Al-Sharif Al-Radi

Ali, Islam Abu

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AL-SHARIF AL-RADI

HIS LIFE AND POETRY

by

'ISAM 'ABD 'ALI

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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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### PART ONE

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this work is to study al-Sharif al-Radi, 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-Radi's social environment and its reflection in contemporary poetry. The third chapter describes the literary environment of al-Radi's age at some length.

The fourth chapter aims to study al-Radi'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-Radi's poetry itself. In Chapter V historical observations are made on al-Radi's Diwan 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-Radi's panegyrical odes are analysed. His Ikhwaniyyat receive special attention. Chapter VII deals with al-Radi's self-praise, its content and form. An endeavour is made to explore the Utopian world which the poet tried to portray. Al-Radi's elegies (Ch. VIII), their content, form and characteristics are reviewed. In addition, his dirges on women receive attention. Shi'ism in al-Radi'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 Ḫudhrītite and Ḫumārītite 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-Mutanabbi'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-Ra'i 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, Dr. 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.
1 - Transliteration of Arabic

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vowels:

- Short dammah: ُ u
- Fathah: ْ a
- Kasrah: ـ i
- Long: َ ü
- Short: ـ i
- Diphthongs: ـ aw or au
- ـ 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:


D. B. Diwân of al-Buhtûrî, Cairo 1911.


Diwân al-Ma‘ânî Abû Hilâl al-‘Askârî, Cairo 1352/1933.


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Mez


Misk


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al-Wafī

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Yāqūt

Mu‘jam al-Udabā’, G. M. S.

Ya‘tīmah


Zuhr

PART I

AL-RADI'S LIFE AND TIMES
CHAPTER I

THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT
The poet al-Sharif al-Ra'd lived in the fourth Islamic century (359-406/969-1015). He led his political and literary life under the rule of the Buwayhid dynasty. He witnessed its rise and the early signs of its fall till the beginning of the fifth century. It is hoped that through the description of the Buwayhid 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 'Abbasid Caliphate was virtually complete by the year 324/939. Fars went to 'Ali b. Buwayh 320-336/932-949, Rayy and Qazwân to Hasan b. Buwayh 320-366/932-976, the Jazirah, Mosul and Aleppo to the Hamdânids 317-394/939-1003, Egypt and Syria to the Ikhshîdids 323-358/935-969, and after that to the Fatimids. Andalus was declared independent of the 'Abbasid caliphs by 'Abd al-Rahmân III 300-350/911-961. Khurasân went to the Samânid 361-389/874-999, Tabaristan and Daylam to the Daylamites 316-434/933-1042. Only Madinat


al-Salām Baghdad remained in the hands of the Caliph.\(^1\)

Ibn al-ʿAthir said, with regret, that the caliph was nothing but a figurehead under the Turkish leaders.\(^2\)

Soon after the Buwayhids 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 Buwayhid columns began hovering about the capital as vultures over prey. The Caliph al-ʿMustakfi 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 ʿAbd al-Buwayh who entered Baghdad at the head of the Daylamites and Turkish troops in 334/945. The Caliph bestowed upon him the title Muʿizz al-Dawlah. Simultaneously, the conqueror's two brothers, ʿAli and Hasan were given the titles ʿImād al-Dawlah and Rukn al-Dawlah. Orders were issued that all their titles should be included on the coinage.\(^3\)

Concerning the Buwayhid family, it is said that the founder Abū Shuja' 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

---

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

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. Probably, under the influences of the Imāmite belief, Mu'izz al-Dawlah rashly decided to abolish the 'Abbāsid 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 Buwayhid rule. However, many encroachments were made on the caliph's prerogatives. The Buwayhid prince 'Aḍud al-Dawlah compelled the Caliph al-Ṭā'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 Buwayhid ruler

1. Lane-Poole, op. cit., p. 139.
3. B. I. 2nd edn. art. "Būwayh".
should be mentioned from the pulpits after the name of the Caliph. Yet the Buwayhids used to feign exaggerated respect for the Commander of the Faithful, when they felt the necessity to legalize their authority in the sight of the populace or of rival states.

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 Fatimids. It made its appearance in the political and religious field. This ruling family pretended to be descended from Fātimah the daughter of the Prophet and denied the ’Abbāsid right in the caliphate. The Fatimids represented a Shi‘i sect called Ismā‘iliyyah, forming a great challenge and jeopardy to the caliphate’s existence. Unlike other independent rulers who paid apparent respect to the caliph, "they raised the claim of being the sole rightful heirs of the caliphate". The nominal religious position of the ’Abbāsid caliph faced a great threat in Baghdad. Qirwāsh the Shi‘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 Fatimid caliph. Mecca in the season of

pilgrimage became an arena of political and religious struggle between these two caliphs. The Khutbah was preached those many times in the name of the Fāṭimid caliph. 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.

Broadly speaking, the Fāṭimidīs found sympathy amongst the shi'ites. The claim of this dynasty "could not fail to excite interest among all shi'ites". Al-Raḍī 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. In one of his odes he indicated that he had intended to take refuge in Cairo. In another he confirmed the genealogical tree of the Fāṭimid family's descent from 'Alī, and accredited them as his paternal brothers.

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.

3. E. I. art. "Būwayh".
5. Ibid. p. 301.
and religious sympathies. Nevertheless, al-Radi 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 toco". It is apparent that this tendency came to an end in 403/1011. In this year a manifesto was made in response to al-Qâdisî's request. He felt strong enough at that time to assert his demands. It denounced the falsehood of Fâtimid descent from the house of the Prophet. Great personalities of different sects put their signature on it. 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 Bahâ' al-Dawlah, the ruler of Baghdad as well.

Returning to the Bûwayhids' 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. The unfortunate Caliph al-Tâ'î suffered a great deal of abasement at the hands of Bahâ' al-Dawlah, who succeeded his father 'Aqîd al-Dawlah in 379/989. It happened that the soldiers mutinied against him because they had not been paid. The Bûwayhid prince first seized his

vision, then deprived him of all his property, but he found
that this money was not so 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 disaster; 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.

Bahā' al-Dawlah was the master of Baghdad for almost a quarter of a century, 379-603/989-1012. His tyrannical policy affected the calipha, 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. 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. The poet Mihyr al-Daylami, 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.

Mihyr once again described the Ministry as follows:

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

Al-Radi 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.

4. Ibid., p. 47.
In spite of this rough policy, the Buwayhids made contributions to cultural activities. They appointed many learned viziers and other figures who took part in intellectual fields. Al-Tha'alibi stated that the leading writers of those days were four: al-Sāhib b. 'Abbād, Ibn al-'Amīd, Ibrāhīm b. Hilāl al-Qābī and 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Yūsuf. The first two were viziers of the Buwayhid dynasty of Rayy, the other two were in the service of 'Ādud al-Dawlah. It is related also that the al-Sāhib's 'salon' was a gathering place of many poets, writers and scientists of that age. The list of famous viziers during this period includes Sābūr b. Ardaghīr, 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." He founded a "house of learning in the capital, to the library of which he had himself presented 10,000 volumes." 'Abū al-'Alā' the famous poet visited it. He referred to it in his poetry:

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

Al-Sha'īf al-Raḍī founded another centre in the same city, also called "a house of learning". He supported the students during their studies there. As for Sābir, al-Tha‘ālibī devoted in the Yatīmah a special chapter in which he praised him mentioning those poets who celebrated his deeds and glory. 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." He was well-known for his wide-spread charities and sponsorship of poets. Al-Raḍī was on familiar terms with him, and the poet Mihyār called the vizier, in one of his praising odes, a protection and refuge of the people from misfortune.

Politically, the Buwayhid 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

that they did their best in patronizing intellectual life when they had the opportunity to do so. Among them ‘Aqūd al-Dawlah was highly esteemed by Arab scholars as a patron of science and literature. He was fond of both learning and gifted men. Under his wing ample allowances were allocated to jurists. Qur’anic 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." It is said that he possessed a degree of knowledge of various sciences. He was versifier and critic as well. Al-Tha‘alibī related that ‘Aqūd al-Dawlah used to take part in the discussions of poetry which was recited in his house when the poets assembled there. 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 Buwayhid ruler as follows:

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

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

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 Fāṭimids, 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 Khawārism flourished under the Persian family of the Ṣamānids. These two cities were reckoned by al-Thaʿālibī as splendid centres of Arab culture and literature.1 The Ṣamānids were ousted by the Turkish family of the Ghaznavids. This dynasty behaved similarly in almost all activities.2 In the western Islamic lands, the famous Ḥamdānid 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-Mutanabbi's poetry represented it.3 The literary glory of this prince's court was so well known that al-Thaʿālibī devoted a large part of his work the Yatimah to it.4

It is worth mentioning another family that was prominent in the political and literary fields. This tribal dynasty was called Banū 'Uqayl - 336-439/996-1096. The Būwayhids had a high regard for it. The 'Uqaylids occupied Diyūr Bahr, al-Jazīrah and a part of Iraq.  

Ahmad Amin suggests that they maintained nomadic principles throughout their lives. The remarkable leader of this family, al-‘Uqailad, was devoted to literature. Our poet was on familiar footing with him. On his death he composed two dirges. In the west the Fātimids 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'. Their encouragement and patronage extended as far as Baghdad and Basrah. The famous mathematician and physicist, al-Hasan b. al-Haytham, was summoned from Basrah to Egypt. Hilāl relates that for a single eulogy composed by the poet Ibn al-Hajjāj, the ruler of Egypt delivered to him a thousand dinars as a gift. 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.
5. O'Leary, op. cit., p. 139.
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 Divāns composed in this period. Even al-Šarīf 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 Buwayhids² religious policy towards Shi‘ites, it gave them the opportunity to practise a great measure of tolerance. Meanwhile, political development, in general, seems to have turned against the ʿAbbāsids and the Sunnites as a whole. Mu‘izz al-Dawlah, in favour of the ʿAlid family, decided to separate them from the jurisdiction of the ʿAbbāsid head man, naqīb,³ and put them under a naqīb

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2. The duties of naqīb were to keep a register of nobility, enter births and deaths in it and to examine the validity of ʿAlid genealogies. He had also to restrain them from excesses. He had other special duties including certain judicial powers. For further information see 3. I. art. Šarīf by C. van Arendonk. See also al-MAILKH, al-Ahkām al-Sultāniyyah. Bonn, 1863, pp. 166-171.
of their own called the head of the ‘Alids. As we shall learn later, this religious position was occupied by the poet’s father many times. Al-Raḍī and his brother, al-Mustaṣfa became a naqib as well. These three figures took an important part in the political field under the Būwayhides. It is possible that al-Raḍī’s family throughout this reign had been acting as intermediary between the Būwayhides, the caliphs and the populace. Moreover, the rulers depended on the ‘Alids, including al-Raḍī’s family, in their relations with the local population and many other states at this time. Al-Raḍī tells us in one of his odes that his father played a remarkable rôle in bringing peace to the Sunnites and the Shi‘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 and south winds.

و غلب على الزوراء الظل المرارة  
سرب النواحي فعقوم البلاء نسبي  
سالت عليه الحمّة مملونه  
عما إجاب غير الضغف المرابل  
راضى من نباح يثير ودبة  
الآذان بايت في مكا رياضب

In ‘Izz al-Dawlah’s reign al-Raḍī’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. More than that, while

1. al-Hamadānī, op. cit., pp. 170, 179.  
war was raging between 'Izz al-Dawlah and 'Aḍud al-Dawlah, a Turkish slave boy of the former was captured in battle. 'Izz al-Dawlah appointed Abū Ṭāhā, al-Raḍī’s father as an envoy to 'Aḍud al-Dawlah to discuss this slave’s release. 1 Probably, because of these cordial relations between Abū Ṭāhā and the prince, 'Aḍud 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-Raḍī’s family. It started early in 'Aḍud al-Dawlah’s rule extending to his death as the poet tells us in his Diwān. 3

On the accession of Bahā’ al-Dawlah, al-Raḍī’s family enjoyed a prosperous time. This ruler assigned Abū Ṭāhā as a chief of judges, and president of the court of appeal Diwān al-Muṣālim, beside his normal position as the head man of the ‘Alīds. The caliph remonstrated against this decision and the prince had to retract his order. He reinstated al-Muṣawi in all his posts except that of the chief of the judges. 4 However, Bahā’ al-Dawlah had a great confidence in al-Raḍī’s father. He appointed him as an envoy to settle the disputes between himself and Basū ‘Uqayl. 5 On other occasions the poet’s father appears to have been intermediary during the struggle between Ṣamṣām

al-Dawlah and Bahāʾ al-Dawlah. As for al-Sharif al-Raḍī himself, he undertook the responsibility of ʿaṣābāh on behalf of his father when the latter was still alive.

