udhri poets, also observed the secrecy of love despite its purity and innocence. The 'Udhri poet, for instance, kept his anguish and lovesickness in secrecy.² Nuṣayb b. Rabāh says:

I once waylaid her in order to greet
her secretly since she would not greet
me openly.
When she saw me she did not
talk to me because of the watchers
round her. But her eyes streamed
with tears.

وَقَفْتُ لَهَا كَيْمَا تَرُ لِي
أَخَالُهَا السَّيَمُ إِنْ لَمْ تَلَمَّ
وَلَا رَأَيْتِي بِالرَّشَاءِ تَحَدَّتْ
3 دَامَ مَا هَوْنًا رَلَمَ تَقَلِمَ

Al-Radī in the method of 'Udhri poets pretended to keep his love secretly as well. He says:

I make brief my greeting when I
see you.
I turn away for fear of arousing suspicion
of me.
I cast down my eyes while their glances
are like flashes towards you,
and deep anguish stirs within my ribs.

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 968.

2. D. J. p. 62.

3. Kināny op. cit., p. 297; see Aghānī, Vol. I, p. 375.

أَفَلَا - مَدِي إِنَّ رَأَيْتَهُ خِفَةً
 وَارْضُ كَمَا لَقِيَ قَالَ مَرِيْبُ
 وَارْضُ وَالْمِثْلَانِ يَوْمَهُ لَفْطَانِ
 إِلَيْهِ رَا بَيْنَ الظُّلُوعِ وَهَيْبُ 1

The above examples will, it is hoped, illustrate the echoes of 'Udhri poetry to be found in al-Hijāziyyāt. However, it must be borne in mind that our poet, as has already been learned, came close to the 'Umarites as far as the repeated story of love, the setting and time are concerned. In general, al-Raḍī had reasonable success in getting his love poetry away from the amatory poems current in his time. He took pains to assert his attachment to the desert, Hijāz, Najd and to admire bedouin values and other traditional qualities. Nevertheless, he did not escape the influence of urban life and its reflection in all walks of life at that time. Exaggeration, sophisticated images, some degree of artificiality and other signs of modernisation were not absent from al-Raḍī's love-poetry in general and al-Hijāziyyāt in particular. However, al-Raḍī limited them and kept his poems at the level of the recognised standard of traditional poetry.

Before closing observations on al-Hijāziyyāt, it is necessary to say a few more words on them. This type of love-poetry has fascinated Arab readers both past and

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 141, see p. 144.

present, and many enthusiastic judgements have been made on them. Modern scholars who have an interest in Arab poetry have a high regard for what al-Radī produced of this type of love-poetry.¹ It has been recommended that al-Hijāziyyāt should be committed to memory by those who want to cultivate their poetical talent. These poems are also ranked side by side with the Hāshimiyyāt of al-Kumayt, the wine-songs of Abū Nuwās, the ascetic poetry of Abū al-ʿAtāhiyah, the poetry of Ibn al-Muʿtazz, famous for its similes, the panegyrics of al-Buḥturī.² This judgement shows us the place which al-Hijāziyyāt holds in Arab poetry. However, the above estimation seems to be rather vague as far as the details of this judgement are concerned. It seems to imply that the Hijāziyyāt of al-Radī had a remarkable hold in Arab poetry in general.

It is necessary to reconsider these poems at first hand in the light of the analyses which have already been given. It has become clear that the elements of this love-poetry can be traced to two poetical trends: the ʿUdhrite and ʿUmarite. It must be borne in mind that our poet did not produce a new type of love-poetry. His contribution lies in the fact that he made an individual approach to these two poetical trends. He purged his style from daring remarks and the frivolity of youth, while making use of the elements of love story which

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1. I. ʿAbbās, al-Sharīf al-Radī, p. 264; Zakī Mubārak, ʿAbqariyyat, Vol. II, p. 77; al-Basīr, fī al-Adab al-ʿAbbāsī, pp. 432-433; Dayf, al-Fann, p. 354.
 2. Zakī Mubārak, ʿAbqariyyat, Vol. II, p. 77.

repeatedly presented in 'Umarite poetry. He also assimilated the 'Udhri expressions and developed them by his poetical talent. He kept a balance between these two types of love-poetry in his Hijāziyyāt and introduced a poetical amalgam stamped by his own touch. It is clear that he failed to come up to the level of 'Umarī poetry as far as fresh experiences and minute description of women's life are concerned. He also fell short in reviving the 'Udhri poetry with its spontaneity, simplicity and genuineness. However, he was successful in using his poetical technique to adorn his love-poetry and check artificiality, at least by comparison with his contemporaries. Al-Radī also expressed himself well. As we have said, he seems to have been deprived of actual love. Consequently, he compensated by imagining it and writing about it poetically. He sang of his yearning and tormented longing for women and love while he had little to say about his first hand experiences of them. The sad feeling, religious elements, profound sentiment and spirit of decency has made his love-poetry touching and fascinating to Arab readers.

The historical importance of al-Hijāziyyāt in Arab poetry rests on the fact that many poets who came after al-Radī imitated their type and method. From the fifth Islamic century onwards the amatory prelude of Arab classical poetry was overloaded with references to Hijāz Najd, Mecca and other religious and desert sites. Many

poets pretended that they had fallen in love in Mecca, Hijāz or somewhere related to them. It is obvious that those urban poets had little or no real access to desert life and had nothing to do with Hijāz and Najd. Despite this, they associated their longing and love with these places.¹ As time passed al-Hijāziyyāt set the pattern for a type of artificial amatory prelude in panegyrical odes and other themes for many centuries after Al-Raḍī.²

1. al-Majdhūb, al-Murhid ilā Fahm Ash'ār al-'Arab, Cairo 1955, Vol. II, p. 88; Dayf, al-Fann, p. 369.

2. See Ch. XII, below.

CHAPTER XI

AL-RADĪ'S POETICAL TECHNIQUE

"If the definition of a poem is a matter of so much difficulty and complexity, the discussion of the principles by which poetry should be judged may be expected to be confused."

I. A. Richards

in "principles of literary
criticism" p. 178.

1 - General remarks

Al-Radī was a poet with an interest in literary criticism as far as poetical composition was concerned. He had his judgements and estimations of Arab poetry and poets. In addition, he set down some points and theories on poetical technique here and there in his Diwān and other works. Accordingly, it is convenient to examine his understanding and ideas in this respect and to consider how far he was consistent with his theories when he put them into practice.

In his Diwān he made it clear that he considered his poems to be characterised by simplicity, eloquence and fluency. In his eyes they are also devoid of weakness of style and ideas. The most important point which al-Radī stressed was the harmony and balance between meanings and words. He described his poetry as follows:

The meaning has no preference over its word,
nor has the word preference over the meaning.

لَا يَفْضِلُ الْمَعْنَى عَلَى الْكَلِمِ
شَيْئاً. وَلَا الْكَلِمَ عَلَى الْمَعْنَى

1

He also referred to the question of words and meanings in his work Talkhīs al-Bayān. He pointed out that metaphorical figures and verbal embellishments must not be sought for their own sake. They should be used to elaborate and adorn the meanings. He remarked that a

close connection should be maintained between the content and the form. He emphasised this point once again declaring that words must serve the meanings.¹ Al-Radī also clarified his understanding of the question of borrowing ideas, images and expressions from ancient poets and previous poets in general. In his eyes contemporary poets must make their own approach when borrowing meanings from others. They were required to recast the previous meaning into something different. He called upon them to improve the common and borrowed ideas and images and invent something original. He advised them to add details to the ancient and previous meanings with which they dealt. Al-Radī added that if a contemporary poet failed in inventing and elaborating meanings he would not attain an individual approach and would lose the chance of being an industrious follower.²

Before entering on al-Radī's poetical technique comment may be made on the points of similarity between his poetical approach and that of al-Mutanabbī. As has already been mentioned, our poet imitated al-Mutanabbī in many respects, modelling some of his odes on those of his master. Al-Mutanabbī's meanings can be discerned in al-Radī's Diwān, in particular the odes which were written in the early stages of his poetical development. Not only did he admire al-Mutanabbī's approach to figures of speech and similes but he also took over some elements

1. Talkhīs, p. 244.

2. Rasā'il, p. 88. Al-Radī explained his ideas in correspondence with his friend al-Ṣābī.

of his poetical shortcomings. Although al-Radī made no references to these close connections, his poems betray them as we shall learn later.

Al-Radī, as we have already seen, deemed the borrowing of old expressions and meanings excusable provided that the borrower took pains to enrich the conventional meanings. It is necessary to examine this point in his poetry to see how far he succeeded in putting his theory into practice. In the Jāhilite poetry, Imru' al-Qays made a comparison of lightning with human hands: he says:

Friend, do you see yonder lightning?
Look, there goes its glitter.
Flashing like two hands now in the heaped-up,
crowned stormcloud.
Brilliantly it shines - so flames the
lamp of an anchorite as he slopes the oil over the
twisted wick. 1

أصاح ترى برقاً أريد دميضه
كلمع اليدين في هي نطل
بضي سناه أو صابج راهب
أمال السيط بالذبال المقتل 2

Al-Radī took the above image and reintroduced it as follows:

O, sickness of your heart, deriving from
a lightning-flash which illuminates and (then) is
extinguished.
Over the eastern part of Najd - a pasture
barren to your eyes -
Just as a forearm flashes, having upon it a
bracelet of pure gold.

1. Arberry, The Seven Odes, London 1957, p. 66.

2. Mu'allaqāt, pp. 72-73.

As if it were a fire or a high hill kindled into
 flame for the guests.
 Or sparks displayed, when the long-tressed
 night is pitch-dark,
 By a man playing with his hands as he bends
 over the flint-stick,
 Or a mistress of a house whose incense is moist
 upon the fire.

يا دين قلبك من با	رقى نير د تحبر
على شريتي نجى	سرى ليلك جذب
كما تلج ذراع	فيها من النظر قلب
كأنه نار عليها	و للضرب ثب
ارسلات أاما	والليل دايج أرب
ترادع بيريه	على الزناد نكب
ارأتم قوى يلج	جها على النار رطب 2

There is no doubt that Imru' al-Qays introduced a splendid picture based on more than one point of similarity. This sort of simile is called al-tashbīh al-tamthīlī. The style is concise, well-built and full of novelty. The poet rested his images on two similes. Al-Radī took over Imru' al-Qays's two lines and cleverly developed their images. In the first line he succeeded in attaching the state of sad feeling to the lightning in its flash and extinction. He also adorned the second hemistich of the first line with successful antithesis (tibāq). Al-Radī introduced four subsequent similes as well drawn

1. Arberry, Arabic Poetry, p. 98.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 129-130.

from desert life. Although he applied a short metre, he did not fail to complete his detailed and refined images.