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 Muḥammad 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-Ḥusayn on the 10th of Muharram (ʿAshūrā). The second was the festival day which is called ʿId al-Ghadir in memory of the supposed nomination of ʿAlī 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. 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 "Musʿab’s Death", eight days after ʿAshūrā and the second was the "Day of the cave - 'Yawm

4. Muq'ab b. al-Zubayr, is a son of famous Hawārī of the Prophet, al-Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām. He died in 71/690 fighting against the Umayyads.
al-Qādi‘ī, the day on which the Prophet had entered the cave with Abū Bakr. The Sunnites celebrated it eight days after 'Id al-Chādir. 1

Those sectarian struggles dragged on almost throughout the Buwayhid régime. Baghdad and its inhabitants suffered from riots and plundering. Consequently, people had to save themselves by migrating from the scene 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’ 5 al-Daulah realised his religious policy was beginning to jeopardise his position, he appointed the severe vizier, ʿAmīd al-Jāyūsh 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

Generally speaking, a growing Shi'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 Shi'ism were first written during this era. The sectarian struggles between the Shi'ah and Sunnah found its way of expression in poetry. Shi'ite poets used to compose odes on the occasion of the 'Ashura', in memory of al-Husayn's martyrdom. Some of them directed seething attacks on Sunnite champions and defended the Shi'ite cause enthusiastically.

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-Radi's social environment.


CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT
The purpose of this chapter is to give a picture of al-Raḍī'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". Though Arabs, in general, lost their important strongholds, they still played some part in the 'Abbāsid administration machinery. On al-Mu'taṣim's accession (318/833) 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 Berbars, but principally Turks". Consequently they gained influence in the military and government and began to take their part in the 'Abbāsid life in general. This condition provided a fertile soil for fusion of Arabians with those foreign elements.

The Buwayhids' 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 Shi'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 Buwayhid prince, 'Aqūd al-Dawlah found himself compelled to reconcile the Rabī'ah and Muqar tribes which had been in strife for a hundred years.3 Among many tribes which


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

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 voices. 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.

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:

1. Ibid., p. 17; see also Ath. Vol. VII, p. 216.
You broke his covenants regarding his family,
and swerved from the high way of (his) ordinances.

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.  

In contrast to this trend, poets of Arab origin
reacted and rebelled. Al-Mutanabbi, and after him al-
Raqqī, 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-
Mutanabbi 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.  

Al-Raqqī had another sort of ambition. He did not claim to be

1. Arberry, Arabic Poetry, p. 110.
4. D. W. Vol. I, see intro. by al-Barqūq; Shawqi Dayf,
Al-Fann wa Nadhāhibahu fī al-Shīr al-‘Arabi. 4th
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-Mutanabbi's diwān.\(^3\) Al-Sharīf in his rebellion and indignation went to the point of adopting the Jāhilīte qualities and tribalism.\(^4\) While al-Mutanabbi lamented the decline of Arab glory. He says:

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\text{وَإِسْنَاحُ الْوَلَادَةَ بَيْنَ الْمَلُوكِ إِلَيْهِ قَصَدُ}
\text{لَدَمَّ أَدْبُهُ عَمَّمُ دَلْدَمُ}.
\]

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, Mīḥyūr, 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"

\(^1\) D. R. Vol. I, pp. 174, 182, 378, 482.


\(^3\) D. R. Vol. II, p. 714.


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

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 con-
venient to present its general picture which was presented
by the historian Ibn al-Faqlī. 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 Awtāt 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.

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

3. Ibn al-Faqlī, 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.
walks of life. From an economic standpoint, as al-Durā 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." The other characteristic features of the 'Abbasid 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. At the head of this were the kinmen of the Prophet, Banū Hāšim, 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 naqāb, who was appointed by the caliph. Both the 'Alids and the 'Abbāsids were addressed as "al-Sharīf", the noble. As we have seen before, in the fourth Islamic century the two opposing offshoots of Banū Hāšim 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. They seemed to be well-to-do, while

1. E. I. art. "Būwayh".
the rest of their followers faced hardship and, to some extent, poverty. Consequently, a large number of 'Alids and 'Abbidoids were found among the people who engaged in riot, plunder and other destructive actions in Baghdad.

Broadly speaking, al-Raḍi'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. Though he did not regard the position of naqīb as his ultimate aim, 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 (naqībah) in my youth; so is there a glory to be regarded as mine? 5

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

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

First of all, those foreign rulers (the Buwayhid) who came from primitive backgrounds adapted themselves to the civilised life of Baghdad. Moreover, they exceeded the 'Abbāsid 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 Buwayhid ruler built a palace in the north of Baghdad. He spent 13 million dirhams which he mercilessly extracted from his supporters.\(^2\) His successor, 'İzz 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 'Adud al-Dawlah, who was well-known as a reformer

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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-Raḍī'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-Raḍī's assembly that a vizier had offered a great deal of money to gain the minister's position. The poet improvised five

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versus in which he called on people to purchase a high
rank. Al-Raḍī used more sarcastic comments on the
decay of moral principle and the corruption of political
life in his time.

The danger of deprivation, imprisonment and
corruption began to threaten the families of those who
hold religious positions. Neither judges nor naqīb
escaped these practices. Muhammad b. ‘Umar, a head of
the ‘Alids, was arrested many times; his property and
estates were confiscated as well. Al-Raḍī’s family
suffered the same fate at the hands of ‘Adud al-Dawlah.
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 300,000 dirhams a year paid to
the prince’s treasury. Consequently, a man of bad repute
and licentious conduct became a judge. The position of
naqīb was put up for auction as well. A certain ‘Alid
paid money and became the chief of the ‘Alids. On account
of this, al-Raḍī 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:

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

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 Buwayhid ruler. Like the others, he seized any opportunity and turned it to his own advantage. He carried out his obligations to justify the Buwayhid rule. In his poetry, he took pains to conceal the regime's ugly side. He always tried to present it as fair and just. 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 these 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 Baha' al-Dawlah, he described him as follows:

Nothing established kingdoms like a cutting sword (Sahā' al-Daulah).
Which can put an end to decreed fate. 1

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

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

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:

3. Ibid., p. 230.
What matters to me if the 'Abbāsid have thrown open the gates of honour and surname, though plentiful the titles, few are the Dirhams in the hands of this our caliph.

Al-Bīrūnī (d. 477/1055) shares this poet's opinion. He says that "When the 'Abbāsid had decorated their assistants, friends, enemies indiscriminately, with vain titles compounded with the word "Dawlah", their empire perished." In the Būwayhīd régime the titles were doubled. 'Adud al-Dawlah became Tāj al-Millah "Crown of religion". Al-Raḍī's friend Bahāʾ al-Dawlah had two other titles. He was called Diyā' al-Millah "light of religion" and Ghiyath al-Ummah. Al-Bīrūnī adds that the Būwayhīd 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-Awhad, "the most excellent of excellent", Kāfī al-Kufāt, and so forth.

Many honorary titles were conferred on Abū Ahmad 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.

those glorious days. 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. 3

The upper classes of that time seem to have lived extremely luxurious and sensuous 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.

with its joys of frivolity and merrymakings, disregarding the wishes of their masters. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, one of the leading writers in the fourth Islamic century (c. 413/1023) wrote a book called al-Imtā' wa al-Mū'anāsah. It contains intellectual and literary conversations which were carried on in the presence of the Buwayhid vizier, Ibn Sa'dān. The author devoted a special chapter, called al-Laylah al-Mujhāniyyah - the obscene night. It is abundant with filthy and outspoken sensual descriptions. From a literary point of view these evening assemblies and gatherings for drinking and conversations provided a natural hot-bed for short poems (al-Maqaṣṣāt) 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.

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


Note: It is of interest to note that when Abū 'Imād al-Munajjim’s donkey passed away, eleven poets lamented on its death at al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād’s request. This account shows how far the assemblies and gatherings affected poetry and broadened poets’ horizons at that time. See Yatīmah, Vol. III, pp. 219-233.
continue that at the summit of merry-making each man holding in his hand a golden cup filled with Qatrabul and Ukbah 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'alibi's narratives one would presume that debauchery was acceptable in high and low circles.\(^5\)

Al-Raḍī'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-Raḍī 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

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friend requested him to describe a Persian "lad". In another he describes a black girl at the request of his companion. He also has an ode in which he depicts an assembly of drinking. Broadly speaking, al-Raḍī 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. Consequently, in the words of al-Dūrī, "the social currents were stirring underneath the exuberant luxury of the wealthy class". 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

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-Jawzi relates that in the year 375/985 Šamṣām 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-Mansūr. They determined to prevent the Friday service. They compelled the withdrawal of this measure. On another occasion, 389/998, this measure was reinforced and as before it resulted in rebellion. The populace stormed the Dār al-Hamūll where the tax rolls were kept, setting fire to it. Afterwards the dispute was settled and the tax was reduced. 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. Famines became current events and death hovered over the downtrodden populace's heads as a result of epidemics and hunger.

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.

Amid al-Jiyūsh, 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 Buwayhid rule as well. His brother, al-Murtadhā, did much the same. The two brothers revealed an anxiety and concern over the lower classes' movement. In another ode al-Raḍī was proud of his part in bringing Baghdad's serious situation back to normal. It would be difficult to depend on al-Raḍī'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' favour or disdained to be under their service. In al-Raḍī's time the famous poet Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarri 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." In the capital he refused to pay court to the ruling classes and disdained to write verse professionally. His hope to establish himself came to

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

Abū-'Alāʾ's contemporary, the Qādī' Abū Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Mālikī (362-422/973-1031) suffered the same fate. He was an able jurist, 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

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¹ Letters, intro.; see Nicholson op. cit., p. 314.
² Letters, intro.
⁵ Ibid., p. 166.
not have turned from your town so I would then have obtained all I wished for". 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'an in the house of an atheist.

The third famous witness who suffered in Baghdad and revealed his indignation and pain was Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī. Yāqūt observed that this well-known man used to lament on his misfortunes and complain of his privation. 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 Ḥayyān 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.
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 Buwayhid era, it is apparent that the lower class failed to improve its state either peaceably 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

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¹ Yāqūt, Vol. V, pp. 380-381.
² Zuhr, Vol. I, p. 121; see Ālī, Miḥyār, pp. 15-16.
story-tellers ipsis 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. 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.

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 Ikhwan al-Safa, "Brothers of Sincerity". In the politico-religious field there was another group called "the Carmathians". In Bernard Lewis's view those two groups and Isma'ilism were all different facets of one and the same movement which by the catholicity of its doctrine and simplicity of its purpose, attempted and almost succeeded in uniting the whole population of the Islamic orient, irrespective of creed and social status.

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

This society produced some fifty separate treatises termed Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Safā. 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-Raḍî did not escape the influence of these movements. A close examination of his poetry shows us traces of Ikhwān al-Safā'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-Raḍî 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-Safā in identifying his friend.\(^5\) In the same ode he called his friend my

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brother (Akhi) the term which was used frequently by
the members of this society. 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-Safā with a slight alteration. In
view of all these points, one could suggest that al-Rāḍī
had something in common with this society. However, our
poet was an Imāmite personality, who had at least personal
cympathy with ʿIsmāʿīlism and Carmathians as we shall see
later on. All those factors provided a common ground
between al-Rāḍī and this movement. Furthermore, al-Rāḍī
as an openminded man, may have admired ʿIkhwān al-Safā's
tolerance.

As for the Carmathians, they were a revolutionary
sect which formed a remarkable force at that time. It
began as an offshoot of Ismāʿīlism 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. Desert Arabs and elements of different races

3. He used the word Aqrān al-Safā which means fellows of
4. Al-Rāḍī's openmindedness will be discussed in a
   coming chapter.
5. Concerning ʿIkhwān al-Safā's tolerance, see B. Lewis,
   op. cit., intro; Nicholson, op. cit., p. 370.
   39-50.
and origin identified themselves with this revolution. To the end of the last quarter of the fourth century, Hijaz, the desert in general, Iraq, and other districts became a scene of its violent activities. On many occasions they attacked the pilgrimage caravans that were on their way to Mecca. In the year 375/985 the Carmathians occupied Kufah and threatened Baghdad itself. In consequence, alarm overspread the capital. Several times the Buwayhid rulers tried to make friends with them and responded to their demands. Al-Sharif al-Radi's friend Abu Bakr b. Shahawayh was a representative of this movement in Baghdad. As Abu Shuja 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." Our poet indicated that Abu Bakr was a man of importance in Baghdad at that time. The intimate relationship between them is evident. Al-Sharif al-Radi sent him a praising ode. It implies that Abu Bakr had high regard for al-Radi's poetry. On the occasion

4. Ibid., p. 126.
5. Dhayl, p. 113.
of his friend's death, al-Raḍî composed a dirge in which he expressed his regret and pain. He called him "my brother" (Akhī) as he did in his two dirges concerning the supposed member of Ikhwān al-Qāfā.  

From this above review of the Carmathians and Ikhwān al-Qāfā and their connection with Ismāʿīlimism, it shall be apparent that these trends played an important part in al-Raḍî'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 Shiʿite 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-Raḍî turned his back on the lower-

2. Ibid.
classes' misery, basing his stand on his identity with the upper class, he showed 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. Fortunately, literary records succeeded, in different degrees, in portraying this important epoch, as we shall see in the forthcoming chapter.

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1. In this respect we assess al-Radi'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-Rađī 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 Buwayhids 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. It is true to say that "the Buwayhid period", as Kabir says, "witnessed unprecedented development under the patronage of Amirs and viziers, some of whom were themselves great men of learning".

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. Literary gatherings abounded which


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 assemblages. They would conduct intellectual and literary debates on various subjects. 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. 'Aqūd al-Dawlah's library in Shiraz was one of these famous institutions. al-Maqdisi 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. In Baghdad the library of Sābūr's "house of learning" was well-known. Its books numbered about 10,400 amongst which were a hundred precious copies of the Qur'an and many monographs of famous writers. Al-Maqdisi, who travelled throughout the Islamic world, visited many public and private libraries and was able to make comparisons between them. He pointed out that Basrah's "house of books" was a big one and full of various books. It is interesting to note that the famous vizier al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād had an enormous collection. It is said that

3. See Chapter I.
5. al-Maqdisi, op. cit., p. 413.
6. Ibid.
transporting it required 400 canoes.\footnote{1}

Mosques also functioned as repositories of books and suitable places for lectures. The most famous of these was the mosque of al-Mangūr in Baghdad. Al-Raḍī’s disciple Mihyār al-Daylamī used to take his place there, surrounded by the pupils who wanted to study his divān under his supervision.\footnote{2} At another mosque called Nadjīd Ibn al-Mubārak, the famous Shāfi‘īite theologian al-Iṣfahānī (d. 406/1015) lectured to seven hundred students on theology.\footnote{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.\footnote{4} Even sectarian conflicts and social insecurity, which were considered

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. 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. The second was the stress placed on derivation (Ishiqâq) and the increased


use of analogy (qiyyās). Concerning the first point, Mes 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." 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. "The leading philologists of the fourth century", as Mes 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 role."

As for derivation and analogy, the leading philologists in this field were Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987) and Ibn Jinnī (d. 394/991). Both were teachers of al-Raḍī, as we shall learn later. Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī was greatly admired by ʿAdud al-Dawlah, for whom he wrote Kitāb al-Hujjah fī al-dirāṣah fī al-sabʿīnā "a book on seven different readings of the Qurʾān". Amongst his other books are al-Takmilah and al-Idāh. With his disciple Ibn Jinnī serious etymological enquiry began. This famous grammarian and linguistic figure is the author of the celebrated book al-Khasāʾis and other important

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

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. 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.

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.


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 Shisah flourishing and the Abbasid power disappearing; the favour of several Buwayhid 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. 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 Shiites and Mu’tazilites, still had the power to challenge other sects in the Buwayhid 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 Sunni Islam, was Abû al-Hasan ‘Ali al-Ash’ari (d. 325/936)." He began as a pupil of the famous Mu’tazilite Abû Ali al-Jabba’i (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-Radi.

1. 3. I. art. the Mu’tazilah, by H. S. Nyberg.
The Shi'ites who took advantage of Buwayhid sympathy laboured ceaselessly, and among many works which were written at that time was the Kitāb al-Kāfī of al-Kulīnī (d. 328/939) containing 16,000 Hadiths. Another celebrated book was Mā lā Yahduru hu al-faqīh by Ibn Bābawayh (d. 381/991). Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Nuʿmān (d. 413/1022) was a well-known scholar and theologian in al-Raḍī's time. 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 Shi'ite opinion.

The two brothers, al-Raḍī and al-Murtadā, made remarkable contributions to the theological and Qur'anic fields. Al-Murtadā was a poet, credited with a Diwān 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. B. I. art. Shi'ah, by R. Strothmann.
2. al-Nuʿmān was the first to teach al-Raḍī and his brother al-Murtadā in their childhood.
the Qurʾān with copious notes from traditions and philological questions and references to poets.1

3. Kitāb al-Shāfiʿi, a defence of the Imāmīte of the "Twelves" against the al-Muḥājir of the Muʿtazilīte chief qādī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 416/1026).2

3. Al-Masūdī al-nūṣirīyyah, on the difference between the Shiʿītes and other sects.3

The poet al-Raḍī was a theologian as well. He concentrated on Qurʾānic studies and composed many works.4 He was credited with works dealing with the exegesis of the Qurʾān, the first of which is Talkhīṣ al-Bayān fī Maṣānī al-Qurʾān in which the author dealt with Qurʾān from rhetorical point of view.5 The second is called Ḥaqāʾiq al-taʾwil fī mutashābah al-Tanzīl, in which al-Raḍī studied the obscure verses in the Qurʾān.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.


3. Ibn Shahrāshūb op. cit., p. 70; see E. I. art. al-Murtada.

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. 130; 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 Qurʾān Maʿānī al-Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān (Majūzāt al-Qurʾān), one of the most remarkable works on the subject.¹

It is worth noting that in the Būwayhid period it became common to find Imāmī theologians who had Muʿtazilite tendencies. Al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbūd was a case in point. He was a passionate Imāmī figure and Muʿtazilite, and in his odes he expressed his admiration for this school's opinions and declared his Imāmī belief as well.² Among al-Raḍī's teachers there were many Shīʿite theologians who had leanings towards the Muʿtazilites. Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā al-Rummānī (d. 384/994) was one of them. He was a Shīʿite theologian and well-known grammarian.³ In general, many other philologists who worked in the Qurʾānic field had a sympathetic attitude towards the Muʿtazilites. Among them were al-Raḍī's teachers Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī and

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


Muḥammad b. ʿUmrān al-Marsubānī (d. 383/993). 1

Our poet appears not to have escaped this sphere of influence. We have already learned that many Muʿtazilite teachers taught him. Consequently, he might have been influenced by them. In two of his books, al-Majāṣṣāt and Talkhīṣ al-bayān, he appears to be open-minded in discussing many religious questions. He referred to the Muʿtazilite 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 Shāfiʿite qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār's opinion in refusing this tradition on the grounds that the transmitter was hostile toward ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and was untruthful. 3 In general, al-Ḥadī reveals a great deal of flexibility and latitude in his theological works.

In al-Ḥadī's time al-Thaʿālibī, (d. 432/1037), in his famous anthology of recent and contemporary poets and writers Yatīmat al-Dahrī 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. Ṭarīkh, Vol. VII, p. 376; Vol. III, pp. 155-156; ʿArbaʿa Lahrī, Vol. IX, p. 89. In Amin's opinion al-Fārisī and Ibn Jinnī were influenced by the Muʿtazilite. He suggests that their liberal attitudes in dealing with linguistic subjects owed, in part, to their Muʿtazilite leanings.

2. Talkhīṣ, p. 156; ʿArbaʿa Lahrī, p. 49.

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

As for literary criticism, the Buwayhid 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'kâr) of the Qur'ân, the dispute between ancient and modern, poetical plagiarisms and comparison between poets. With regard to al-Mutanabbi'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'ân is stated in the holy book itself, and this belief became current among


3. In the Qur'ân the verse runs as follows: "Say if men and Jinn banded together to produce the like of this Qur'ân, they would never produce its like; not though they backed one another." The Kuran 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 Qurʾān. They made a vital contribution to the field of literary criticism. "Discussion of the stylistic virtues of the Qurʾān", as Grunebaum put it, "turned out to be fruitful of critical investigation". 1 Al-Baqillānī (d. 403/1013) the passionate defender of Ḥadīth shows how far the studies of the Qurʾān'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 Muʿallagah of Imruʾ al-Qays and subjected it to a systematic aesthetic criticism. He used the same method for a poem of the ʿAbbāsid poet al-Ṣuḥṭurī. 3 Al-Naḍī's teacher al-Rummānī also used this system. In his comparative study of the stylistic characteristics of the Qurʾān 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 Qurʾānic study. In his book Talkhīṣ

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2. Baqillānī. pp. 100-143.
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. Al-Raḥīq 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.

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 'Abbāsīd period. Philologists and transmitters of poetry were conservative in general and their hostility to contemporary poetical trends was obvious. Poets made only a limited effort to modernise their style and content. Even Abū Nuwās who claimed to have freed himself from traditional shackles in poetry seems to adhere to old poetical conventions in his praise.

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-Buḥtārī, considered to be a representative of the

1. Talkhīṣ intro. p. 1; see pp. 3, 4, 288.
2. Ibid., p. 1.
traditional form of Arabic poetry. However, they did not restrict themselves to those 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-Raḍī’s time. Critics appear to be tolerant in this respect, and their attitude seems to be fairly flexible. Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Jurjānī (d. 392/1001) in his book al-Wasāṭah Bayn al-Mutanabbi wa Khūṣūbih, states that:

Plagiarism (he sums up) is an ancient disease and an inveterate blemish. If you are just, you will realize 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 diwāns 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-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbdād declared that borrowing from poets later that al-Buḥṭurī was plagiarism and literary theft. 2 This shows that in his opinion it is excusable.


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-Radī, 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-Radī gives an example of al-Mutanabbi's poetry in which the poet took an ancient theme and improved upon it. In al-Radī's eyes al-Mutanabbi'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. Rasā'il, pp. 88-89.
². Von Grunebaum, Art. Literary criticism, J. A. O. S.
al-Amidi's view, the urban poet should use his own vocabularies. Meanwhile, critics warned modern poets to be cautious of indulging in simplicity and vulgarity. In al-Jurjani'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. 3

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-'Askari stands for the supremacy of the idea, but theoretically he insists on the significance of the form, 3 while al-Amidi appears to be a moderate. His view is that the verse should be considered under three aspects: verbal expression (Lafz); Idea (Ma'na) and composition (Nazm). 4 Al-Radi 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. Amidi, p. 201.
5. Talkhis, p. 244.
al-Raḍī's time is the dispute concerning al-Mutanabbi 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-Mutanabbi, Ibn Jinnī is worthy of mention. This famous grammarian and philologist was considered an authority on al-Mutanabbi's poetry. Among his works is a commentary on al-Mutanabbi's poetical collection called al-Faṣr "the explanation." It was described by Hilāl as exhaustive in character, containing a quantity of grammatical and lexicographical material. Another admirer of this poet was his own transmitter Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Majībī who composed two books in defence of the poet.

The detractors of al-Mutanabbi 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. Ibn Furrajah (b. 330/941) wrote two works in which he criticised Ibn Jinnī's commentaries.

The first was al-Fath 'alā Abī al-fath, the second was
al-ta灸ānī 'alā Ibn Jinnī. Among those who waged a
campaign against this famous poet in his lifetime was
He declared his hostility towards the poet and
criticised him violently in a treatise called al-Riṣālah
al-Muwaddihah fil dhikhur warṣāt al-Mutanabbi.2 The famous
visier al-Ṣāhib b. Ṭabbād took his part in this campaign.
He devoted a work called al-Kashf 'an masā'īr al-
Mutanabbi to tracing the poet's shortcomings and defects
in composition.3

This long-lived and heated dispute paved the way for
other authors to play the role of judges. Al-Tha'ālibi
in his work Yatlmat al-dahr and al-Jurjānī in his book
al-wasāţah tried to hold the scale of justice between
al-Mutanabbi's admirers and detractors. Al-Tha'ālibi
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-Mutanabbi'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
Muḥsin Ghayyād and published in Baghdad under the
title: Al-Faṣr al-Mahbūl 'alā Mughkilat al-Mutanabbi,
1973. The first volume of al-Faṣr al-Kabīr was

criticised as well as rapturously admired. 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-Qāhīb b. 'Abbād was a case in point. 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 Tamām and al-Buhtūrī's poetry and studied the shortcomings of poetry in general and the rhetorical side of the structure of the ode.