Al-Radī sometimes falls short in dealing with ancient and conventional images and ideas, when he uses too many words, causing the ideas to lose brightness and concision. He once imitated Tarafah's ideas in which the poet expressed his painful sorrow on his relatives' oppression of him. Tarafah says:

Truly, the tyranny of kinsfolk inflicts sharper anguish upon a man, than the blow of a trenchant Indian sabre. 1

و ظلم ذوي القربى أشدّ مضاضة
على المرء من دمع الحام الحفير

Al-Radī tried to put the above poetical image into gnomic form making a slight change as far as the comparison is concerned. He likened relatives' injustice to the blow of lances rather than to the sabre as Tarafah had done. In another line he repeated the same idea, which was superfluous as the poet had already completed his statement. He says:

To be humiliated amidst relatives is painful,
while amongst very distant relatives
it is soothing.

1. Arberry, The Seven Odes, p. 88.

when you incur men's biting words, the lances of
closest kinsfolk are very injurious.

لِلذِّلِّ بَيْنَ الدَّقْرَيْنِ مَضَاضَةٌ ۚ وَالذِّلُّ مَا بَيْنَ الدُّبَاعِ دَارُوعُ
وَاذَا رَمَيْتُكَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ تَوَارِصُ ۚ سَلَامٌ ذِي الْقُرْنَيْنِ لِتَرْبِيَةِ أَجْرَحُ

Al-Mutanabbī's poetry was a basic source from which
al-Radī borrowed meanings and drew ideas. Our poet
sometimes failed to come up to the level of al-Mutanabbī's
poetical composition while at other times he had consider-
able success. Al-Mutanabbī, for instance, explained his
idea on life from his own viewpoint as a cavalier and
fighter. He says:

And do not reckon glory as a wineskin and
a singing girl, for glory resides only in
the sword and virgin violence,
and striking the necks of kings, and that there
should be seen to you black dust and a mighty
host. 2

وَلَا تَحْسِبَنَّ الْمَجْدَ زَقَاً وَحِينَةً ۚ ضَا الْمَجْدِ الدَّالِيفُ وَالْقَلْعَةُ الْبَلَدُ
وَتَضْرِبُ الْمَنَاقِبَ الْمَلِكُ أَنْ تُرَى ۚ لَكَ الْحَبَاتُ السُّودُ وَالصُّرُ الْمَرْ

Al-Radī took al-Mutanabbī's idea and put it as follows:

Glory resides only in the invasion of tribes
and the tying up of the mature and strong
horses at the chambers of noble women,
and sheathing the sword into every head and fixing
the ends of lances in the eyes.

وَمَا الْقُرُ الدَّخْرُوكَ الْحَيِّ بِالنَّصَا ۚ وَرَبَطُ الْمَذَاكِي فِي هَمْدِهَا الصَّوَاتِ
وَأَتَمَّادُكَ الْأَسْيَافَ فِيمَا لَهَا ۚ وَرَزَكَ أَطْرَافَ الْقَنَا فِي الْحَالِ 3

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 200.

2. Arberry, Poems of al-Mutanabbī, pp. 38-39.

3. D. R. Vol. II, p. 557.

Al-Radī, as his two lines show, made no improvement on al-Mutanabbī's idea. On the contrary, he spoiled the splendour and nobility of al-Mutanabbī's chivalrous images. Our poet as his two lines indicate seems to be aggressive and cruel - while eager for violence, he defaced the image of chivalry. However, al-Radī, as his Diwān shows, had some notable successes in his poetry in borrowing and improving on al-Mutanabbī's meanings. Al-Mutanabbī, for instance, praised his patron Sayf al-Dawlah as follows:

Do you not regard a victory as sweet, except
it be a victory in which the white Indian swords
shake hands with the dusky locks?

أَنَا تَرَى ظَفَرًا هَلَبًا سَوَى ظَفِيرٍ
تَقَابَحَتْ فِيهِ بَيْضُ الْهَنْدِ وَالْبُحَيْرِ 1

Al-Radī transferred the meaning from panegyric to self-praise. He described his courageous supporters as follows:

Cavaliers who attained their goal by their
lances and shook hands with their objectives by their
swords.

نَوَاصِيٍّ نَالُوا الْمَنَى بِالْمَنَاحِ
وَصَافِحُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ بِالْمَصْنَعِ 2

Al-Radī's style in the above line is simple and eloquent as well. He adorned it with two successful paronomasias

1. Arberry, Poems of al-Mutanabbī, pp. 70-71.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 197.

(Jinās). The first is between al-munā and al-qanā, the second between sāfahū and sifāh. As for al-Radī's remaining viewpoints on poetical technique, it will be convenient to consider them in the coming observations on his similes, metaphorical figures, verbal embellishments and other aspects of his poetical style.

2 - Similes in al-Radī's poetry

A simile in Arab rhetoric is to compare one thing to another in order to clarify, adorn and embellish the former. Arab rhetoricians divide similes into several categories and introduce many terms related to them. However, this brief survey on al-Radī's approach to this point will be confined to examining similes as a part of al-Radī's poetical technique. Accordingly, it will not be overloaded by complicated terms which occur in Arab technical treatises on rhetoric.

Arab poets for many centuries had their own established and traditional clichés in similes. The generosity of a praised man, for instance, was often compared to rain clouds, his courage to that of the lion and his firmness and wisdom to a deep-rooted mountain. In love-poetry also they had their conventional similes which were often repeated when poets described their beloved's charms or expressed their feelings. Al-Radī was on the traditional side in dealing with different sorts of similes as far as the main principles are concerned. In his praise the hands of his patron are

likened to clouds and his courage is compared to that of a lion. He says:

رَقَبْتُ كَالسَّجَاعِ يَوْمَ عَزَمًا رَجَزْتُ بِالطَّلَى هَذِبَ الرِّثَاءِ
رَكْنًا كَالْفُجَامِ يَنْفُضُ حَتَّى يَتَمَّ الْأَرْضَى مِنْ طَلْدٍ رِثَاءِ¹

In praising the Būwayhids he described them as if they were the rains and the people the green field. He says:

O. Al Būwayh, you are the rains
and the people the green fields.

أَنْ بَرِيهِ أَنْتَ الرِّطَارُ وَالنَّاسُ الْخَضَرُ²

Al-Raḍī shows a preference for two sorts of simile. The first is al-tashbīh al-baligh in which the point of similarity (wajh al-shabah) is omitted. The second is al-tashbīh al-tamthīlī in which there is more than one point of similarity between the two halves of the simile. In one of his panegyrical odes on Bahā' al-Dawlah he used a sequence of similes as follows:

You are a holder and regulator of the world
and religion, splendour, light, abundant rains
and the foundation (of the state).

أَنْتَ لِلدُّنْيَا وَالْدِّينِ يَاسُكَ وَنِظَامُ
رَجَاءُ وَضِيَاءُ رَغِيَاةٌ وَتَوَامُ

3

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 9.

2. Ibid., p. 320.

3. D. R. Vol. II, p. 731.

Although al-Radī overloaded the above two lines with a collection of nouns, he produced four puns (tawfiyah). The four words 'splendour', 'light', 'abundant rain' and 'foundation of the state', - (Bahā'), (Diya'), (Ghiyath), (Qawām) were among the titles of the Būwayhid prince Bahā' al-Dawlah. Meanwhile, the poet used them as similes as well.

Al-tashbīh al-tamthīlī often occurs in al-Radī's poetry. He produced many interesting pictures in this respect. He once likened himself to a spear then followed this simile by a novel picture in which he compared the entry of a spear into a throat with a viper forcing its way into a spring well. He says:

رَأْسُ سَهْمٍ شَارِعاً فِي حَلٍّ خَصِيٍّ
شَرُوعَ الصِّلِّ فِي كَيْبُوعٍ سَائِرٍ ١

The poet also gave attention to add details to the pictures which were based on the point of similarity. In one of his odes he described the people's limited life and speedy departure as if they were camels in a state of alert. They came near to a mountain trail while behind them an adventurer chased them with his lance. Al-Radī's picture runs as follows:

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 10.

رَأَيْتُ كَالْأَهْجَالِ قَدْ قَرَّبْتُ
تَنْظُرُ إِلَيَّ لِأَن يَفْعُنَا
تَدْنُو إِلَى الشَّيْبِ مِنْ خَلْفِنَا
مِنْهُ مَرَّةً يَهْرُدُهَا بِالنَّارِ

1 Al-Radī did not use similes for their own sake. He often applied them side by side with other rhetorical figures to adorn and clarify his pictures and expressions. In one of his odes the poet embodied the insignificance of a certain tribe. He did not indicate this point directly. He first used metonymy (kināyah) to illustrate the tribe's cupidity and miserable state. In his picture he shows us that the tribe's tents were of short pillars. He then likened these tents to ashen dogs sitting on their backsides. He says:

هَيْئَتُ قَصِيرَاتِ الصَّادُكَا نَا
كُلَابٌ عَلَى الذَّنَابِ رَقِيعَةٌ رُبُ

The echo of al-Mutanabbī can be discerned in al-Radī's similes. We have already seen some aspects of this. However, another example may be quoted. Al-Mutanabbī, in his self praise likened himself to a spear. He says:

I am but a samharī spear carried by
you, an ornament when slung casually, but
terrible when directed.

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 900.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 315.

رما أنا الدَّ سُرِّيْ هَلْتَهْ

فَرَيْتُ مَرَضًا رِجَّ سُدَّ

1

Al-Radī cleverly exploited al-Mutanabbī's image, applying the word sword instead of spear and drawing on the details of al-Mutanabbī's similes. He says:

He is the sword, if you sheathed it, it
would be decisive and wise, and if you drew it, it
would be terrible.

هو السيف إنْ أَخَذْتَهُ كَانَ حَازِمًا
وَتَوَرَّأَ دَانْ جَرَدَتُهُ كَانَ حَادِيًا

3 - Metaphorical figures in al-Radī's poetry

"A metaphor, as I. A. Richards put it, "is a shift, a carrying over of a word from its normal use to a new use. In a sense metaphor, the shift of the word is occasioned and justified by a similarity or analogy between the object it is usually applied to and the new object."³ In Arab rhetoric the word majāz in its broadest sense seems to correspond to the English term Metaphor. Arab rhetoricians made no clear distinction between isti'ārah and majāz in their early studies of the rhetorical art."⁴

1. Arberry, Poems of al-Mutanabbī, pp. 82-83.

2. D. R. Vol. II. p. 983.

3. I. A. Richards, Practical criticism, London, 1964, p. 221.

4. Sinā'atayn, p. 270.

Al-Raḍī himself made no distinction between these terms as his book majāzāt shows.¹ Later on, the term majāz was used in the broadest sense. It comprises isti'ārah, kināyah, majāz, murcaḥ, and majāz 'aqlī. These terms are subdivided into many sorts as 'Alī al-Jarīm indicates and clarifies in his book.² However, in this survey stress will be laid on al-Raḍī's approach to three figures of speech: metaphor (isti'ārah), pathetic fallacy which is similar to al-majāz al-'aqlī and metonymy (kināyah). These sorts of rhetorical figures recur more than others in al-Raḍī's poetry.