By a comparative method he drew a distinction between Abū Ṣuľām and Ibn al-Ṯāฏīr and proceeded to deal with al-Mutanabbī. His concentration on poetical plagiarism, which engaged Arabic critics, is of great merit and illustrates his erudition in ancient and "modern" poetry. 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

4. Ibid., p. 42.
5. Ibid., pp. 64-135.
6. Ibid., pp. 136-159.
al-Mutanabbi or took sides against him. His brother al-Murtada, for instance, had a strong dislike of him. He put his prejudice in practice by criticizing Ibn Jinni's commentary on al-Mutanabbi's diwan. In al-Raḍi’s diwan, as we shall see later, the stamp of al-Mutanabbi'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-Qāṭī, his comments imply such esteem. Furthermore, he drew a brief comparison between three important poets: Abū Tammām, al-Buḥṭūrī and al-Mutanabbi. In his view “Abū Tammām is a pulpit-preacher, al-Buḥṭūrī a describer of the wild cow while al-Mutanabbi is a slayer of armies.” Al-Raḍi’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-Buḥṭūrī succeeded in his descriptions of desert and coloured his poetry with his own tender sentiment. As for al-Mutanabbi, his poetry, as al-Raḍi observes, is impregnated with bellicose words and filled with displays of strength.

2. Raṣā’īl, pp. 89-90.
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. Consequently, the style of writers was bound to be affected and artificial. Al-Qābī and al-Qāhib b. 'Abbād were true

representatives of this literary style. The former was highly esteemed for his contribution to setting the standard for official correspondence. In Moq's view, his style was admired up to the twentieth century. He says: "E'en today the letters of al-Ṣāḥīb 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." As for al-Ṣāḥīb, 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. This tendency towards the use of flowery embellishment encroached upon private correspondence too. A glance at the Yatīmah shows us to what extent those writers in the fourth Islamic century were attracted by rhetorical and verbal ornament.

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-Tawḥīdī and al-Raḥīm in their correspondence and prose-writings and al-Jurjānī in his critical work

1. Moq, 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.


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

Art prose, in general, made much progress in al-Rādī'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.

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-Rādī, his brother al-Murtadā, al-Qāhīb b. ʿAbbād, al-Khawārizmi and so forth. In addition, the critics of that time began to realise the mutual connection and influence between prose and poetry. Abū ʿAll al-Nātimī, 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

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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.
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, satire and sectarian religious themes, were treated in prose. The private correspondence of al-Šāhib b. ʿAbbād, al-Khwārizmī and Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadānī embodies this interesting feature. 2 In the Yatīmah there are many specimens of al-Šāhib’s and Badīʿ 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-Maqāmah. Badīʿ 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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4. Nicholson, op. cit., p. 328. See also Mubāarak al-Nathr, Vol. I, pp. 197-200. He suggests that the creator of Maqāmah was Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933) for much information, see B. I. art. Maqāmah, By Brockleman.
displays of rhetoric, poetry, and learning seldom failed to draw from an admiring audience. The second character is the réawi or narrator, who should be continually meeting with the other, should relate his adventures and repeat his excellent compositions.¹ The Maqámát 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 Maqámát. Though the Maqámah 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 Zaki Mubarak observed, a real reflection of the corruption and the decline of moral principles of the social life as well.² Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Iskandari, the hero of al-Hamadānī in his Maqámát, 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-Maqámah al-Sásáníyyah, Abū al-Faṭḥ describes

his own time as follows:

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

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

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. 85; the quotation is modified.


3. Ibid., pp. 70-71.


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-ʿukbarī 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-Raḍī's time. A glance at the Yatīmah shows that passion for poetry was widespread in those days. Everybody, as al-Tha‘ālibi 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. According to the Yatīmah, 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 elite 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-Maqṭū‘āt al-Shi‘rīyyah" found a fertile soil to grow and

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 (diwān) 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 qaṣīdah 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'ubiyyah, 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 elegy and eulogy 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

those of the Arab par excellence."\(^1\)

It is common knowledge that al-Mutanabbi, 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.\(^3\)

Many poets who established themselves at al-Mutanabbi'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-Ḥamdānī, Ibn Naḥṣah al-Saqdlī, al-Muṣṭaḍār, and al-Raḍī and his pupil Mihyār al-Daylami. As far as al-Raḍī was concerned the influence of al-Mutanabbi 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

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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 civilized 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-Raḍī 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. In al-Raḍī's time the use of shorter and lighter metres like Hazaj, Khafif and so forth, increased and their range became larger than ever. Poets employed them in elegy, eulogy, and even sectarian religious odes. Al-Raḍī's poetry

1. Bayf al-Fann, pp. 70-71, 72-74; see also 'Inād Ghazwān īsmā'il, the Arabic qasida, its origin, characteristics and development, thesis for Ph.D., School of Oriental Studies, Durham University, 1963, p. 453.

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

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. 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-Rādi's time. Mihyār was considered a poet passionately attached to the Shī'ites. On the other side, Abū ʿAli al-Sukkārī (d. 413/1023) was

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

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

Poetical pieces, al-Saqṭū'āt al-Shi'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. Tarikh, Vol. XII, p. 17.
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 Hez 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." As for al-Raḍī, 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

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-Kāshimī (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 statements: 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.

2. Ibid., p. 3.
3. Ibid., pp. 3-20.
4. Ibid., p. 39.
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:

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

Ibn al-Hajjaj, 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.

Concerning the administrative chaos, Ibn al-Hajjaj 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:

2. Ibid., p. 33.
3. Ibid., p. 83.
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-Radi took an interest in it as well. He was on familiar terms with Ibn al-Hajjāj. He lamented on his death expressing his admiration and revealing his familiarity with the poet and his poetry.

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-Radi Abū al-Hasan Mūsawi 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. Hilāl, p. 431. See also Yatimah, Vol. III, p. 53. Note: Mez, in his interesting observations on al-Radi’s poetry suggests that in al-Radi’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-Radi 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. 374.
The second poetical group which represented the popular trend in al-Raḍī's time was called Banū Sāsān; it included Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī and al-Āḥnaf al-'Ukbārī (d. 385/995). 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.

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

2. Ibid., pp. 122-142.
3. In the Yatīmah there are many specimens of Ibn al-Hajjāj's poetry in which he reflects the influence of Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī and al-'Ukbārī. 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-\(\text{Ahnaf al-}^{'}\text{Ukbari described his homeless state as follows:}

\begin{quote}

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.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}

Al-\(^{'}\text{Ukbari composed a famous ode in which he confirmed his affiliation to Banu Sasan 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.}\(^3\)

Abu Dulaf al-Khasraji 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 'Abbasid caliph at the hand of the rough Buwayhid prince. It is a bitter reflection on the time when Abu Dulaf says:

\begin{quote}

And to us belongs the Guardian of the Faith al-Mutl, whose reputation is widespread, he bogs from Mu'izz al-Dawlah the bread as much as he can get. \(^4\)
\end{quote}

\textbf{References:

2. Ibid., p. 123.
3. Ibid., p. 132.
It is ironic that while the community at that time was immersed in heated sectarian conflict, those professional beggars took no heed of it. Moreover, they knew how to take advantage of this religious conflict. Abū Dulaf tells us that these beggars used to practise the following tricks, among others. They would collect a large crowd around them, one narrator (qāsaṣ) would take his stand at one end of the street and quote traditions regarding the excellence of 'Ali. 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 Sunnī and the Shi'i. Then they divided what they had gained. 3

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.

2. Ibid., p. 366.
CHAPTER IV

AL-RADĪ'S LIFE
Al-Raḍī and his family

Al-Raḍī's full name is as follows: Aḥšṣ al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrahim b. Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Ṭālib. He was born in 359/970. He was later well-known by his nickname al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.

His family was one of the famous ʿAlīd households at the political and religious level in Baghdad in the Buwayhid period. It was held in high esteem by caliphs, rulers, and the populace. His father al-Ḥusayn was a descendant of Muḥammad al-Kāẓim, who is considered by the Shiʿite 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. On his mother's side he was descended from Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, the fourth Imām in the ʿAlīd family tree from the twelvers' point of view. Fāṭimah, al-Raḍī's mother, was a grand-daughter of the ʿAlīd figure al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Maṣqūṭ al-Uṭrūsh. On his mother's side he was descended from Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, the fourth Imām in the ʿAlīd family tree from the twelvers' point of view. Fāṭimah, al-Raḍī's mother, was a grand-daughter of the ʿAlīd figure al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Maṣqūṭ al-Uṭrūsh. He was the famous leader in al-Daylam.

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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-Raḍī's family played an influential role in religious and political circles in the Buwayhid 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 maqābah, the high religious position of that time, seems to have been monopolised by this family. Al-Raḍī's grandfather, his mother's maternal uncle and after that his father, al-Raḍī himself, and his brother became nagīb many times as our poet recorded in his poetry.2 Although al-Raḍī 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.

This historic and glorious background which gave al-Raḍī 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-Raḍī'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.

ناَ نُمْ نَتَرَى مَرْدَى بِاللهِ نَّاَ إِمَّا فَضَرَرْنَا أَمَا لَنَا

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 Buwayhid prince Aḍūd 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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   Note: It is most likely that al-Raḍī 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 Shi'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 heir 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, Duḥra Vol. XII, 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-Raḍī’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-Tahīr “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-Raḍī 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.

Aṣlām, ma bi‘n al-mulk, wa‘n a‘lam, \(^4\)
lib wa‘n a‘lam al-‘arbā‘ al-‘arəf

As a naqīb, al-Raḍī’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.

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and ancient poetry as al-Radi tells us.  

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

His childhood

Al-Radi was the third of four children. His elder brother 'Ali was born in 355/965. One of his two sisters was called Zaynab and the other Khadijah. The elder died in 419/1028, 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.

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

4. Ibid.
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 365/976 as well on his way to Mecca. 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. 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. 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 Buwayhid prince 'Aṣūd 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

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 ḏīwān, Vol. II, pp. 131–132. Furthermore, al-Khwānsārī indicates that al-Raḍī suffered physical disease and emotional insecurity, see Rawdāt al-Jannāt, Tehran, (1307/1889), p. 576.
influential figures who may have been considered an
obstacle in his way to secure absolute authority. The
mag̲l̲āb al-Ḥusayn b. Mūsā, his brother, Abū ʿAbd-Allāh b.
Mūsā and the chief of judges Abū Muḥammad b. Maṣrūf were
at the head of this ruler's victims. They were arrested
and sent off to Fāris as prisoners, and the properties
of al-ʿAbdī's father were confiscated. The list of
unfortunate personalities who suffered under ʿAdud al-
Dawlah included the famous ʿAlīd leader Muḥammad b. ʿUmar
al-ʿAlawī who was deprived of his estates and imprisoned
in Fāris as well. The great writer and the faithful friend
of al-ʿAbdī's family Abū ʿIṣḥāq al-Ṣābī had the same fate.
He remained in prison for three years. For his release
he paid a heavy price: ʿAdud al-Dawlah compelled him to
write the history of the Būwayhid dynasty. It is said
that al-Ṣābī called it a pack of lies. 4

The years of calamity lasted until ʿAdud al-Dawlah's
death in 372/983, while their aftermath continued until
the Būwayhid ruler Sharaf al-Dawlah put an end to this
catastrophe by liberating al-ʿAbdī'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

   IV, p. 333.
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-Raḍī 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-Raḍī 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

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

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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.


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.

The misfortune of al-Raḍī's family coincided with the humiliation imposed upon its historic heritage. Aṣūd 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 Ālīd 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. 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 Fatimids, lances, swords and forearms would have been waved over him.


3. 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.
The above mentioned lines reflect two important facts. On the one hand, they make it clear that al-Raḍī'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 Fāṭimid. This sympathetic attitude appeared many times in his poetry when he felt wronged and oppressed.

As for his family's hardship at that time, it seems to have been serious. Though his mother supported him, the sad memories of those 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.

3. Ibid., p. 200.
Early stages of his education

In the years of his father's exile, Faṭīmah, 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 Imâmite theologian Muḥammad al-Muḍ'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-Fath 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 Ṭmr Ra'yatu Ṭmran by what mark is it known that Ṭmr is in the accusative case." Al-Raḍī replied, "his hatred for Ṭll". 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:


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 touted, proved worthy as prophet and regent.

Al-Rađî, in the early stages of his education became familiar with the famous philologist Ibn Jinnî who was considered a passionate advocate of al-Mutanâbbî's poetry. The teacher admired his pupil and the apprenticeship turned into intimate friendship which lasted until Ibn Jinnî's death (d. 399/1001). It is very likely that this philologist inculcated into al-Rađî the admiration of al-Mutanâbbî's poetry. In addition, al-Rađî 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. It is probable as well that al-Rađî 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

3. Dayf, al-Farrâ, p. 353. He came to the conclusion that Ibn Jinnî encouraged al-Rađî to learn al-Mutanâbbî's poetry by heart.
4. Points of similarity between al-Rađî and al-Mutanâbbî will be discussed later.
Tafsir al-alawiyyat and has not come down to us.¹

Further stages of his education

Al-Raḍi 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'anic studies. His tutors are listed as follows:

1. Abū ‘Ali al-Ḥasan b. ʿAmr al-Fārisī (d. 377/987). He was Ibn Jinni’s teacher and the famous grammarian in the fourth century. He was well-known for his Muʿtazilite leanings.² Al-Raḍi studied Kitāb al-Īdāh under his direction and drew on it in his work al-Majāzāt al-Nabawiyyah.³

2. Abū Ḥasan ‘Ali b. ‘Īsā al-Rabʾi (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-Raḍi referred to his tutor in his works.⁶

⁶ Majāzāt, pp. 67-68.
3. 'Ali b. 'Usā 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-Radī and his brother studied Arabic poetry under his care.2

5. Abū 'Ubayd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Umarān al-Marrubānī (d. 384/994). He was a Shāfi‘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-Nawaghahāf fi Ma'sākhidh al-'Ulamā' alā al-Shu'arā'. Al-Radī tells us that he studied under his supervision. He referred to his teacher's works in al-Majāzāt.4

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

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7. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Khwārizmī (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 ʿĪsā b. ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā 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 ʿUmar b. Ibrāhīm al-Kinānī (d. 390/999). He specialised in Prophetic tradition and Qurʾānic readings.5 Al-Raḍī mentioned that he had studied the different readings of the Qurʾān under his supervision.6

9. Also among his teachers was al-Muʿāfā 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 Qurʾānic studies.7 Al-Raḍī received further lessons on Qurʾānic readings under his direction.

2. Ṭalkhīs, p. 305; Majāzāt, p. 145.
10. Our poet had access to another Mālikite theologian. He was Ibrahim b. Ahmad al-Tabarî (d. 393/1003). Under his supervision al-Rādî 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 ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Ḫafānī (d. 405/1014). He was the sunnite judge of Baghdad for many years.2

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

C - Sahl b. Ahmad al-dībājī (d. 385/995).4

This list of al-Rādî'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


figures who flourished in his time. In addition, this list illustrates the point that he did not confine himself to Imāmītite tutors. Muʿtazilite, Sunnite, Mālikīte and Shāfiʿīte teachers form notable figures among those who taught him. Even some of his Imāmītite instructors had Muʿtazilite leanings. Consequently, it is most likely that the dogmatic Imāmītite doctrine which may have been implanted in his mind by his passionate Shīʿite teacher Muhammad b. al-Nuʿmān in the early stages of his education, was liable to lose its absolute sway over his thoughts and feelings. It is clear that al-ʿAḍud 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

ʿAḍud al-Dawlah's régime which rode roughshod over al-ʿAḍud's family, apparently ended in 372/982, but its aftermath lasted for another four years. However, the announcement of ʿAḍud al-Dawlah's death gave our poet and his family limited relief. His father was released from his prison, but stayed in Fars with the Buwaysid prince Sharaf al-Dawlah who had liberated him. In Baghdad, Šamām al-Dawlah succeeded his father. Consequently, the supporters of the brutal régime still held power. al-ʿAḍud 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 ʿAḍud 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.

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-Ṭaʾī in 374/984. 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

2. Ibid., p. 186.
began. 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 indispensible to rulers. On the other hand, he attacked his political enemies, exposing their incompetence and the moral decline of their conduct. 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. Ardachīr, Abū Manṣūr b. Ṣāliḥān, Abū Saʿd b. Khalaf and Abū ʿAli al-Mūwaffaq. The Caliph al-Taʾī and the Buwayhid prince Sharaf al-Dawlah received many praising odes. By such constant efforts al-Radī 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. Al-Radī's father seems to have pinned high hopes on his younger son whose ambitious personality made itself felt and whose qualifications were evident. Al-Radī

1. Dhayl, p. 140; Ath. Vol. VII, p. 131. In al-Radī's Diwān one of the explanatory preface of his odes suggests the year 386/996. This date seems to be inaccurate for two reasons. Firstly, al-Radī 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.


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-Ta'bî' became clear as his odes reveal to us. 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-Ta'bî' 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.

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

3. Ibid., pp. 52-54.
important personalities. In his ode to the vizier Abu 'Ali 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.


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-Murtada and al-Raḍī became acting naqīb on their father's behalf. 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-Ta'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.

However, his isolation from the political scene was short-lived. Soon after al-Ṭābi‘ī’s dethronement he began to look forward to having access to the palace again. Meanwhile, he began to pin high hopes on the Buwayhid 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. When his father was sent to Fāris as an envoy to make peace between the armies of Ṣamṣān al-Dawlah and Bahā’ al-Dawlah, and kept there, al-Raḍī 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.

The year 384/994 witnessed a great crisis affecting al-Raḍī’s family. His father was deposed from his position and his two sons were consequently dismissed. Al-Hasayn 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

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 Buwayhid ruler was away from the capital. 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).

On the second occasion al-Rāḍī pretended that he gave no heed to the loss of his position as a naqīb. 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.

In this period in which al-Ḥadhīl underwent harsh and difficult experiences, his relationships with the Caliph al-Qādir, who assumed the caliphate in 381/991, appeared to worsen. Al-Rāḍī 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.

Furthermore, he seriously upset him by mentioning the Fatimid caliph of Egypt who threatened the legitimacy of the caliph of

3. Ibid., p. 544.
Baghdad. In one of his odes he voiced his loyalty to the Fatimids 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.

The Caliph al-Qādir, on hearing these attacking verses summoned al-Raḍāl’s father and blamed him for his son’s attitude. Al-Raḍāl’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 Fatimids when his family received a heavy blow under 'Aqūd al-Dawlah’s régime. However, al-Raḍāl was no longer concerned over his relationship with the Caliph al-Qādir. Later he attached himself to his patron Bahā’ al-Dawlah

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-Raḍî and his family as a whole. The caliph's attitude was unfriendly and al-Raḍî'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 Diwan reflects. He did not praise the caliph from 384/994 onwards. Later his relationship with Bahāʾ al-Dawlah suffered hard conditions in 388/998. In the following year al-Raḍî 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. 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. He made another three journeys, two being to Mecca in 392/1001 and 394/1003 and the other to 'Ali's tomb in Kūfah.

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

3. Ibid., p. 702.
Diwān 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 ʿAbū ʿAlī al-Ḥuwaffaq. In this ode al-ʿRāḍī 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 Diwān illustrates, was about twenty-four odes consisting of elegy and self-pride.

Al-ʿRāḍī, 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 Kaʿb al-ʿAmīrī. Al-ʿRāḍī identified him as Abū

al-‘Amâm and Ibn Laylî. Al-Raḍî and Ibn Laylî 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. It was the first time that al-Raḍî tried to put his ambitious aim into reality, as we shall see later.

Al-Raḍî the ambitious politician

Al-Raḍî’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 his dream and came down to reality. They state that one of his intimate friends, Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣābî made him believe that he was qualified to be caliph. Al-Ṣâbî predicted al-Raḍî’s future from the stars, coming to the conclusion that he would assume the highest position. It is difficult to pinpoint the time when this event took place. However, al-Ṣâbî was imprisoned till 376/986 and the first friendly correspondence between him and al-Raḍî had begun by this year. The important poetical letter sent by al-Ṣâbî to his friend runs as follows:


O, Abu Hasan 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.

In al-Râdî's reply he promised his friend that he would requite al-Sâbî'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.

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

many factors which contributed to laying the foundation of his high aspirations: his Shīʿite background, the historic glory which he inherited as an ʿAlid 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-Ḥāfiẓ’s mysterious prediction. From his poetry it can be assumed that his aspiration emerged early in his life. 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.

Al-Raḍī 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 Diwan reveals that

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 Hamdānid and the ʿUqaylid rulers, both having Shiʿite tendencies and representing notable tribal powers at that time. 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. Yet he did not take the first step towards putting his plan into action.

His acquaintance with the bedouin leader ʿAbū al-ʿAwwām led to the appearance of his aspiration in a practical form. This propagandist, 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 ʿAbū al-ʿAwwām and later on killed him. Our poet, as he indicates in his poetry, received a heavy blow from this which rendered him sad and disillusioned. Although he did not completely identify his friend, he praised his loyalty, courage and forebearance and lamented his death in many odes.

2. Ibid., p. 55, 114, 216, 220, 225.
3. Ibid., p. 182.
4. Ibid., pp. 183, 431.
5. Ibid., p. 447.
one of his dirges he says:

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

尉 نم هبَلَ الَّذَيْنَ لَهُ هَيْنَ لَهُنَّ
منْ يَسَ عُلُوَّ الَّذِينَ رَأَتْهُمْ

However, this disenchantment drove al-Radī 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-Radī's professional career

In the year 394/1003 Bahā' al-Dawlah once again appointed al-Radī'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 qādi through the refusal of the Caliph al-Qādir to sanction it.³ It is probable that the caliph's unfriendly attitude was due in part to al-Radī's stubborn behaviour which brought the family into al-Qādir's disfavour, as we have already seen. At that time al-Radī began to move from the shadow to the limelight again. He tried to strengthen his relationships with the Buwayhid 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

to his patron Bahāʾ al-Dawlah as a last resort of his hopes. From the year 394/1003 till 403/1013 he devoted his poetry to praising the Buwayhid prince. He lavished twenty praise-odes on him, to prove his loyalty and sincerity. Bahāʾ al-Dawlah conferred many honorable titles in return. 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 Diwan appears to indicate, he ignored him entirely.

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

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

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. 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 'Abbāsid which no 'Alid had previously worn. As Mez observed, with this step al-Raḍī, who relinquished his claim to the caliphate, declared himself defeated.

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

3. Mez, pp. 153, 272. In his opinion, al-Raḍī was the first 'Alid 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 'Abbāsid courtier and official. See Jaw. Vol. VII, p. 360.
Diwān indicates. He requested the Buwayhid 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 unlived by the ‘Alids. Bahā al-Dawlah refused to accept his resignation.

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. At that time al-Raḍī retired from political life and became silent. It seems he was tired and ill. The Buwayhid 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.

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

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.

Al-Raḍī's untimely death occurred in 406/1015. His elder brother al-Sharīf al-Murtada 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 Imam Mūsā al-Kāsim 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-Murtada. 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 Mihyar al-Daylamī

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

Al-Radî was buried in his own home,² but his remains were, however, removed later on to Karbalâ³. He left behind him his only son called 'Adnân, who, according to Ibn Athîr⁴'s account, was born in 400/1009. He was of great importance and held with high respect by rulers. He succeeded his uncle al-Mustaḍâ in assuming the headship of the 'Alids.⁵ Unfortunately, we have no information concerning the rest of al-Radî's family.

His personality and character

Al-Radî 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.⁶ 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:

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I know not obscenity except by its description.
I utter nothing offensive when I am in anger.

In his Diwan 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-Radi's house, the vizier Fakhr al-Mulk sent him 1000 dinars. Al-Radi would not accept it. The vizier sent it again as a gift for the nurses. Al-Radi 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. On another occasion, al-Radi's teacher Ibrāhīm b. Ahmad al-Ṭabarī presented him with a house. Al-Radi did not accept the gift, claiming that he did not receive presents except from his father. However,

2. Ibn al-Hadīd, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 13. Compare with Jamal al-Millah op. cit., p. 184. See also Margoliouth, op. cit., intro. p. XIII. The author suggests that the vizier was Sābūr b. Ardashır. However, we have no evidence to support his assumption.
he eventually acquiesced. 1

It is worth noting that behind this splendid picture of al-Ra‘î, 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-Ra‘î 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. 3 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.

وَالنَّفْسُ فِي الْأَهْلِ الْإِفْرَادِ

3

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

3. Ibid., p. 167.
They said meeting people brings comfort and ease.
Had I found satisfaction with people
I would not have been alone.

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.

Al-Radi 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.

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

Al-Radi failed to keep a balance between his ideal world and reality when he sometimes tried to put his unrealistic principles into practice as a naqib. 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-Radi 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-Radi reproached her saying, "Did you imagine you were complaining to a schoolmaster?" 3

Al-Radi 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

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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. However, his readiness to paint a favourable picture of the evil face of Bahāʾ 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 Imāmīte family. In addition, Muḥammad al-Nuʾmān, the passionate and dogmatic Imāmīte advocate was the first to teach him the principles of Islam and theology according to Shiʿite doctrine. In his further education he became acquainted with teachers of different Islamic sects of whom some were Muʿtazilites 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 development of his

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

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

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.