Al-Raḍī relies heavily on metaphorical figures plus similes in producing his poetical pictures. Isti'ārah forms a fundamental means through which he parades his descriptive talent. In general, he draws on the traditional methods which were usually used by Arab poets who preceded him. The increasing use of metaphors in his poetry has been examined by past and present Arab scholars. Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī (d. 466/1073) who analysed al-Raḍī's use of figures of speech in general and isti'ārah in particular came to the conclusion that the poet produced interesting metaphors, but somewhat far-fetched and complicated.³ On the other hand, modern scholars appreciate al-Raḍī's figures of speech. Some

1. Majāzāt, pp. 105, 108, 294.

2. 'Alī al-Jarīm and Muṣṭafā Amīn, al-Balāghah al-wāḍihah, 17th edn. Cairo 1964, pp. 69-133.

3. Ibn Sinān Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Khafājī, Sirr al-Faṣahah ed. by 'Abd al-Muta'āl al-Ṣa'idī, Cairo 1969, pp. 114, 127, 130, 158.

of them regard him as being among the most successful Arab poets in clever metaphorical figures, and the avoidance of artificiality in them.¹

In the light of the recognised rules of Arab rhetoric, inadequacy of statement or comparison and remoteness were counted technical shortcomings in figures of speech. Abū Tammām, for instance, was blamed by al-Jurjānī and al-Bāqillānī among others owing to the remoteness and extravagance of his metaphorical figures. Al-Mutanabbī often received the same rebuke for a similar reason.² Al-Radī was, to some extent, fond of using remote and complicated metaphors. However, he usually drew on the poetical heritage and fully used it. Like other poets he likened the emergence of gray hair to the light of the rise of dawn. He says:

هـو تَمَّحَ فِي حَادٍ زَائِي
لِأَنْفِي، بِهِ رَدَّ اسْتَمَحَ³

He put the same image once again as follows:

إِلَى كَمْ ذَا الزُّرْدُ فِي الْقَضَائِ
وَنَجْرُ الشَّيْبِ عِنْدِي قَدْ أَضَاءَ⁴

1. Muhfuz, al-Sharīf al-Radī. Beirut 1944, pp. 12, 68, 72, 74. See Mārūn 'Abbūd, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-262.

2. Jurjānī, pp. 64, 76, 311; see Bāqillānī, pp. 138-139.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 200.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

In his love-poetry the poet produced many interesting metaphors. He once described the scene of departing from his beloved when they both burst into tears while trying to hide these tears by their bosoms. He used the word 'steal', nasruqu instead of the common word 'hide' making his metaphor in harmony with his emotional state. He says:

نَرَقُ الدَّمْعَ فِي الْجُوبِ هَبَاءً

1 رُبْنَا مَا بَيْنَا مِنَ الدِّهْنِ بِضَاقَ

Al-Radī also used metaphors when he intended to attach a particular significance and eminence to the subject of his description. In one of his dirges he compared the bier of the dead to a mountain walking on men's hands. He says:

مَارَاطُ فِي نَوَارِ قَبْلَا

جَبَلٌ مَارَ عَلَى أَيْدِي الرِّجَالِ

2

Remote and strange metaphors occur in various themes of al-Radī's poetry. In one of his odes he described the anguish of love and presented it in the form of a metaphor as follows:

Love is a disease which fades
as if its tired she-camels froth without foam

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 578.

2. Ibid., p. 666.

وَالْبَيْتُ دَائِدٌ يَفْجَلُ كَأَنَّا
تَرَفُو رَوَازِعَهُ بِغَيْرِ لُغَامٍ¹

In the above line the poet produced a strange metaphor. He failed to establish an adequate point of similarity in it. In the same ode he praised the Caliph al-Tā'i⁶ as follows:

A king ascended until he scaled the highest peak of sky and humiliated the upper part of the nose of time.

مَلِيطٌ سَامَا هَيْتُ تَلَقَّى فِي السَّاءِ
وَأَذَلَّ يَحْرِيضُ الزَّمَانَ السَّاءِ

The ode from which the above two strange metaphors have been quoted is filled with exaggeration and complicated metaphorical figures. However, the poem in question was written in the early stages of al-Radī's poetical development. Later on he dealt with these figures of speech more successfully and skilfully.

Al-Radī's metaphorical language is also characterised by the increasing use of al-majāz al-ʿaqlī, "pathetic fallacy". The poet often applied this figure of speech, drawing on it in building up his descriptions and pictures. Although these are sometimes strange and complicated according to the traditional standards of Arab rhetoric, they are nevertheless interesting. Ibn Sinān criticised

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 772.

al-Radī for remoteness in the use of pathetic fallacy. This traditionalist rhetorician could not imagine that darkness had a brain as al-Radī describes it in one of his odes.¹ Ibn Sinān's judgement is correct from a traditional point of view, yet al-Radī's descriptive talent in this respect is undeniable. In his poetry he makes us imagine that longing has a sword by which it slaughters tears. He says:

نَسِيتُ بَؤْسَهُ، يَنْخِرُ الدَّمْعَ مِنْهُ
إِذَا هُوَ دَثْنَةٌ بِالْهَيْتَالِ الْمَاهِدِ

In the same ode he attaches illness to determination.

He says:

وَمَا مَرَضَتْ لِي فِي الْمَطَالِبِ كَلِمَةٌ
رَأَيْتُهَا فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ عَوَائِدُ

The poet in another ode imagined his heart as a person.

He then likened patience to water. He imagined that this heart drank patience. He says:

أَلَمْ يَشْرَبِ الصَّبْرَ قَلْبِي وَلَدَانِ
فَتَنِي مَرَجًا وَالصَّوَالِي ضَرَابِي

1. Ibn Sinān op. cit., p. 130.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 240.

3. Ibid., p. 236.

4. D. R. Vol. II, p. 801.

In the same ode he produced a picture in which swords embrace him and lances kiss him as well.

أَمَا عَانَقَنِي صُدُورُ الْيُونِ أَمَا قَبَّلَتْنِي نُفُوسُ السَّهَامِ ١

He also depicted darkness as if it had a baby and this baby is weaned by dawn. He says.

وَضَلَّ الدَّجَىٰ فِي هَجُورِ الْبَلَا دَلَّيْهُمُ بِالْفَرَسِ لِنِظَامِ ٢

Metonymy (kināyah) is also used by al-Raḍī in his poetry but it is less common than isti'ārah and majāz 'aqlī. In his love-poetry, however, it is an important element. He preferred to call his beloved by the word 'gazelle' rather than by her name. He also named his mistress by the word 'tree' (carḥah). He says:

Oh tree in a vale whose soil was not
watered by anything other than my blood.

يَا سُرَّةَ بَالْعَا لَمْ يُبَلِّ بِفِرْدِي ثَرَاهَا ٣

In other odes he called his beloved zabyah. He says:

Oh she-gazelle at al-Bān pasturing
in its thickets.
Rejoice, for today my heart has become
your own pasture-land.

يَا ضَبِيَّةَ الْبَانَ تَرَجَّى فِي هَمَائِكِهِ
لَهَيْكِ الْيَوْمَ أَنْ يَقْبَلَ مَرْعَاكَ ٤

1. D. R. Vol. II. p. 801.

2. Ibid., p. 803.

3. Ibid., p. 965.

4. Ibid., p. 593.

Al-Radī often repeated some traditional types of metonymy which were common in Arab classical poetry. For instance, he described the avarice of people much the same as previous poets had done. He says:

Their fire-places are cool
and their cook's shirt is white.

وَاقَدْ نِيرَانُهُمْ قَرْدَةٌ دُرْبَالُ طَافِصِيمِ أَبْيَعِينَ 1

Before closing these remarks on al-Radī's use of metonymy it is convenient to present a comparison between him and al-Mutanabbī in this respect. The comparison has been made by Diyā' al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr in his work al-Mathal al-Sā'ir. He cited al-Mutanabbī's line which runs as follows:

In spite of my passionate desire for what lies
behind her veil,
I refrain from what which is inside her trousers.

إِنِّي عَلَى حُفْنِي بِنَا فِي خُرْصَا
لَزَيْفَتٍ عَمَّا فِي سُرَادِيلِهَا 2

Ibn al-Athīr remarks that al-Mutanabbī had tried to indicate and assert his decency but fornication is better than the chastity that al-Mutanabbī expressed in his line. Al-Radī drew on al-Mutanabbī's idea and improved upon it. Ibn al-Athīr comments that al-Radī put al-Mutanabbī's line in a more beautiful form. The poet says:

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 441.

2. Diyā' al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, al-Mathal al-Sā'ir, ed. by Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn Abd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo 1939, Vol. II, pp. 211-212.

I am longing for what the veils and
adornments contain but I abstain from what
is under the security of the aprons.

أَمِنْتُ إِلَى مَا تَحْتِ الْخُرَّ وَالْحِلْيِ
رَأَيْتُ مَا فِي حِصَانِ الْمَازِرِ ١

It is plain that al-Raḍī borrowed al-Mutanabbī's meaning,
but he recast it cleverly and overcame the shortcoming
in which al-Mutanabbī failed by using the word sarāwīlātihā
which is considered a suggestive and ugly word in this
context. Al-Raḍī avoided it and used the word ma'āzir
which is regarded as acceptable and in its proper place.

4 - Rhetorical embellishments

Al-Raḍī applied different sorts of rhetorical
adornments which were used by Arab poets. Mutābaqah
'antithesis' was applied in his poetry much more than
any others. He also proved his poetical talent with
(Jinās) paronomasy. Other sorts of verbal and significative
embellishments rate low in comparison. Three points can
be discerned as far as al-Raḍī's approach to rhetorical
adornments is concerned. Firstly, the poet used these
flowery expressions too often in the first stage of his
poetical development and they seem, to some extent,
artificial. As time passed he depended much more on
metaphorical figures, similes and tibāq while he paid
less attention to the others. Secondly, he did not fall
into artificiality and verbal juggling as much as his

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 343.

contemporaries. The third important point is that al-Raḍī did not sacrifice the meanings for the sake of adorning his poetry. This point became plain in the stage of his maturity. Accordingly it is safe to say that al-Raḍī's verbal and significative embellishments served the meanings which the poet intended to state or clarify and came coherently close to them. However, in order to explore al-Raḍī's approach to these rhetorical adornments it is necessary to discuss their points of interest and how far the poet succeeded or failed in dealing with them.

A. Muṭābaqah and muqābalaḥ

The term muṭābaqah: 'antithesis' means the mentioning of the thing and its opposite. As for muqābalaḥ it is a pair of contrasting ideas elaborated in balanced compounds. These two types of rhetorical embellishments are used to strengthen the meanings. Al-Raḍī, as it has already been mentioned, used them abundantly. In this respect the point of similarity between al-Raḍī and al-Mutanabbī is clear. As Ṭahā Ḥusayn suggests, al-Mutanabbī was fond of muqābalaḥ and ṭibāq and this artistic aspect grew steadily in his poetry.¹ A close examination of al-Raḍī's poetical specimens shows us how far he depended on ṭibāq and muqābalaḥ to clarify and strengthen his meanings. In one of his odes he says:

1. Ṭahā Ḥusayn Ma'a al-Mutanabbī, Cairo 1949, pp. 50-51.