2. Ibn Taḥrī Bardī, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 56; see also Shihāb al-dīn Ahmad b. Ṭāhir al-ʿAṣqilānī, Lisān al-Mīzān, Hyderabad, 1331/1912, Vol. V, p. 141. Note: The term Rāfiḍah was used to identify the Imámites 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 caliph Abu Bakr and 'Umar and declare them unjust to 'Alī. He refused to do so. There upon they deserted him and called them 'deserters' or Rāfiḍah, see Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, al-Parq bayn al-firaq, Cairo, 1910, pp. 24-35.

without the help of any instruments. Consequently, the Mu'tazilites were called the people of justice and unity. Ahl al-'Adl wa al-Tawhīd.  

Al-Radi in one of his praise odes appreciated al-Sāhib b. 'Abbād's adoption of Mu'tazilite tendencies as a method of defending the religion of Islam against the unbelievers. 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.

Al-Radi appears to have been Imāmite 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 Imāmite, 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-Mahdi's return". In Imāmite doctrine this Imām would come out of his concealment to spread justice over the world.

3. Majāzāt, pp. 11, 190-191; see Talkhīṣ, pp. 34, 36, 68.
adopted the Zaydite's attitude, which was based on the idea that 'Ali leaders should carry on their revolution against the usurpers and regain their legitimate right to the caliphate. Al-Radl, as we have already seen, claimed to be caliph.

Generally speaking, al-Radl seems to be broadminded concerning the historic question of the caliphate which divided the Muslims for many centuries. Although he believed that 'Ali was the most competent to hold this religious position, he avoided voicing his ill-feeling towards the other Orthodox Caliphs as his pupil Mihyār did in his poetry. On this point al-Radl came nearer to the Zaydites who concluded that the caliphs who assumed power before 'Ali were legitimate. Al-Radl never contested the legitimacy of those caliphs in his Shi'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. However, it is difficult to accept such an assumption for two important reasons. First of all, al-Radl himself admitted that he was Imāmite, and like other Imāmites he believed in the superiority of 'Ali who was nominated by the Prophet to be his successor.

3. 'Abd al-qāhir, op. cit., p. 35.
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-Hasan and al-Ḥusayn who unsheathed his sword and summoned the faithful (al-Ummah), was to be considered Imām.²

Al-Radi, 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 ʿAbbāsid caliph, calling him his Imām,³ the term which was confined in the Imāmite view to ʿAlī and his successors. In his poetry he recognised the legality of the Ismāʿilite 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 Shiʿite sects. In addition, there is no doubt about his admiration of the Muʿtazilite 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.
His works

Al-Raḍī worked vigorously during the short period of his life. Although he was exhausted by his demanding position as a naqib 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. 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 Diwān which has been printed many times. His books may be listed as follows:

1. Sirat al-Tāhir: this book is a biography of his father in which al-Raḍī, 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. Khaṣṣ 'ṣa al-Ā'immah: al-Raḍī 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-Ṭehrānī, the manuscript of this book is

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available in Najaf and Teheran. He became acquainted with it by looking through the introduction which was written by al-Radi. According to al-Tehrani this work contains a biographical survey of the twelve Imam, including their careers, talents, dates of birth and death. Al-Radi 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-Imam 'Ali's sermons and sayings and began to collect them.

3. Haqiq al-ta'wil fi Mutasababah al-tanzil: al-Radi in this book discussed the obscure Qur'anic 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.

4. Talkhis al-Bayan fi Majazat al-Qur'an: in this work the author traced the metaphorical figures in the Qur'an. He composed it in 401/1010 as he indicates on its closing page.

5. Ma'ani al-Qur'an: Ibn Khalikân related that al-Radi "composed a work on the rhetorical figures of the Qur'an."

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. This book was mentioned many times in Arab historical sources. Unfortunately it has not come down to us.

6. Al-Majāzāt al-Nabawīyah: the author in this work selected 361 prophetic traditions, analyzing 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.

7. Taqāliq Khiļāf 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.


As we have mentioned before, studied Kitāb al-ʿIḍāh 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 Shiʿr al-Husayn: In this work the

1. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 120.
author made a large selection of the decent verse of Ibn al-Ra‘i who specialised in obscene verse. Al-Ra‘i arranged this poetical selection in alphabetical order.

10. Ḍākarāt qudāt Baḥdhād: This work was mentioned by Arab biographers, but it has not come down to us. There is no information concerning its exact content.

11. Mukhtār Shī‘r Abī Ishāq al-Ṣābī: the title indicates that al-Ra‘i made a selection of his friend’s poetry. The work has not come down to us.

12. al-Ziyādāt fī Shī‘r Abī Tammām: this book is lost. However, it was mentioned in many historical sources.

13. Rasā‘il al-Sharīf al-Ra‘i: 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-Ra‘i.

14. Judging from the account of Ibn ‘Umar al-Irbillī, it is possible that al-Ra‘i made a poetical selection

concentrating on verses of wisdom and proverbs. Ibn 'Umar says that he made a summary of al-Radi's works.¹

15. **Nahj al-Balaghah:** this work is supposed to be the sayings, letters, and sermons of the Imam 'Ali which were collected and arranged by al-Radi. Arab historians, ancient and modern, and orientalists, disagree on the genuineness of this book. Ibn Khallikän was the first to suspect the authenticity of **Nahj al-Balaghah.** He says:

"It is a controversial point whether the book entitled **Nahj al-Balaghah** "highroad of precision in discourse", and containing a collection of sayings of the Imam 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, was compiled by al-Nustadâ or his brother al-Radi; it has been even stated that these sayings were never uttered by 'Ali, and that the person who collected them and attributed them to the Imam was himself the author of them; of this God is the best judge."²

Those who followed in the footsteps of Ibn Khallikän in his suspicion were many. Amongst them were: al-Safadi in his work **al-Wafi³** and Ibn Taymiyyah who states that all the literary and historical works that appeared before al-Radi's time are devoid of much of what was mentioned in **Nahj al-Balaghah.**⁴

Shi'ite biographers ancient and modern are of the opinion that **Nahj al-Balaghah** is genuine and that there

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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-Radī'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 Shi'ites' view there is no reason to suspect al-Radī's account and accuse him of forgery.¹

Some orientalists and modern Arab scholars who discussed the question of the Nahj thought that it was compiled by al-Murtada or by both al-Radī and his brother, and attributed to 'Ali.² However, there are no grounds for forming the opinion that the Nahj was written or collected by al-Murtada. In addition, there is no reason to suppose that he participated with his brother al-Radī in collecting the Imam 'Ali's sayings, letters and sermons. Al-Radī 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 Talkhis al-bayān and the second al-Majāzāt.³ Furthermore, in his


Introduction to the Nahj he confirmed that he came across 'Ali's sayings and sermons when he was compiling his first book Khaza'ın al-A'mmah. He carried on his work until 400/1009 in which year he completed it. However, al-Ra'di tells us that he did not scrutinise and test his materials cautiously and carefully. He accepted different versions and accounts of 'Ali's sayings without further investigation or checking. 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 Diwân.  

3. Historical observations will be given on al-Ra'di's Diwân in Chapter V, see below.
PART II

AL-RADI'S POETRY
CHAPTER V

HISTORICAL OBSERVATIONS
ON
AL-RAḌĪ' S DĪḤĀN
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-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād (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-Murtada 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.

3. Ibid., p. 502.
As we have already said, it is difficult to form a clear idea about the first arrangement of al-Radi's poetical collection made during his lifetime. However, al-Hurtasah tells us that he found one of al-Radi's odes rhymed with bu in the second volume of this Diwan. This indicates that the alphabetical order was not applied by al-Radi. So it is possible that the odes were arranged according to their dates or themes.¹

After al-Radi's death "different persons" as Ibn Khallikân states "have essayed to collect the poetical works of al-Sharîf al-Radi, but the best edition is that of Abû Hâkim al-Khâbri (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-Radi's Diwan have come down to us, some of them versions of Abu Hakim'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 Aghâ Bozork al-Ţehrâni, who specialised in Shi'ite works in the course of Islamic history, acquainted himself with three handwritten copies of al-Radi's Diwan, one of which was written in 515/1121. The odes were

1. I. 'Abbâs, al-Sharîf al-Radi, p. 64.
arranged according to their themes and the poems of each theme were disposed alphabetically. A similar arrangement was adopted in a version which was a copy of Abū Ḥakim's original version. On the first page, it was stated that "this is the third volume of al-Radī's poetry arranged according to the themes and alphabetically. It was made by Abū Ḥakim al-Kharī."  

It is very likely that Abū Ḥakim's arrangement of al-Radī'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 Ḥakim arranged the odes according to their themes as follows:

1. The first section contains eulogy.
2. The second comprises al-Radī'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 (maqāḥāt).

In the printed versions of al-Radī's Diwān, the odes are arranged alphabetically, but some signs of the original order made by Abū Ḥakim and those who followed him can be

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 Hakim's version, which became a reliable source to many copyists, is of great importance. He made his own commentary on some of al-Raḍî's odes giving interesting detail concerning the occasion for which they were written. What he collected from al-Raḍî'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-Raḍî had tried to discard from his final copy. ²

As for the authenticity of al-Raḍî's Diwan 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

2. al-Raḍî, Diwan, Bibl. Nat. MS no. 6440, fol. 19, 110, 133, 140; see also 'Abbâs, al-Sharîf al-Raḍî, p. 65.
manuscripts at present extant, but the explanatory preface 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 **Diwān** have been consulted, in writing the present thesis:

1. The first volume of al-Raḍī's **Diwān** 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 375 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-Ḥakīm's version.

2. Al-Raḍī's **Diwān** which is in Istanbul (Köprülu no. 1242). This copy contains the complete **Diwān** with the additional poetical pieces and individual lines which were found after al-Raḍī's death. The folios of this copy number 235. It was written by Abū Mansūr Abū al-Barakāt al-Madīnī in 668/1369.

3. The third part of al-Raḍī's **Diwān** (British Museum no. 19410). This copy was made according to Abū Ḥakīm's version. It was written by Yūqūt al-Mustaʿsimī in 1018/1610. It contains 132 folios.

4. The fourth manuscript is (British Museum no. Add.

¹ al-Raḍī, **Diwān**, Bibl. Nat. MS fol. 19; see also Köprülu MS no. 1342; see D. R. Vol. I, p. 33.
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 ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bahrānī in
1090/1679. The odes are arranged alphabetically.

The Diwān has been published many times, the first
case being in 1306/1888. This edition contains 549
pages filled with misprints and mis-spellings. In
addition, many odes were printed in incomplete. 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 ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥillī. 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 ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd but he did not mention
on which manuscripts or published copies he depended.

However, there is no difference between these three editions.

2. al-Raḍī, Diwān, published by Dār al-Bayān in Tehran,
1964. In this study 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-Raḍi's odes which are undated in the printed version are furnished with dates in the manuscripts. In addition the handwritten copies can be used to correct the dates suggested in the published edition. One of al-Raḍi's odes, for instance, was dated 396/1005. It was written to console the Caliph al-Tābi', 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. 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


the complete poetical collection of al-Raḍī’s poetry.¹

Al-Raḍī’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 Buwayhid 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 Buwayhid’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-Raḍī’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-Raḍī examined two other manuscripts which exist in Muhammad Shākir’s private library. He concluded that there is no difference between these manuscripts and the published Diwān. See his work, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, p. 65.
divided according to their themes as follows: Eulogy 100, self-pride 83, Blegy 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. Eulogy 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-RADI'S EULOGY

And this is my praise, in it I seek no fortune. Glory forbade me to make a living out of eulogy.

فزعا فلا التأريذ به الفن
أني الحاكر في أنّا مسلّم عقالي

al-Radi
1 - General Remarks

Sylogy is one of the important ancient themes in Arabic poetry. Poets began composing it as early as the Jähilite period. They first were recognized 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 Jähilite 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. Al-Mabighah al-Dhubyānī and al-ʿAṣhā al-Kabir were considered the first of the Jähilite poets to sell their praises and lower their standards by flattering kings and asking their rewards. Al-Mabighah was said to have reaped rich prizes for his praises. As for al-ʿAṣhā, 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.

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 Umayyade poetry in general

and eulogy and satire in particular were given a free

rein and the poets who followed al-Mūbīghaḥ and al-A'ṣhā in their profession were innumerable. The three famous poets al-Parāzdaq, 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. Poets who refrained from lauding the great became, to some extent, exceptional. Among them were 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah and Jamīl Buthaynah who composed nothing but love poetry. In addition, there were a few committed poets who adhered to political or religious sects and refused to praise rulers. The Khūrījītī poets were a case in point.  

Poets in the 'Abbāsid 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 themlavishly. 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

against this trend. Among them were 'Abd Allah b. al-Mu'tazz in the third Islamic century (d. 296/908) and the Ḥamānid prince Abū Firūz al-Ḥamāni (d. 357/968). In al-Raḍī's time Abū al-'Alāʾ al-Maʿarri refused to write poetry professionally and eventually confined himself in solitude. Al-Raḍī belongs to the same class.