من رأى البرق بِنُورِي السند في أديم الليل ينري يُقَيِّدُ
 هَيْدَةَ المصباح تزهوه الصبا فَلَاحَ الظلمات رَجَبُ دَيْبِد
 طَمًا أُجِدَّ عَلَوِي السنا قَامَ فِي الْعَلِي حَتِيمًا مَقْد
 كم أضواء البرق لي من محمد زَلَّي دمع العين فيه رَجِد
 رَضَانِي أَنْبَتَ الحن بها كَهَيَا تَرَعَاه عَيْنِي رَغِيد
 طَمًا عَاوَدَ قَلْبِي ذِكْرَهَا لَمِبِ الدمع بَحْنِي رَجِد
 إِنْ رِيمَ الرَب ادْنَى إِلَيَّ الْبُؤَى دَنَايَا بِالْهَر عَنِي رَاكِد
 قُلْ لَزُورِ اللَّيْلِ اهْدِإْنَهُ اخْذِ الْفِي رَاكِبِي الرُّشْد 1

The underlined words show us al-Radī's increasing use of tibāq even in the stage of his maturity. Meanwhile, metaphorical figures held their place as well while other rhetorical embellishments decreased in importance. In addition, he rarely falls into artificiality, despite the abundant use of tibāq. Muqābalah was used side by side with tibāq when the poet intended to clarify a statement or assumption. He says:

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 210-211.

وَالنَّاسُ إِنَّمَا تَانَحُ أَوْ طَالِبُ لَا نَيْتِي أَوْ رَانِبَةٌ أَوْ رَاهِبُ
 وَإِذَا نَيْتٌ نَحَلْتُ نَيْتِي "مَكْنُ" رَادَا نَيْتٌ نَحَلْتُ نَيْتِي عَارِضًا 1

In the first line al-Radī used tibāq twice while the second consists of muqābalah.

Al-Radī, like other Arab poets, described his state of suffering in love as being confronted by the double peril of fire from his burning heart and flood from his brimming tears. He was fond of this image, using the muqābalah and tibāq to present it. He says:

You encompassed my heart with tears and my
 bowel with burning. I wonder, how did
 you combine water with fire?

شَفَلْتُ عَيْنِي رُبْعًا دَالِيًا هَرَمًا
 نَكَيْتُ أَكْنَتَ أَرَاكٍ وَبَرَانَا 2

Al-Radī dealt with the same meaning again with some alteration, putting it in the form of muqābalah. He says:

(Because of you) my heart is in the heat
 of summer, while
 my eyes are in a spring garden.

قَلْبِي وَطَرَنِي نَهْلًا: هَذَا فِي صَمِي
 قَبِيلِي 3 ، هَذَا فِي رِيَاضِ رَبِيعِ

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 66.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 889.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 496.

Al-Radī in the preceding line drew on al-Mutanabbī's image which runs as follows:

My bowel is on the live coals of love
while my eyes feast in the garden of beauty.

هَـأَيَّ عَـلَى جِـمْرِ ذَـكِيٍّ مِّنَ الْحَمَى
وَعَيْنَايَ فِي رَوْضٍ مِّنَ الْحَنِّ تَرْتَجُ ١

Al-Radī put the idea in another form using muqābalah.

He says:

My eyes take pleasure while my heart is in pain,
as if the latter was in a funeral
ceremony while the former in a wedding feast.

تَلَذُّ عَيْنِي وَطَلَبِي نَدَى فِي أَلَمٍ
فَا تَطَبُّ فِي سَأْتِمِ الْعَيْنِ فِي تَحْسَنٍ ٢

The above specimens show us how al-Radī dealt with ṭibāq and muqābalah and how he drew on previous meanings. The shadow of al-Mutanabbī is present in this respect.

B. Tajnis

Al-Radī used different types of tajnis, but he was not taken with it to the extent of sacrificing the meaning for its sake. In general, he applied it masterfully to adorn his poems. However, when al-Radī does

1. D. M. Vol. II, p. 411. Before al-Mutanabbī, Abū Tammām dealt with the same idea which was first used by the poet 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Dumaynah, see p. 411, the footnotes.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 425.

increase the use of tajnis, a trace of artificiality is apparent. This point becomes clear as well when the poet intends to parade his talent for toying with verbal embellishments. In one of his odes which may have been written in his youth the opening line is as follows:

رَضِينَا الطَّبِيَّ مِنْ عُنَاقِ الطَّبَا
وَضَرَبَ الطَّلِيَّ مِنْ رِجَالِ الطَّلَا 1

Al-Radī in the above mentioned line twice used the tajnis which is called al-Jinās al-muharruf in which two words differ only in their vocalisation. In the first hemistich there are al-zubā which means the upper part of swords or lances and al-zibā which means gazelles. In the second hemistich there are al-ṭulā which means necks and the second al-ṭalā which means love. In the same ode al-Radī devoted some lines to verbal embellishments. He says:

وَسِرْبٌ تَنْفَرُهُ بِالرَّحَايِ وَوَعْدٌ تَنْفَرُهُ بِاللَّطَا
رِمَايَ تَصَارَعُهُ بِالرَّكَابِ رَهَيْشِي تَقَارَعُهُ بِالْقَا
سِنَاءٌ تَبْلُغُهُ السَّمَاءُ وَبَعْدُ سَلَا عَنْ مَدَاهِ الشَّيْءِ
بَنِي فَلَيْفَ أَنْتُمْ فِي الزَّمَانِ غُثُوثُ لَطَا لِيُوثَ الرُّغْمِ 2

The poet used various sorts of tajnis. In the first two lines he applied al-jinās al-mudāri⁶ in which every two words differ only in regard to a single letter. The

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 29.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 31.

third contains two jinās, the first is jinās mudāri' and the second jinās muharraf. In the fourth line the poet used al-jinās al-mudāri' and combined it with ṭibāq. These lines show us how al-Radī dealt with tajnīs when he sought for it. However, it must be borne in mind that the poet did not overload all his odes with these sorts of verbal embellishments. He later on preferred to apply muqābalah and ṭibāq at the expense of tajnīs. Even in the early stage of his poetical development ṭibāq and muqāballah rated higher than tajnīs. A close examination of his odes shows us that the increasing use of ṭibāq and muqābalah coincided with the comparatively limited use of tajnīs.¹

C. Husn al-ta'ill: "ingenious assignment of cause"

This rhetorical adornment is applied by al-Radī in different themes of his poetry. He applied it in order to strengthen the statements he was making. He seems to be successful in using his own reasons and presenting them to clarify his convictions. The poet once addressed his patron Bahā' al-Dawlah when the latter was ill. He opened his ode using husn al-ta'ill as follows:

Oh mountain (Bahā' al-Dawlah) May calamities
not shake you and may sickness beset your
enemies.
The lion might not be well but that
is not due to its weakness, and the mountain-goat
may be safe and sound.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 322; Vol. II, pp. 702, 704, among others.

لَا زَعَزَعْتُكَ الْغُطْبُ يَا جَبَلُ
 وَبِالْعِزِّ أَهْلٌ لَدَيْكَ الْبَيْتُ
 قَدْ يُؤَمِّكُ اللَّيْتُ لَا لَذَلُهُ
 عَلَى اللَّيَالِي وَيَلْمُ الْوَعْلُ¹

In another ode he praised himself. He said that it was not strange that he followed his father as far as dignity and glory are concerned. The reason in al-Radī's eyes was that fire comes from wicks. He says:

رَأَيْتُ إِنْ لِحِقْتُ أَبِي عِدْلًا
 فَخُذِي النَّارَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ الذُّبَابِ²

Husen al-ta'111 also occurs in al-Radī's love-poetry. He addressed his beloved as follows:

Don't deny my patience when time beat me severely.
 The slave is more patient physically but the free man is more patient in heart.

لَا تُنْكِرِي هَنْ صَبْرِي إِنْ أَوْجَعَ الدَّهْرُ ضَرْبًا
 فَالْعَبْدُ أَصْبَرُ جَسَدًا وَالْحُرُّ أَصْبَرُ قَلْبًا³

In one of his dirges he consoled Bahā' al-Dawlah on the death of his son using husen al-ta'111 many times in order to comfort his patron. He says:

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 612.

2. Ibid., p. 649.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 155.

والبدْرُ ما ضَرَّه تَفَرَّدَ
 وللهِ جفا نوره دلّه عينا
 وما انتراق الشُّبُلِ من ريد
 بما نفي أن يكون رهرا¹

Al-Radī in the above-mentioned lines concluded that if the patron was safe and sound it would do him no harm to lose anything else. The poet put forward two ingenious assignments of cause. The first is that the moon's status is not harmed by its solitariness and its light neither fades nor is blemished. In the second line he made it clear that the departure of lion cubs did not mean that the lion would not be terrible.

D. Exaggeration and hyperbole

Exaggeration mubālaghah and hyperbole ghuluw are types of rhetorical embellishment in Arab rhetoric. Critics and rhetoricians differ on the limitation of these two terms and the ruling principles which must be applied in dealing with them. However, exaggeration (mubālaghah) as al-^cAskarī says is considered a rhetorical method of strengthening meanings and bringing them up to achieve their ultimate objectives.² In his eyes hyperbole (ghuluw) is excessive exaggeration which reaches the

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 110.

2. Sinā'atayn, p. 357; see also Bāqillānī, p. 122.

stage of absurdity or inconceivability.¹ Such excessive exaggeration is called ifrāt by Ibn Rashīq.² Al-ʿAskarī also considers hyperbole worse when it is burdened with ugly words and inadequate metaphors.³

Arab poetry was filled with exaggeration, as Arab medieval critics conceded. Although they considered it acceptable in ancient poetry, they remarked that as time passed poets greatly increased the use of exaggeration and hyperbole. The Arab proverb "the best poetry is the most lying" shows us how far poets depended on mubālagh and ghuluw.⁴ Al-Mutanabbī was ranked high in the list of poets who overloaded their poetry with exaggeration and hyperbole. The critic al-Jurjānī in al-Wasāṭah admits that excessive hyperbole and extravagant profuseness are found in al-Mutanabbī's Diwān here and there. However, he remarks that ifrāt is the method of poets contemporary with him.⁵ He calls on poets to consider the limitation of the use of these rhetorical embellishments.

Like al-Mutanabbī and other poets al-Radī does show exaggeration and hyperbole in some of his metaphors, similes and other rhetorical figures. As has already

1. Sināʿatayn, p. 363.

2. ʿUmdah, Vol. II, p. 49.

3. Sināʿatayn, p. 363.

4. Qudāmah, op. cit., p. 26.

5. Jurjānī, pp. 75, 77, 311, 317-318.

been mentioned. his panegyrics, self-praise, love-poetry and other themes show his tendency towards exaggeration. Accordingly, it is needless to cite further specimens of his poems in this connection. However, in al-Radī's poetry the kind of excessive exaggeration which is considered a rhetorical blemish makes its appearance here and there. In one of his odes he praised the Caliph al-Ta'i' as follows:

A glory which, were the star given its like,
it would have disdained
to dwell in the sky.

نَظَارُ لِرَأْنِ الْجَمِّ أَطَى شِلْه
تَرْنَعُ أَنْ يَأْرِي أَدِيمَ - مَاءٍ ١

Al-Radī praised his family and relatives as follows:

They entertain (people) and even when their
guest missed them they spur on their
high-bred she-camels towards him.

يَقْرُونَ حَتَّى لِرَأْنِ الضِّيفِ نَاتَمُ
هَمُّوا إِلَيْهِ مَهْدَرُ الدَّيْغَةِ النِّجْبِ ٢

A ridiculous expression occurs in one of his love poems when he describes the lover's tears as follows:

Torrents of tears are gushing through
the pupils of his eyes.
Had he not been swimming in them, he
would have been drowned.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 6.

2. Ibid., p. 78.

سأنتَ بِلِسَانِ عَيْنِهِ لِي
لَمْ يَكُنْ سَابِغًا بِهَا غَرِيبًا 1

In another ode he also praised his people in an extra-vagant tone. He says:

Scared people seek shelter in our
homes; even the fleeing wild beasts of the desert
do the same.

يَلُوزُ بِأَيَّامِنَا الْخَائِفُونَ
نَحْنُ طَرَادُ رَهْطِ الظِّلِ 2

Al-Radī is on the side of al-Mutanabbī with regard to the increasing use of exaggeration and hyperbole. Tāhā Husayn regards mubālagha as a characteristic aspect of al-Mutanabbī's poetry. He sometimes used it to the extent of spoiling his poetry.³ Al-Radī's poetry is also marked by exaggeration and hyperbole and the excessive use of them drove the poet sometimes to produce ridiculous and remote meanings.

5 - Rhyme and rhythm

Every line of a poem in traditional Arab poetry must end with the same rhyme and this rhyme often occurs also at the end of first hemistich of the first line. Arab prosodists differ on the limitation and definition of rhyme (qāfiyah). However, they agree that the rhyming

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 586.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 30.

3. Tāhā Husayn, Ma'ā al-Mutanabbī, p. 51.

letter is the operative consonant of the rhyme by which the ode is called a 'bā'iyyah' 'lāmiyyah' and so on.¹ In traditional Arab poetry the rhyming letter is applied in two forms. The first is called al-qāfiyah al-muqayyadah in which the rhyming letter is vowelless. The second in al-qāfiyah al-muṭlaqah in which the rhyming letter is pronounced with vowel points. The former is considered easier than the latter when it is applied in poetry because the poet is free from having to regard the vowel points.

Arab poets are allowed to use any letter of the Arabic alphabet as a rhyming letter in their poems. The letters bā', dāl, rā', mīm, lām and nūn are very common. The letters hamzah, tā', jīm, hā', ṣīn, 'ayn, fā', qāf, kāf and yā' are less common in comparison with the first group. The letters dād, tā' and hā' are rarely used by poets while thā', khā', dhāl, zā', shīn, ṣād, zā', ghayn and wāw are very scarce.²

In al-Radī's poetry the frequency of different rhyming letters is as follows: bā' 21%, lām 13%, rā' 11%, dāl 10%, mīm 10%, nūn 9%, and 'ayn 8%. The rhyming letters qāf, hamzah, hā' and ṣīn are less common in comparison. These simple statistics show al-Radī in line with other Arab poets. An interesting point to

1. Ibrāhīm Anīs, Muslqā al-Shi'r Cairo, 3rd edn. 1965, pp. 246-247; see Safā' Khulūsy, fann al-Taqtī' al-Shi'rī wa al-qāfiyah, Beirut, 3rd ed. 1966, pp. 213-215.

2. Khulūsy, Fann al-Taqtī', pp. 215-216; see Anīs, op. cit., pp. 247-248.

note in this respect is that the poet uses every letter of the Arabic alphabet as a rhyme in his poems, including those letters which are considered difficult and were very rarely used by other poets. He uses the letters thā', ṭā' and ṣād in a considerable number of his odes and proves capable of dealing with them. This point indicates that al-Raḍī's vocabulary was wide and ample and his acquaintance with Arabic of a high degree. He composed two odes in which he applied the rhyming letter thā'. The first numbers forty seven lines and the second fifty three; both were produced without shortcomings except for the increasing use of some rare and rough-sounding words.¹ However, there is no doubt about the odes' eloquence. The poet had the same success in applying the letter ṣād and ṭā' but the use of rare and rough-sounding words is noticeable in these odes as well.²

Three further points can be discerned in al-Raḍī's poetry with regard to rhyming letters. The first is that the poet avoided prosodical shortcomings. It is likely that he weeded out any deficiencies when he looked over his poetry. Secondly, the poet gave importance to the rhyming letters and their association with metres. He once had poetical correspondence with his friend the famous writer Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābī. The latter applied the letter nūn as a rhyming letter and preferred it unvowelled. The metre was ṭawīl. He opened his ode as follows:

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 175-178, 178-181.

2. Ibid., pp. 431, 433, 445, 446, 449.

أَبَا طَلْحَةَ قِيلَ نِي رَهْفَه مِنْ
إِلَى ذَاكَ يَخْرُجُ كُنَاكَ بِأَلْحَنِ

أَبَا طَلْحَةَ قِيلَ نِي رَهْفَه مِنْ

-u-u/u-u/---u/---u

-u-u/---u/---u/---u

Al-Radī in his reply to his friend used the same rhyming letter but he applied it pronounced with the vowel point kasrah. He also used the metre basīṭ instead of ṭawīl.

The first line is as follows:

غَدَاً لَدَاهُمْ السَّيْمُ لَطْفُنْ²

دَعْنِي دَوْمَكَ بِدَالِيْنِ لَدْنِي

-uu/-u--/-uu/-u-u

-uu/-u--/-uu/-u--

The poet justified this alteration on the grounds that there was incongruity between the unvowelled letter nūn and the ṭawīl metre. He found the metre basīṭ suitable with the rhyming letter nūn, using it with the vowel kasrah. In general, al-Radī paid attention to the congruity between metres and rhyming letters.

The third interesting aspect in al-Radī's poetry as far as the rhyme and rhythm are concerned is the use of internal rhymes (al-tasrī'). The poet enriched his poems by rhyming the end of both hemistiches of the opening line of his odes. He also similarly rhymed

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 945.

2. Ibid.

other lines which came during the course of his odes.

In one of his odes he used this ornament twice. The opening line of his ode is as follows:

شَوَايَ إِنَّمَا صَهْرَةٌ ارْغَارِبْ دُنَايَ إِنَّمَا زَاغِبٌ ارْغَارِبْ

In the same ode he says:

وَالنَّاسُ إِنَّمَا نَاحٌ أَرطَابٌ لَدَيْتِي ارْغَابٌ ارْطَابٌ
فَتَأْتِي نِيَا النَّدَى رُضَائِبٌ دَكَايِبٌ نِيَا الرَّدَى رُضَائِبٌ¹

In another he uses tarsi' frequently. He says:

أَتَرَى السَّحَابَ إِذَا سَرَتْ مُرَادُهُ يُسْرِي عَلَى قَبْرِ بَابِلَ مَارِدُهُ

Then he goes on:

يُسِي دَلِيلٌ مَارِدُهُ هَضْبَارُهُ فِيهِ رُؤُوسٌ لِيْلِهِ ظَلَامَارُهُ
نُفُفٌ رَلِي لَلذِّقِ إِغْضَارُهُ نُفُفٌ رَلِي لَلذِّقِ إِغْضَارُهُ
مَا زَالَ يَفْدُو الرُّكَّابَ هُدَارُهُ بَيْنَ الصَّرَامِ وَالْعَجَابِ رِدَارُهُ
لَا تَعْبَتْ نَمَا الْجَيْبِ نَفَارُهُ بَيْدَ الْمَنُونِ بِلِ الْجَيْبِ بَقَارُهُ²

The poet used the internal rhythm (tarsi'), which suggests, by internal rhyme, the division of the line into several sections. He says:

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 64-67; see also Vol. II, pp. 517-518, pp. 543, 694.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 22-23.

ورما هم فُزاره دحيرة
فُزاره دحياده نُداؤه ¹

In another ode he also says:

أأُفَرُّ من لا يَنْبِي وأُدير من
 لا يرمي وألوم من لا يَحْتَنِي ²

Al-Radī shows success in applying internal rhyme to attach importance to some statements he wanted to make. He once says:

ودعوا مجاذبة الخلافة إنما
 أريج بنير ثنائهم لا يَنْبَقُ
 فَنَامِهَا لا يَنْتَقِي دَنَاءُهَا
 لا يَحْتَنِي دَنَاءُهَا لا يُطْرَقُ ³

He also says:

ما المجد إلا في الرِّى والحمد
 لا في القِرَى المستَفِرِّ الخاسر ⁴

He succeeded in combining internal rhyme with other sorts of rhetorical figures. In one of his odes he applied tarsīl⁶ with kināyah, tibāq and jinās. He says:

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 23.

2. Ibid., p. 173.

3. D. R. Vol. II, pp. 542-543.

4. D. R. Vol. I, p. 335.

نَائي الحنا، داني النوى، صاني لُدى
صاني الطايا، العلى، المنخر¹

6 - Motre

The poetical metres in Arab poetry number sixteen plus al-majzū'āt which are derived from the major metres. The Arab poet is free to choose any of them and apply it in his poetical composition. In the Jāhilite age the long metres, tawīl, basīt, kāmil may be regarded as the main metres. Later on, the short metres and al-majzū'āt command a noticeable place in poetry. Nevertheless, the traditional metres never completely lost their hold. Ibrāhīm Anīs made an interesting investigation with regard to the frequency of different metres in Arab poetry. He came to the conclusion that a third of Arab poetry has been composed in tawīl.² In second place comes kāmil and basīt then wāfir and khafīf.³ The author made a further study. He examined many Arab poetical anthologies up to the fourth Islamic century. His statistics show that the percentage use of metres was as follows: tawīl 34%, kāmil 19%, basīt 17%, wāfir 12%, khafīf and raml 5%. In the Diwān of al-Mutanabbī the rates are as

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 364.

2. Ibrāhīm Anīs op. cit., p. 59; see Khulūsy Fann al-Taqtī', p. 43.

3. Ibrāhīm Anīs op. cit., pp. 63, 78.

follows: tawīl 26%. kāmil 19%. basīt 16% wāfir 14%. and rajaz 2%.¹

In al-Raḍī's poetry the rate of use of tawīl is much the same as in that of al-Mutanabbī. It rated 26%. Kāmil forms 18% of al-Raḍī's poetry, and this percentage nearly equals that of al-Mutanabbī. One obvious aspect of the use of metre in al-Raḍī's poetry is that the poet shows a liking for rajaz as we shall learn later. Another is that the short metres form 9% which indicates al-Raḍī's leaning to the lighter metres compared with other poets. He applied them in his praise, love-poetry and elegy and proved quite successful. In his love-poetry in particular, he used them with fair success. In other poetical themes he used tawīl, basīt and kāmil. The poet discerned that these metres were suitable to his self-praise and ḥamāsah. As for the metre kāmil, al-Raḍī applied it successfully in his elegy as well. His dirges on his friends al-Ṣābī, al-Ṣāḥib b. 'Abbād and on his mother and father, in which he used kāmil, are a case in point.²

The other interesting aspect of al-Raḍī's poetical composition is the increasing use of rajaz in different poetical themes. This metre is the oldest and the simplest of all Arab metres. It is considered himār al-shu'arā' owing to its simplicity. It occurred in

1. Ibrāhīm Anīs, op. cit., pp. 191-197.

2. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 18, 294, 378, 479, 490, Vol. II, pp. 670, 736.