In the Dīwān of al-Raḍī, 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.

In this respect al-Raḍī 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. In addition, the poet regarded his poetry as a means to an end, making use of it in his political life as a weapon

2. Margoliouth, Letters, p. XXVII.
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.

Al-Kadl 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'an's statement in which poets were denounced as liars inspired by the devil. 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 its sins.

Al-Rađī, 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. However, the poet was, to some extent,


2. In the Qur'an 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.


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-Raḍī'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-Raḍī's poetical career is the span of his first stage. It began in the year 369/979.

3 - The stage of Imitation

The first difficulty in tracing the course of al-Raḍī'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-Thālibi in his Yatīmah states that al-Raḍī borrowed his poetical meanings from al-Buḥṭūrī, Ibn al-Rāmī and al-Ḳutṭānī.1 However, it is likely that the poet drew on Jahilite and early Islamic poetry in his eulogy and other themes. He himself likened

his skill to that of the Jähilite poet Zuhayr.¹ In addition, there are points of similarity between al-Raḍī and Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī's poetry.² As for Abū Tammām's poetry its artistic impact on al-Raḍī 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-tībāq (antithesis), and al-mugābalah (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 tībāq 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-Raḍī's eulogy. His odes abound with Jinās and tībāq. In addition, remote and complicated metaphors

made their appearance. In one of his odes which was written when he was about eleven years old, he used Jīmāṣ and Tibāq twenty five times. In one line of this ode he equated six of these ornamental forms. In another ode which was written in 376/985 when the poet was about sixteen years old, he seems to be still obsessed with poetic embellishment. He used Tibāq and Jīmāṣ twenty seven times in this ode and overloaded it with many complicated and tasteless metaphors. 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 تَفْعَّليُّي ماءً بالذَّيْنَى، وَأَطَرأَتْيُمَّي ماءً بالحَمِيمَيْنَ

When al-Rāḍī 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.


2. Ibid., pp. 216-220.

It is clear that al-Raḍī filled the above-mentioned line with ḥammā and sāmū. 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.

Another point of similarity between ʿAbū Tammām's poetry and al-Raḍī's is the use of historical references in their composition. This artistic characteristic made its appearance early in al-Raḍī'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-Raḍī failed to make use of his historical erudition artistically as ʿAbū Tammām did, he succeeded in using these historical references to support the arguments which he tried to put forward.

The second poetical source from which al-Raḍī borrowed his meanings, and to some extent, on which some of his odes were modelled, is al-Buḥṭūrī's poetry. Although the influence of this poet is less important

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. Al-Radī, for instance, took one of al-Buḥturi's meanings and tried to improve upon it. Al-Buḥturi says:

And if the minbar should desire to undertake a task beyond its power; it would come to you of its own accord. 2

It is clear that al-Buḥturi'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.

The most important poetical source from which al-Radī drew his inspiration was al-Mutanabbi's poetry. A close examination of their Diwāns reveals to us how closely al-Radī followed al-Mutanabbi's model and how he drew upon his meanings and imitated his poetical method.


The introductory lines which al-Mutanabbi used were imitated by our poet. When al-Raḍī modelled his odes on those of al-Mutanabbi he applied the same metre and rhyme-letter as well. In addition, al-Mutanabbi's spirit with its dark outlook and his sharp comments on people, rulers and life in general infiltrated al-Raḍī's poetry. He found much in common with this leading poet.

Al-Raḍī, in his imitation of al-Mutanabbi, went to the length of paraphrasing the meanings of his favourite poet and many times repeated them. In one of al-Raḍī's odes which was written in his early life he borrowed the idea of one of al-Mutanabbi's opening lines and used it with slight alteration. Al-Mutanabbi 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.

Al-Raḍī's two lines are as follows:

Those 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.

2. The two lines were quoted from Arberry, Poems of al-Mutanabbi, p. 83.
In al-Raḍī's odes in which he praised al-Ṣāhib b. ʿAbbād in 375/985 many of its meanings can be traced back to one or other of al-Mutanabbi’s odes. The following line may illustrate the clear-cut points of similarity between them. Al-Raḍī says:

From your closeness I hope for an action with which to infuriate the envious collectively and individually.

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.

It is clear that al-Raḍī looked at al-Mutanabbi'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. Arberry, Poems of al-Mutanabbi, p. 82.
Al-Mutanabbi 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‘alibi’s view, al-Mutanabbi distinguished his panegyrical odes by addressing his praised kings as though they were his beloved.¹ In one of al-Mutanabbi’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

This expression of allegiance took place in al-Radi’s early panegyrical composition and lasted to the stage of maturity when it became an established aspect of his eulogy.³ In one of his odes in which al-Radi praised the Caliph al-Ṭā‘i in the manner of al-Mutanabbi 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.

In another ode al-Raḍī 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.

It is worthwhile to analyse the artistic structure and the internal harmony of al-Raḍī'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-Raḍī dropped the amatory preface (nasīḥ) 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. 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-Raḍī returned to praise his

2. Ibid., pp. 236-240.
patron and closed his ode with lines relating to his wisdom. 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-Mutanabbi'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. 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. 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.

3 - The Stage of Maturity

To deal with al-Raḍī's panegyrical odes of this stage, it is convenient to examine and analyze 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 lifetime 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, docency, 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-Dawla who was described as a greatly parsimonious and tyrannical ruler, has an illustrious picture in al-Raḍī's praises.² Moreover, the Buwayhid 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 Buwayh; 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.

It is ironical that the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Qādir who suffered a great deal of encroachment at the hand of the Buwayhid 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.

2. Ibid., p. 731, 783, among others. 
In the light of what we have already mentioned and cited, al-Raḍī's panegyrical odes are to some extent misleading in their information and their historical value must be treated cautiously. Al-Raḍī, for instance, mentioned a certain rebellious movement which took place in Bahāʾ al-Dawlah's time. It emerged in al-Baṣrah and al-Ahwāz under the leadership of Abū al-Abbās b. Wāṣil who occupied a large amount of territory of southern Iraq and brought trouble to Bahāʾ al-Dawlah. He defeated many expeditions sent by the Buwayhid ruler till the rebellious leader was captured by a trap laid by Bahāʾ al-Dawlah's supporters. Yet in al-Raḍī's panegyrical odes Ibn Wāṣil was timid, ungrateful and treacherous. The defeat of Bahāʾ al-Dawlah's armies was portrayed as a great victory which was celebrated by al-Raḍī in many odes.

Broadly speaking, the poet distinguished himself in his praise from other professional poets by two characteristics. First of all, al-Raḍī utilised his panegyrical odes to serve his aim. Consequently, the political function

1. Dhayl, p. 217, the lines were slightly modified.
and implication of these odes is clear. It gave them vitality and made them interesting despite their contradiction with historical sources and also their overestimation 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 roles and activity. The other distinguishing aspect of al-Raḍī’s praises is that unlike the majority of Arab poets at least in his time, al-Raḍī’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-Mutanabbi, but al-Raḍī outdid al-Mutanabbi 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. 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:

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.

It is surprising that al-Raḍī used the same manner of address when he praised his maternal uncle who became annoyed and upset by al-Raḍī's hint of challenge to his own status. The poet found himself compelled to apologise for the implication of his ode. However, al-Raḍī 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.

Al-Raḍī's excessive self-praise was toned down in all the odes devoted to his patron Bahā' al-Dawla. 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

to live up. However, he had realized 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 Buwayhid 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.

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.

As for the artistic structure of al-Radi'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

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 summarized 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 (najib) 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 mens' 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 Madih." 1

The major part of panegyrical odes in the Jähilite 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. As for the 'Abbasid period, a close examination of the diwāns of the outstanding poets Abū Tammām, al-Buḥtūrî, and al-Mutanabbi 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. 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-Buḥtūrî, 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. 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. The second was the description of

lightning (al-marq) which was often compared to the
smile of the beloved. Al-Buhturi used such description
as the whole erotic preface in some of his odes and
dropped the other parts of the traditional preface.\(^1\)
Al-Mutanabbi in the manner of his predecessors con-
centrated 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 \textit{nasib} he decided to break with
this convention.\(^4\)

\begin{quote}
Al-Radi 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-Radi imitated the established traditional method.
Like al-Mutanabbi, he began his praise directly in some
of his odes, in others he spoke about his bravery and
\end{quote}

\begin{enumerate}
\item D. M. Vol. I, p. 61, Vol. III, pp. 140, 455, Vol. IV,
p. 59.
pp. 89, 123.
\item D. M. Vol. IV, p. 89.
\end{enumerate}
courage. In addition, he pursued al-Buṭṭuri's method in describing lightning (al-Burq) 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-Raḍī's introductory nasīb and the description of his beloved's phantom was applied as an erotic prelude as well.¹

Al-Raḍī's contribution to the development of the poetical prelude and panegyric 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 panegyric 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 Ḳhūrāsān. 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-‘Aqlq:
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

² Mez., p. 274.
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.

Al-Raḍī 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 Jāhiliite 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 —

Such sorts of oath became common from the Islamic period onwards. However, al-Raḍī dealt with them in a different way. He enlarged and enriched them. He began to swear

3. Arberry, Arabic poetry, p. 36; 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 Hijazite 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. It is possible that the frequent use of this artistic method is due in part to al-Rađī's acquaintance with desert life through his journeys to Mecca.

Al-Rađī 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-Rađī's panegyric. He was on the side of al-Mutanabbi who was fond of using such sorts of expression as poetical epilogues to his panegyrical odes. 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. Al-Rađī seems to be in line with

the critics' request, while al-Mutanabbi used such expressions indiscriminately. Al-Radī, in praising Bahāʾ 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.

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.

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. 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.

Broadly speaking, poetical friendly correspondence and congratulatory odes were considered a part of panegyric. But as Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī suggests, they did not occur in the Ḥā hilite 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 panegyrical 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-Tha‘alībī 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

Al-Raḍī 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-Raḍī exchanged much poetical correspondence with his brother al-Mustaḍāʿ and his firm friend Abū Iṣḥāq al-Qābī. They applied the same metres and rhyme letters. 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. It is interesting to note that the birth of a daughter was a suitable occasion in al-Raḍī's eyes for congratulation. The poet wrote two odes to his brother in which he celebrated the day of his daughter's birth.

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.

إِلَّا نَاسِبَةٍ جَدًّا يَدُانُونَهَا بِلَوْرَةٍ

A close examination of al-Raḍī's friendly poetical

3. Ibid., pp. 243, 359.
4. Ibid., p. 245; see Nez, pp. 364-365.
correspondence and other relating to the Xkhwa'miyyat 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 severances. His relationship with his brother al-Murtada 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.

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.

Such a firm relationship between al-Radi and al-Qabiti is natural owing to the fact that the latter encouraged his friend’s aspiration to be caliph and overestimated his qualifications. However, al-Radi had another longstanding friend called al-Batti. He was a boon companion of al-Radi. The poet tells us that he was very eager for his friend’s company and often invited him to attend his assembly. Al-Radi seems anxious and cautious to maintain a smooth relationship with al-Batti. When lapses occurred he tried to bring the condition back to normal. It is interesting that al-Radi, 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.

In general the Ikhwāniyyāt in al-Rādī’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.

I aspired to honours, but they repelled my advances; the beloved always repels the lover.

al-Radi
1 - General remarks

The words 'glory' or 'boasting' (fakhr) and 'bravery' or 'chivalry' (hamāsah) 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. Hamāsah has the meaning of courage, fighting and chivalry. Some Arab anthologists who took an interest in collecting and choosing poetical anthologies often applied the word hamāsah 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 'hamāsah' to that Arabic poetry which has a close connection with tribal war, fanaticism, description of the battlefield, bravery, chivalry, endurance and other warlike virtues. In the manner of Abū Tammām, al-Buhturi and Ibn al-Shajari (d. 542/1147) among others applied the term hamāsah to their anthologies.