Jāhilite poetry and developed in the Umayyad age at the hand of the famous rajjāz al-‘Ajjāj (d. 90/708) and then his son Ru‘bah (d. 145/762). In the ‘Abbāsid period rajaz declined. Rajaz in general, is used in two forms. The first is similar to the qaṣīdah in which the poet applied it in much the same way as other metres. The second, which can be considered the traditional form, is one in which the poet rhymes each hemistich of his urjūzah by the same rhyming letter throughout the poem.¹

Al-Raḍī used rajaz as one metre among others. He also composed the arājiz which forms 9% of his Diwān. This rate is rather high in comparison with his contemporaries. It is plain that al-Raḍī made a contribution towards reviving this poetic art in a period of its decline. His pupil Miḥyār also paid attention to rajaz as his Diwān shows.² As for al-Raḍī he applied rajaz in his different poetical themes. It is likely he found it well-suited for certain types of themes. He applied it in self-praise when he intended to express his emotional tension.³ He also used it in elegising his Bedouin friend and propagandist Ibn Laylā.⁴ In his dirge on the philologist Abū ‘Alī al-Fārisī rajaz was also applied.⁵ The poet in this dirge paraded his subject's originality and his expert knowledge of Arabic. Although the poet used rare words and archaic expression here and

1. Khulūṣay, op. cit., 1966, pp. 123-124.

2. Ibrāhīm Anīs, op. cit., p. 191.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 400, Vol. II, pp. 664, 767, 936.

4. D. R. Vol. I, p. 431 among others.

5. D. R. Vol. I, p. 445.

there in his arājiz, he exploited them well in conformity with his themes.

Before closing these observations on al-Radī's metro it is necessary to stress that the poet proved his mastery in tackling various metres with which he dealt and discovered their congruity with his different themes. In addition, metrical shortcomings rarely occur in his poetry. Traces of metrical deficiency can be found only in one ode in his bulky Dīwān. In this ode he applied al-kāmil al-aḥadḥ in which the feet run as follows:

أَفَلَا تَنِيَّ الظَّنَّ بِالْفَرِّ

--/-u--/-u-uu

أَوْ مَا رَأَيْتُ دَقَائِعَ الدَّمْرِ

--/-u-uu/-u-uu

←

In some lines of the same ode he broke away from these feet and changed them into what is called al-kāmil al-tāmm. Its feet run thus:

سِيلٌ يَقْبُ رِجَالُهُ سِرِّي

--/-u-uu/-u--

يَتَرَادُونَ عَلَى الرَّمَاحِ مَأْنَمَ

-u-uu/-u-uu/-u-uu

←

However, the above mentioned metrical deficiency does not mar the high degree of al-Radī's poetical talent displayed in his Dīwān.

7 - Al-Radī's poetical style and vocabulary

Judging by what has already been mentioned, al-Radī's poetical style indicates his tendency towards bedouin life in spirit and to traditional diction in words, with some modification. His vocabulary, ideas and images were derived from the life of the desert rather than from the environment in which he lived. Although some aspects of urban life can be sensed in his style, the desert spirit overshadows them. This artistic return to a conventional style in the fourth Islamic century was represented by al-Mutanabbī, Abū Firās, to some extent, al-Radī and his brother al-Murtadā. Our poet's share in this is noticeable.¹ In his poetry foreign words very rarely occur and even popular expressions which had become common in his age are scarce. In addition, there is no room for philosophic and scientific terms. As for verbal adornments which became wide-spread in al-Radī's time, he is moderate in using them in comparison with his contemporaries. In this respect he stands side by side with al-Mutanabbī and Abū Firās.

It is interesting to trace some stylistic aspects of al-Radī's poetical composition which seem to be inherited from al-Mutanabbī. Although al-Radī took pains to outgrow some of al-Mutanabbī's poetical shortcomings and tried to assert his individual approach in his poetry, al-Mutanabbī's shadow still hovered over him. Al-Radī's

1. al-Majdhūb, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 183-184; see also Ihsān Abbās, al-Sharīf al-Radī, pp. 263-264.

poetry gives evidence of a close connection between him and al-Mutanabbī as far as poetical technique is concerned. Al-Mutanabbī's poetry, for instance, is characterised by the frequent use of exceptional grammatical forms. As Shawqī Dayf observes, the poet shows a liking for the Kūfite school and sometimes goes to the point of applying rare usage rather than the common. He says:

نَفْدِيكَ مِنْ مِيلٍ إِذَا سَأَلَ النَّدَى
هَرَلًا إِذَا افْتَرَطَا دِمًّا رَسِيحًا¹

The underlined verb is in the dual, although it precedes its subject. According to the accepted rules of syntax, the verb should be in the singular form. Al-Radī used this kind of exceptional form many times. He says:

مَا تَنْفِي التَّرَادُّمَ مِنْ جِنَاحٍ تَحَاكِيْ
إِنْ تَقْدُنَ بِهِ الْهُوَاني²

Here the verb is in the feminine plural, though preceding its subject. It should be in the feminine singular. In another ode he does the same. He says:

لَا ذَكَرْتُكَ عَادَ تَبِي سَوْقَهُ
نَبِيْنُ عَنْهُ دَا سَعِ الدُّقْلَامِ³

Al-Mutanabbī was criticised for his excessive use of the demonstrative pronoun dhā and dhī.⁴ This is

1. D. M. Vol. I, p. 290; see Shawqī Dayf, al-Fann, p. 338.

2. D. R. Vol. II, p. 523.

3. Ibid., p. 800.

4. Jurjānī, p. 73.

considered a sign of weakness in poetry. Al-Radī also often used these two words in his poetry. They occurred a lot in his poetry from the early stage of his poetical development and remained visible in the stage of his maturity.¹ The frequent use of diminutive forms is another joint aspect of both al-Radī's and al-Mutanabbī's poetry. Al-Jurjānī justified al-Mutanabbī's use of these forms for various purposes. Thus there are no grounds to raise objections to al-Radī's application of them. The final point which may be mentioned is the tendency of al-Mutanabbī and al-Radī to apply rare and rough yet eloquent verbs. However, our poet is less prone to this than al-Mutanabbī.

As for the recurrent use of religious technical terms in al-Radī's poetry, it has already been mentioned that Shī'ite terms like Imām and al-fatā often occur in his poetical composition. The spirit of Nahj al-Balāghah has already been shown. Al-Radī also borrowed from the Qur'ān and such borrowing (Iqtibās) is considered a verbal rhetorical device in Arabic. He says:

We belong to God and our return is to him.
For us Allāh sufficeth and he is
the best disposer. 2

إِنَّا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِنَّا لَهُ رَحْبُ اللَّهِ رَحْمَةُ الْكَافِرِ

Other references can be found in his Diwān.³ Qur'ānic

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 59, 66, 99, 216, Vol. II, pp. 581, 619, 894, 949.

2. D. R. Vol. I, p. 685. See The Holy Qur'ān, text, trans. commentary by 'Abd Allāh Yūsūf 'Alī, Lahore 1969, Vol. I, p. 168, The Ayah 133, see also p. 62, the Ayah 156.

3. D. R. Vol. I, p. 109.

terms are also used. He applied the verb yansakhu which means in the Qur'ānic sense that God abrogates a verse of the Qur'ān substituting for it another one. Al-Radī used it in his poetry as follows:

Security may abrogate (yansakhu)
fear and the hope may overcome frustration.

قد يَنْقُضُ الْخَوْفَ الْإِثْمَ نَ رَيْطِبُ الْيَأْسِ الرَّجَا ١

To sum up, al-Radī, as his poetical technique shows, succeeded to a noticeable degree in maintaining consistency between his theory and practice in poetical composition. He did not sacrifice the meaning for the sake of the word and, by comparison with other poets of his era, economised in using verbal embellishments. He did not fall into verbal juggling as many of them did. The atmosphere of urban life is limited and his attachment is to desert life and bedouin scenes. His approach to his poetical technique did not lack individuality and originality in details, and his genius is apparent in many respects. The shadow of al-Mutanabbī hovers over al-Radī's poetry here and there. However, al-Radī stood the test and did not lose his individual traits. Even when he imitated al-Mutanabbī and borrowed his meanings he did his best to improve upon him, despite his occasional failures.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 185.

CHAPTER XII

AL-RADĪ'S PLACE IN ARABIC LITERARY HISTORY

I am the pure gold which is
treasured.
If put to the test by critic's
hand.

أَنَا النِّصَارُ الَّذِي يُضَنُّ بِهِ
لَوْ قَلْبَتَنِي يَمِينُ فَتَقْدَرُ

al-Radī

Al-Raḍī as a poet has been highly regarded by critics, literary historians, and other men of letters since the fourth Islamic century. His poems were admired in his time and requested by famous personalities of his age, as has already been mentioned. They also received a high and enthusiastic appreciation by his contemporaries. His teacher the famous philologist and grammarian Ibn Jinnī took pains to write a treatise on selected odes of al-Raḍī. Our poet was proud of this interest in his poems shown by such a great and well-known figure of that time, as his Diwān shows.¹ The great writer Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābi regarded him as the best poet and writer who ever existed. He said that nothing reached the ears better than al-Raḍī's poetry and prose.²

Al-Raḍī's contemporary, the expert critic and anthologist al-Tha'ālibī illustrates the high place that al-Raḍī held in his age as follows: "He is moreover the ablest poet of all the descendants of 'Alī Ibn Abī Talib, past or present, though many of them were eminent in that art; were I even to declare him the best poet ever produced by the tribe of Quraysh, I should not be far from the truth."³ Al-Tha'ālibī made no analytical assessment or comparative study of al-Raḍī and his contemporaries, despite his familiarity with the poetical product of his time. However, he was impressed by the fact that al-Raḍī's

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 640.

2. Rasā'il, p. 94.

3. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 119; see Yatīmah, Vol. III, p. 136.

poetry was characterised by a combination of ease and majesty, facility with perfection of art. He added that these poems contain thoughts easy of comprehension and profound in meaning.¹ Al-Tha'ālibī's zealous estimations imply that the critic placed al-Raḍī at the top of Qurashite poets, among whom were 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah, Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah, al-Walīd b. Yazīd, Ibn al-Mu'tazz, Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, al-Murtaḍā and others. It is plain that al-Tha'ālibī recorded his judgement with enthusiasm, lacking some degree of objectivity. He shows his preference for al-Raḍī's poetry and denies the original and individual aspects of those poets with whom he compared al-Raḍī's work. It is clear that some^{other} Qurashite poets made remarkable contributions to Arab poetry. 'Umar b. Abī Rabi'ah and al-Walīd b. Yazīd are cases in point.

Nevertheless, al-Tha'ālibī's high estimation of al-Raḍī's poetry has been accepted for many centuries and handed down to us by historical and literary sources. It found ardent supporters among modern Arab scholars, and some orientalist, as we shall learn later. Ibn Khallikān relates:

The Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī says in his history of Baghdad, that, being in the presence of Abū al-Ḥusain b. Maḥfūz, who held a high rank in the service of the empire, he heard the Kātib Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd Allāh say that some literary men declared, in his hearing, that the Sharīf was the best poet ever produced by the tribe of Koraish. On this Ibn Maḥfūz said: "That is perfectly true; some poets there were among them who expressed themselves well, but

1. Ibid.

their compositions were not numerous; none of them shone by the excellence and the quantity of his works but al-Raḍī. 1

This judgement on al-Raḍī's poetry supports what al-Tha'ālibī had already declared in his Yatīmah. However, it lacks the basis of comprehensive and objective study. The anonymous men of letters and Ibn Maḥfūz based their preference for al-Raḍī, to some extent, on the quantitative elements of his poetry rather than on the qualitative factors which must form the main basis of any literary assessment. These zealous praises and overestimation of al-Raḍī's poems were repeated by many historians and biographers in Arabic literature. They mentioned them with warm response rather than with reservation or comments.²

The only comment made on al-Raḍī's poetry in the medieval age in a critical tone seems to have been that by the philologist and poet 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad Ibn Nāqīyā al-Baghdādī (d. 482/1089). He was asked to pass judgement on al-Mutanabbī, Ibn Nubātah al-Sa'dī and al-Raḍī. He compared them with three men. The first (al-Mutanabbī) set up high buildings and castles. The second (Ibn Nubātah) came and pitched his tents and canopies around al-Mutanabbī's buildings. The third (al-Sharīf al-Raḍī) came to settle, sometimes here and sometimes there.³ Ibn Nāqīyā's comparison is rather vague. However,

1. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 121; see Tārīkh, Vol. III, p. 246.

2. al-Qiftī, 'Alī b. Yūsuf al-Muḥammadūn min al-Shu'arā', al-Riyād 1970, p. 243; al-Wāfī, Vol. II, p. 374; Ibn Kathīr op. cit., Vol. XII, p. 3; Abū al-falāh al-Hanbalī Shadharāt al-dhahab, Vol. III, p. 182; among others.

3. Yāqūt, Vol. V, pp. 218-219.

it implies that he placed al-Raḍī in the third position. Moreover, he indicated that al-Raḍī drew on the other two poets in his poetical composition. In this respect Ibn Nāqīyā was, to some extent, unfair. There is no doubt about al-Raḍī's being influenced by al-Mutanabbī, but Ibn Nubātah's impact on his poems is too limited to give it as much importance as Ibn Nāqīyā attached to it. Nevertheless, the significance of this criticism lies in the fact that Ibn Nāqīyā freed himself from the dogma of al-Raḍī's poetical superiority which had already been stated.

The echoes of al-Tha'ālibī's judgement on al-Raḍī and the others which were related by al-Baḡhdādī can be traced down to modern Arab scholars and some orientalist's observations on al-Raḍī's poetry. Some Arab scholars came to the conclusion that al-Raḍī was the best Arabic poet who ever existed. Such enthusiastic judgements are found in al-Baḡīr's work Fi al-Adab al-'Abbāsī and Zakī Mubārak's study on our poet.¹ 'Abd al-Rahmān Shukrī in his essay on al-Raḍī and his poetical characteristics shared with them the same overestimation of al-Raḍī's poetry. He went so far as to place al-Raḍī above Ibn al-Rūmī and Abū Tammām in certain aspects of their poetry.²

In orientalist circles, F. Krenkow, for instance,

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1. al-Baḡīr, Fi al-Adab al-'Abbāsī, p. 449; Zakī Mubārak, 'Abqariyyat, Vol. I, pp. 10, 15, 24; Mahfūz, op. cit., pp. 12, 87, 101.
 2. 'Abd al-Rahmān Shukrī, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī wa Khaṣā'is Shi'rih, Majallat al-Risālah, Cairo 1939, the seventh year, No. 287, pp. 5ff.

accepted, to some degree, al-Tha'ālibī's high opinion of al-Raḍī's poetry. He says: "If we take the measure of so much inferior poetry composed at that time, for the times were prolific in poets, al-Tha'ālibī may be right."¹ Mez also ranked al-Raḍī side by side with the famous poets of his time. He says: "Thus in the fourth Islamic century al-Ṣanaubarī and al-Mutanabbī, Ibn al-Hajjāj and al-Raḍī, stand side by side - each at the very height in his own sphere, gazing from on high, at the unfolding centuries of Arabic literature."²

Before estimating al-Raḍī as a poet and placing him among his contemporaries and other Arab poets, it is convenient to see how much he influenced Arab poets of his time and after his death. This point may show us the poetical impact of our poet on Arab poetry and what sort of seal he left on it. It also helps us to consider the significance of this poet among other poets and to throw light on the place that al-Raḍī held through his practical influence.

In al-Raḍī's time his brother the poet al-Murtadā was the first to be influenced by al-Raḍī. He modelled some of his odes on those of al-Raḍī.³ Our poet has a famous amatory ode which had a wide reputation throughout the length and breadth of Islamic lands.⁴ the first line

1. E. I. art. al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, by F. Krenkow.

2. Mez, p. 274.

3. 'Abd al-Razzāq Muḥyī al-Dīn op. cit., p. 228.

4. al-Wāfi, Vol. II, p. 378.

of which runs as follows:

O, she-gazelle at al-Ban pasturing
in its thickets.
Rejoice, for today my heart has become
your own pasture.

يا ظبية البان ترحى في غمامه
ليتهب الحيم أن القلب رماح¹

Al-Murtaḍā composed an amatory ode on the same model as that of al-Raḍī using the same metre and rhyme-letter. He also borrowed many meanings from his brother's ode. The explanatory preface of al-Murtaḍā's ode indicates that he deliberately modelled his ode on that of al-Raḍī.²

Al-Raḍī also influenced his apprentice the poet Mihyār al-Daylamī (d. 428/1036). This poet had been a fire-worshipper but afterwards he made his confession to Islam to al-Raḍī who was his tutor and under whom he received his training in poetry.³ This poetical apprenticeship is interesting. It initiated a sort of poetical tendency as we shall see later. Mihyār himself made it clear that he had imitated al-Raḍī's poetry and followed his method in poetical composition. He was also proud of being a faithful follower of al-Raḍī as far as poetry was concerned. He mentioned that his tutor, al-Raḍī, admired his poetry and encouraged him to compose in the method of the latter.⁴ A close examination of al-Raḍī's

1. D. R. Vol. II, p. 593.

2. D. T. Vol. II, p. 373.

3. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 517.

4. D. Y. Vol. III, p. 370.

Dīwān and that of Mihyār shows that the points of similarity between their poetry are many and evident. Not only did Mihyār model many of his odes on those of al-Raḍī; but he also borrowed al-Raḍī's meanings, images and expressions. The bedouin spirit and religious tone which al-Raḍī's poetry reflects found their way into Mihyār's as well. In addition, the Hijāziyyat of al-Raḍī were imitated by Mihyār.¹

It is worth noting that the poetical importance and the range of al-Raḍī's influence on Arab poets became visible and increased from the fifth Islamic century onwards. The poets who imitated al-Raḍī's poetical method and modelled their odes on his are many. This poetical imitation took two directions. The first was that some poets imitated al-Raḍī directly and the second that other poets were influenced by al-Raḍī's pupil Mihyār. The latter also show their preference for al-Raḍī's poems and bear their stamp.²

In the fifth and early decades of the sixth Islamic centuries the two famous poets al-Abīwardī (d. 507/1113) and al-Ṭuḡhrā'ī (d. 515/1121) were both influenced by al-Raḍī's poetry in many respects. Al-Ṭuḡhrā'ī admired al-Mutanabbī and al-Raḍī's poetry from his youth but the mark of al-Raḍī's poetical influence became clearer later. AQ- 'Alī Jawād al-Ṭāhir suggests, al-Ṭuḡhrā'ī's love-poetry

1. D. R. Vol. I, pp. 394, 285. Vol. II, pp. 894-897; compare with D. Y. Vol. II, pp. 76-77, Vol. I, pp. 249-253, Vol. IV, pp. 142-144.

2. I. A. 'Alī, Mihyār, pp. 267-284.

seems to be a copy of that of al-Raḍī. In addition, al-Hijāziyyāt of al-Raḍī had a remarkable influence over al-Ṭaḡhrā'ī's poems. Al-Raḍī's odes also served as models for many odes of al-Ṭaḡhrā'ī.¹ The latter composed a well-known ode called "Lāmiyyat al-ʿAjam" on which many commentaries were made, some of which indicate that the poet drew on a vast poetical heritage among which was al-Raḍī's poetry.²

As for al-Abīwardī, his Diwān shows the extent to which he went in imitating al-Raḍī's poetry and modelling his odes on those of al-Raḍī. Both poets expressed their preference for the desert and bedouin life and revealed their profound longing for Najd, Hijāz and other places with religious associations. Moreover, al-Abīwardī composed a quantity of odes called al-Najdiyyāt relating to Najd. There are points of similarity between al-Hijāziyyāt and al-Najdiyyāt. Furthermore, al-Raḍī's expressions and images found their equivalents in some of al-Abīwardī's odes.³

The poetical influence of al-Raḍī's poetry can be traced to the last decade of the sixth Islamic century. Ibn Jubayr, for instance, relates in his travels that he

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1. 'Alī Jawād al-Ṭāhir, al-Shi'r al-ʿArabī fī al-ʿIrāq wa Bilād al-ʿAjam fī al-ʿAsr al-Saljūqī, Baghdad 1958-1961. Vol. I. p. 82, Vol. II. pp. 100, 201, 202, 209.
 2. Khalīl al-Safadī, Kitāb al-Ghayth al-Musjam fī Sharh Lāmiyyat al-ʿAjam, Cairo (1305/1887). Vol. I. pp. 36, 63, 68; see Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. Muḥarak al-Hadramī, Naḥr al-ʿAlam fī Sharh Lāmiyyat al-ʿAjam, Cairo, 1283/1866, pp. 9, 11.
 3. Abū al-Muzaffar Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Abīwardī, Diwān, Beirut 1317/1899, pp. 68, 81, 82. Compare with D. R. Vol. I. p. 170, pp. 197-199; see also al-Abīwardī, Diwān, pp. 48, 58, 60, 100, 123, 262.

met the famous historian and great man of letters Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), and attended his lectures. He also admired his poetry, making an interesting comment on it. He described it as follows: "His (Ibn al-Jawzī) verse is al-Raḍī's in temper but after the manner of Miḥyār".¹ This remark suggests that al-Raḍī's and Miḥyār's poetry had overlapping influences on some poets, and those who admired Miḥyār revealed their leaning towards his teacher al-Raḍī as well. Diyā' al-Dīn Ibn al-Aṭhīr shows us the tendency towards al-Raḍī and Miḥyār's poetry in his conversation with a man of letters in Damascus. This man committed to heart some of al-Raḍī's and Miḥyār's poems. Ibn al-Aṭhīr tried to draw his attention to the amatory odes of Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbī. The man's answer was that the love-poetry of al-Raḍī and Miḥyār is fluid and simple, while that of Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbī is complicated and sophisticated.² This view gives one convincing reason for the increasing influence and admiration of al-Raḍī's poetry and that of his pupil Miḥyār, which lasted for many centuries.

Al-Raḍī's poetry not only left its mark on the poets of Iraq and other neighbouring countries, but went even further. In al-Andalus this poetry was received with admiration and a warm response. The Judge Abū Bakr Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī indicates that al-Raḍī's love-poetry

1. Ibn Jubayr, Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, Travels of Ibn Jubayr, Tr. by R. J. C. Broadhurst, London, 1952, p. 230.

2. al-Rabḍāwī op. cit., p. 525.

became well-known and familiar in al-Andalus. His famous ode al-kūfiyyah was imitated by many poets. Some of them used it as a model for their poems while others recast it into Khumāsī form.¹ The two famous poets in al-Andalus, Ibn Darrāj al-Qaṣṭalī (d. 422/1030) and Ibn Khafājah al-Andalusī (d. 539/1114), were fond of al-Raḍī's poetry. Al-Tha'ālibī in his Yatimah cites some specimens of Ibn Darrāj's poetry. The first two odes of al-Tha'ālibī's selection show us that the poet drew on two of al-Raḍī's poems. He used the same metres and rhyme letters that al-Raḍī applied to his odes. Other points of similarity can be discerned between these odes as far as images and meanings are concerned.² As for Ibn Khafājah he made it clear in the introduction to his Diwān that he had been fond of the poetry of al-Raḍī and Miḥyār from his youth. His Diwān shows that he modelled some of his odes on those of al-Raḍī and his pupil Miḥyār.³

It is interesting to note that in the seventh Islamic century the Sūfī poet Ibn al-Fārid (d. 632/1234) found in al-Hijāziyyāt of al-Raḍī a major source on which he drew in some of the amatory preludes of his odes. It is probable that the profound sorrow, tender sentiment, ecstasy of love and religious tone of al-Hijāziyyāt found

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1. Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī, Fihrist, Saragossa 1894, Vol. I, p. 424.
 2. Yatimah, Vol. II, pp. 104-105; see D. R. Vol. II, pp. 593, Vol. II, pp. 865-868; see also Dayf, al-Fann, p. 428.
 3. Ibn Khafājah, Diwān, ed. by al-Sayyid Muṭafā Ghāzī, Alexandria 1960, intro., p. 6, see p. 14, pp. 231-232.

a warm response from this Sūfī poet. In the manner of al-Raḍī he expressed his longing for Najd, Hijāz, Mecca and other religious places related to the pilgrimage.¹ Sūfī circles in general became familiar with al-Raḍī's love-poetry. His Hijāziyyāt found a brisk market in their conversations and gatherings as Ibn 'Arabī indicates in his work Muhāḍarāt al-Abrār. He cites many specimens of al-Raḍī's love-poetry and many of al-Hijāziyyāt side by side with his own odes. It seems that Sūfis found something in common with al-Raḍī's love-poetry.²

The influence of al-Raḍī's poetry on Arab poets lasted as far as the first flowering of the literary renaissance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly in Iraq and Egypt. In this period poets came to revive the old pattern of Arab qasīdas and apply them to their old and new themes. 'Abbāsīd poetry became a major poetical source and a favourite fountain of inspiration to these poets and al-Raḍī's odes were amongst these imitated and used as models. In Egypt al-Bārūdī modelled some of his poems on those of the 'Abbāsīd poets, in some of which he drew on al-Raḍī's poetry. In al-Bārūdī's Dīwān there is an ode which was composed in the manner of one by al-Raḍī. The poet applied the same metre and rhyme letter as that of al-Raḍī. The

1. Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Dīwān, ed. by Karam al-Bustānī, Beirut 1957, see pp. 7-13, 29, 33, 126, 128.

2. Ibn 'Arabī, Muhāḍarāt al-Abrār, Beirut 1968, Vol. I, pp. 145, 184, 196, 270, 411, Vol. II, pp. 153, 169, 212.

chivalrous spirit and decency of al-Raḍī can be sensed in al-Bārūdī's ode.¹ Al-Raḍī's elegy on his friend al-Ṣābī also served as a model for al-Bārūdī's dirge on his wife. The poet borrowed some of al-Raḍī's meanings and expressions.²

In Iraq in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth the poets who imitated al-Raḍī and were influenced by his poetical composition and that of his pupil Miḥyār formed a considerable number. The list includes the poets Ḥaydar al-Ḥillī (d. 1882), 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. al-Sayyid Dāwūd (d. 1920), Sa'īd al-Ḥabbūbī (d. 1916) and Ḥasan b. al-Ḥājj Muḥammad (d. 1901).³ Al-Ḥabbūbī's Dīwān, for instance, shows that there are many things in common between him and al-Raḍī. They both were experts in the religious field; both wrote love-poetry with religious tones and 'Udhri decency.⁴ Al-Raḍī's elegies were also exploited by al-Ḥabbūbī in some of his dirges. He also borrowed meanings from al-Raḍī and followed his poetical method in some of his dirges.⁵

In the light of what has already been said of al-

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1. al-Bārūdī, Dīwān. Cairo 1948. Vol. I, p. 33; see D. R. Vol. I, p. 85.
 2. al-Bārūdī, Dīwān. Vol. I, p. 172; see D. R. Vol. I, p. 294-298; see also Shawqī Dayf, al-Adab al-'Arabī al-Mu'āṣir fī Miṣr. Cairo 1957, p. 78.
 3. Al-Baṣīr, Nahdat al-'Iraq al-Adabīyyah fī al-qarn al-tāṣi' 'Ashar. Baghdad 1946, pp. 59, 60, 15, 16, 303, 344.
 4. J. A. Haywood, Modern Arabic Literature. London 1971, p. 106. See al-Baṣīr, p. 15.
 5. al-Ḥabbūbī, Dīwān, ed. by 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Jawāhirī. Lebanon, Dār al-'Irfān 1331/1912, pp. 196-205, 206-210.

Radī's poetry and its expanding and lasting impact on Arab poets it is fair to reconsider the assumption that the qaṣīdas of the last 150 years probably owe more to al-Mutanabbī than to any other classical poet.¹ Al-Radī shared with al-Mutanabbī the poetical influence on Arab poetry in general and in the last 150 years in particular. Furthermore, al-Radī's poetry exercised a notable range of impact on Arab poetry in both space and time. Of course, our poet did not overshadow his master as far as the poetical influence in Arab poets is concerned. However, al-Radī seems to be able to stand on a par with him in this respect.

Al-Radī can be placed in the top rank of poets, in comparison with his contemporaries like his brother al-Murtadā, al-Salāmī, Ibn Nubātah and other poets who represented an urban trend in their poetry. As for those poets who involved themselves in verbal embroidery and empty phrases, there are no grounds for making a comparison between them and al-Radī. His brother al-Murtadā followed al-Buḥturī's poetical method and in some ways lost variety in his poetical composition. He failed to come up to the level of his brother with regard to self-praise and hamāsah. As for the poetical style, al-Murtadā did not pay constant attention to revising and improving his odes as al-Radī did. Accordingly, al-Radī's poetical composition seems to be more perfect than that of his brother. In love-poetry al-Radī's melancholic sentiment

1. Concerning al-Mutanabbī's influence see Haywood op. cit., 1971, p. 8.

and profound and tender feelings made his ghazal charming and touching while al-Murtadā fell short in this respect. In addition, there is no ground on which to compare al-Radī's elegies with those of al-Murtadā which seem, in contrast, to be artificial and lacking an individual touch. Al-Salāmī, who was highly regarded by al-Tha'ālibī, also proved his descriptive talent in his poetry. However, he failed to come up to the level of al-Radī in other poetical themes. Al-Radī can stand the test of comparison with Ibn Nubātah al-Sa'dī. This poet like al-Radī represented a bedouin and traditional style in his poetry. Nevertheless, the urban elements which were limited in al-Radī's poetry can be discerned here and there in Ibn Nubātah. Furthermore, the latter's excessive exaggeration sometimes marred the charm of his poems. His approach seems to lack individuality compared with that of al-Radī.

It is convenient to draw up a comparison between al-Radī and Abū Firās al-Hamdānī. Both had a glorious background combined with ambition. They both expressed themselves well in self-praise in which they advanced to the same level. Abū Firās distinguished himself by his Rūmiyyāt which reflect his own bitter experiences in prison and exile. In other poetical themes al-Radī seems to be more successful, particularly in elegy and love-poetry. As for poetical style, al-Radī is more competent and eloquent according to Arab traditional standards. Abū Firās's style is fluid and sometimes its simplicity amounts to weakness.

As for al-Raḍī and his master al-Mutanabbī, it has become plain that our poet drew on this great poet as well as other sources. However, the qualities of al-Mutanabbī, who eclipsed many poets in Arabic, cannot detract from al-Raḍī's individuality. This is due in part, to the fact that our poet exploited his acquaintance with the Arab poetical heritage very well. He developed his poetical composition successfully and improved upon what he inherited from previous poets despite his failure in some respects, as indicated throughout the present thesis.¹ He also was able to limit some poetical shortcomings which he inherited from al-Mutanabbī. His inclusion of technical terms, such as those of philosophy and sufism is limited, and rare expressions are not as frequently used as they are by his master. To the present writer, the musical elements in al-Raḍī's poetry are superior in comparison with al-Mutanabbī. The rough-sounding words which often occur in his master's poetry are weeded out, to some extent, in al-Raḍī's poems. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that al-Raḍī failed to come up to the eloquence and skill of al-Mutanabbī's style according to Arab conventional standards.

Al-Raḍī's individual touches can be seen in his various poetical themes. In his praise he was among the few in his time who refused to earn a livelihood from poetry. He regarded it as a means to an end, making use of it in his political life as a weapon to achieve his ultimate goal. Accordingly, his praise had its political

1. See, for example, Chapter XI.

function in his age. Al-Raḍī also dealt with elegies successfully with many personal and individual touches in details. His contemporary al-Tha'ālibī and those who came after him awarded al-Raḍī the title of "a master of elegy". His Shī'ite odes show us that the poet marked them by his own personal conviction and his openmindedness in a time of sectarian fanaticism. Al-Raḍī's self-praise can be considered a record of his political career in its ups and downs, failure, ambition, frustration and aspiration. He expressed himself well and drew up his utopian ideas, depicting an interesting picture of the world he wanted to live in. The importance of al-Raḍī's love-poetry in general and al-Hijāziyyāt in particular has already been shown. Nevertheless, it is necessary to stress again that the poetical amalgam which al-Raḍī introduced in his love-poetry and al-Hijāziyyāt holds a unique place in Arab poetry. As for his poetical technique, his talent made itself felt in many ways and proved his high degree of experience and competence. He dealt with different kinds of figures of speech and verbal embellishments skilfully. In the light of this study al-Raḍī can be considered a poet of undeniable talent. His individual aspects are plain, despite the fact that he did not create a new way in poetry. He proved his genius in presenting his own poetical method, and stamped his poems with his own characteristics. There is no doubt of his influence on Arabic poetry. Though not among the few greatest poets, still he carved out for himself a niche which is still acknowledged by those conversant with Arabic literature.

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