As for Arab critics, they almost all preferred to use the word *fakhr* - 'pride' or 'self-praise'. When Ibn Sallām al-Jumāhī (d. 251/866) enumerated the major poetical themes in Arab poetry he mentioned self-praise among them. Other critics distinguished this established theme but they made it clear that there was no difference between self-praise (*fakhr*) and eulogy (*Mādiḥ*) save that the poet in self-praise confined his praise to himself. Those critics did not mention the *hamāṣah*. 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. This means that they applied the word *fakhr* in its broadest sense. It is very likely that the *hamāṣah* 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 *hamāṣah* and *fakhr*. Some of them consider the *hamāṣah* 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 *hamāṣah* had a vast and an expanding meaning covering some aspects of different


poetical themes. However, it is possible to draw a
distinction between these inter-related words fakhār
and hamāsah. Self-praise (fakhār) is one of the estab-
lished 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 (fakhār) 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 Jahilite 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'allagāt
shows us that poets of ignorance spoke proudly of their

1. Ahmad Badawi, Usus al-Maqd al-Adabi 'ind al-'Arab,
Cāiro, 3rd edn. 1964, p. 286-289; Shalash op. cit.,
p. 142; Hānā' Fakhūrī, al-Fakhār 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 clan's glorious deeds and fame. In the *Mu'allaqah* of 'Amr b. Kulthum, al-Harith b. 'Hilizah 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. 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. 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

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1. *Mu'allaqat*, pp. 105-109, 110, 139-144
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 'Abbasid 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 Bashshār b. Burd in the early 'Abbasid 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 'Abbasid poets Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturi amongst others took pride in their poetical talent, intellect, wisdom and continuous and

2. Shalajsho, _op. cit._, pp. 7–8.
3. 'Alī Mihyār, p. 344.
prolonged travels which they made to earn a living. In their praise there is a sort of war-poetry when they celebrated their lords' courage, fighting and firmness on the battle fields. In general, these two poets did not engage themselves in self-praise. Al-Buhturi composed only three odes devoted to praising himself and his tribe, 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.

The fourth Islamic century witnessed the revival of self-praise and war-poetry at the hand of al-Mutanabbi and Abū Pirās al-Ḥamānī. 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-Mutanabbi, as he tells us, accompanied his lord Sayf al-Dawlah in his fighting and Abū Pirās was one of the Ḥamānī war-leaders. He was captured on the battlefield and imprisoned. The


period of his imprisonment gave birth to a unique theme in his poetry known as al-Mumiyût. In general, al-Mutanabbi and Abû Firûs in their self-praise used the traditional method of boasting of tribal deeds and warlike virtues. In addition, al-Mutanabbi 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. 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-Râdi’s self-praise

Al-Râdi, 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

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 (hamēkah) an interesting aspect of his self-praise.

It is natural to a man like al-Rādī 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-Rādī'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. Even in his love-poetry, in which poets should be tender and subservient, al-Rādī did not cease to boast of his deeds and valour.

Al-Rādī 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.

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, (nasāb). In other odes al-Raḍī entered upon his basic subject directly. The poetical pictures, metaphors and similes were drawn from desert life. Although al-Raḍī's odes in self-praise were overloaded with repetition and cliches, 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-Mutanabbi. Points of similarity can be found between al-Raḍī and ʿAntarah, Ṭarafah and ʿAmr b. Kulthūm. In addition, he did not escape the influence of other poets like Bashshar b. Burd, Abū Tammām, Abū Firās and Ibn Nubātah. However, al-Mutanabbi's poetry was one of al-Raḍī's favourite sources for his self-praise. Points of identity between them are many.

2. Ibid., pp. 805, 835.
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. But they differed later on; whereas al-Mutanabbi 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-Mutanabbi 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.

Here they differed again. Al-Mutanabbi 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


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-Raḍi 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.

ライライ ليل أتري لد آهان به
١ ٢ ٣

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.

مالي لا أبغع عن بلدة ترى في كربه هادي
١ ٢ ٣

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.

2. Ibid., p. 239.
Ho says:

Ho are in the midst of a band who regards oppression as justice and who calls error the home of guidance.

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?

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?

2. Ibid., p. 341.
Once again al-Raḍī 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

Al-Raḍī 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-Raḍī's eyes. In one of his odes he says, addressing his beloved:

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.

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.

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.

Al-Raḍī 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

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.

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.

Al-Raḍī 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

2. Ibid., p. 363.
his ode 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. 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.

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. 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

Before closing our observations on al-Radi's self-praise, it is necessary to see what sort of values and

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-Raḍī 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.

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

and Yaman can not come up to the level of Nizār to which al-ʿAdī belongs. Although al-ʿAdī based his assumption on the grounds that the Prophet is a descendant of Qurash and consequently of Nizār, he did not conceal the Jāhilite superiority of his tribe. Religious elements made themselves felt in al-ʿAdī's self-praise as well. His descent from the prophet Muhammad and the deeds of his ʿAlīd family occupy a notable part in this theme. He made it clear that none could challenge or be equal to the sublimity of the ʿAlīd 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.

Al-ʿAdī 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-ʿAdī 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

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-Raḍī'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-Raḍī 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 fākhr. He once came to imagine himself a caliph whose illustrious glories were unrivalled. He says:

This is the Commander of Faithful. Muhammad (al-Raḍī).
Noble is his origin, honourable is his birth. Is it not enough for you that your "mother" is Ṭāीmah (Prophet's daughter), your "father" Haydarah (ʿAlī) and your forefather Ḥāmad (the Prophet).

\[\text{هَذَا اِمِّيَّ الْمُوْلِيَّ،} \]
\[\text{أَمَا كَفَّارًا بَأَنْ أَسْتَخْلَصْ} \]
\[\text{فَرِيضَةً هِيْرَةً،} \]
\[\text{إِنْ وَلَدُ أَحَمَّدُ} \]

CHAPTER VIII

AL-RADI'S ELEGY

Every day I turn my glance, time and again,
after a life-companion like unto a star breathing
its last breath.

al-Raḍī.
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.

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-Ṭa‘ālibī highly esteemed his elegy. In the Yatīmah he came to the conclusion that al-Raḍī was the master of elegy. In al-Ṭa‘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

al-Tha‘alibi himself gave no more details, closing his remarks by citing many specimens of al-Raḍī’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-Raḍī in his dirges to the woman mourning her own son.\(^2\)

2 - al-Raḍī’s elegy

Al-Raḍī composed forty eight dirges. The poet, as we have already seen, started writing poetry on self-praise and panegyric 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-Ṭā’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 eulogised 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-Raḍī composed one dirge. He eulogised the mother of the vizier Abū Mansūr Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan. Al-Raḍī confined this dirge to comforting the vizier and praising him.\(^5\) A year later the Buwayhid prince Sharaf

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4. Ibid., p. 445.
al-Daulah died. This ruler, as we have already seen, released al-Raḍī’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-Raḍī’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-Raḍī 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-Raḍī lamented can be categorised to explore the motives and factors governing al-Raḍī’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

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³. Ibid., pp. 125, 127.
qualities. Moreover, his family’s previous record made it self felt when al-Ra‘i 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-Ra‘i’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-Ra‘i elegised the dethroned Caliph al-Ṭā‘i (d. 393/1002) in two dirges. This Caliph died in confinement in a room of the Caliph al-Qādir’s palace. However, al-Ra‘i 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-Ra‘i also lamented his patron and friend the Buwayhid 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-Ra‘i elegised two great statesmen. The first was al-Sāhib b. ‘Abbād. Al-Ra‘i praised him in his life and lamented his death but he never met him. His dirge on al-Sāhib is one of al-Ra‘i’s lengthy odes in his Diwan. The other statesman was the vizier ‘Amīd

al-Jiyūsh who died in 401/1010. Among religious personalities and judges, the poet lamented the "judge of judges" Abū Muḥammad b. Ḥârûf (d. 381/991) and the Ḥabbanīd naqīb Abū al-Qāsim al-Zaynubî (d. 384/994). He lamented another Ḥabbanīd personality called Abū ʿAbd Allâh al-Manṣūrî (d. 391/1000).

In the third group of dirges al-Raḍî eulogized Arab princes and tribal leaders. Among them were two Hamdānīd princes and two ʿUqaylid leaders. 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-Raḍî 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 Šīʿite as well.

The most important bedouin leader whose death was a heavy blow to al-Raḍî was Abū al-ʿAwwām b. Laylā. This man was supposed to be al-Raḍî's propagandist. He was killed on his mission to win supporters to al-Raḍî'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

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 Jinal and of the outstanding friend of his youth Abū ʿAll al-Battī.2 The loss of his favourite friend Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābi caused the poet deep sorrow and lasting pain. He lamented him in 364/974, 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 398/1003 the poet lamented al-Ṣābi for the third time. He recalled the passing days in which the poet enjoyed the company of his friend. He also called al-Ṣābi his brother. The final dirge on him is filled with so 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-Raḍī'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

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-Asiz. It is strange that al-Rađi 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 Imam 'Ali in the Khutbah and when 'Umar ruled he abolished it. Al-Rađi 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-Rađi 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. The poet Ibn al-Hajjāj, who specialised in obscene poems filled with sexual references, received al-Rađi'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-Rađi in which he expressed his sincerity and affection towards Ibn al-Hajjāj.

2. Ibid., p. 384.
The above simple classification of al-Raḍī'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-Raḍī 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-Raḍī 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?*

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.*

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?

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-'Awwām 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 Ṣabean writer Abū Ishāq caused al-Raḍī the same lasting pain.

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-Qābī as follows:

You may not be one of my family and tribe, but surely you are closer to my affection than anyone of them.

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.

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-Qābī the public rebuked him for his ode because he who was a Sharif (a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad) had lamented the death of a Ǧabean. But he replied, "It was his merit alone the loss of which I lamented". However, al-Raḍī in comparison with his contemporaries.

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-Ṭā'ī. He made it clear that he highly respected the family ties between the 'Abbāside and 'Alide, although the former were considered by the Shi'itee and 'Alide the usurpers of the 'Alid right to the caliphate. It is strange that al-Raḍî regretted what had happened between these two branches. In another elegy he lamented the 'Abbāsid Abū 'Abd-Allāh al-Manṣūrī 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.

Moreover, al-Raḍî, despite his religious position and Prophetic descent which demanded cautious conduct and exemplary behaviour, respected his literary relationships elegising the poet Ibn al-Hajjaj as follows:

I weep for you and those wide-spread verses whose words are filled with meaning. Let time long lament your loss You wore the light spirit of the time.

Concerning the content and the artistic form of al-Raḍī'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-Mutanabbi's dirges had an influence on al-Raḍī's elegy. Our poet, for instance, modelled one of his dirges on one by al-Mutanabbi. 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-Mutanabbi's dirges. Even the subject-matter seems, to some extent, similar. Al-Mutanabbi elegised the prince Sayf al-Dawlah's mother and al-Raḍī lamented his daughter. In another dirge al-Raḍī 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.

Al-Raḍī'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.


to his subject. Al-Radî in one of his dirges on Ibn Laylā says:

By the life of the birds, on the day of Ibn Laylā's death, verily they bent on noble flesh.

The above line was borrowed from Abū Khirāsh al-Hudhali who says in one of his dirges:

By the life of the father of the birds, gathering around Khalid, verily they fell on flesh.

In another dirge Abū Khirāsh says:

I knew not who threw his cloak over him, except that he was verily of illustrious and pure stock.

Al-Radî also borrowed this idea and put it as follows:

Oh Ibn Laylā, I swear that your cloak is embraced with intact dignity.

3. Ibid., p. 158.
Moreover, al-Radī not only borrowed many meanings from the Ḥudhaliyyīn poetry but he also made use of their odes as models for his dirges.\(^1\)

The other important source from which al-Radī drew the inspiration for his dirges was Nahj al-Balāghah. Al-Radī 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-Radī's ideas and the contents of the Nahj al-Balāghah which were collected and arranged by al-Radī 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 'Ali's sayings and sermons.\(^2\) The same spirit coloured al-Radī's poetry in general and his dirges in particular. The following examples illustrate the points of similarity between them. The Imām 'Ali deems this world a thorough-fare and the next the abode of permanent stay. He says:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي أَلْقِيْتُ جَانِبَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْخَيْرُ دُلْقًا

Al-Radī used the same meaning in almost similar words. He

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2. Khulusy, Shi'ism, p. 100.
The Ināmūm describes the life and people as follows:

بَلْ هُمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ وَأَهْلِ الْأَسمَاءِ فِي هَذَا الْأَرْضِ غَرَّضُ فِي نَأْسِهِ الْحَيَاةِ

He also says:

أَيْنَ الْمَتَّ الْخَالِبَةِ هِيُّ وَلَيْنَهُ الْيَمِينِ لَدَدٍ بِمِيزَةٍ الْمَارِبِ

Al-Raḍī says:

دُلِّ يَسَاءَ الْمَدِينَةِ أَكْبَرَ اِلْإِنْسَانُ أَنْبَأَهَا نَابِلٌ دَانِبٌ

Hبَلْ هِيُّ الْأَمْرِ مَرَّةً فِي هَذَا الْمَلاَءِ

In another dirge the poet also says:

لَعْمُ إِنَّا إِلَى الْدِّينِ مُسَاهَرُونَ لَعْمُ دِمْرُونَ مُغَزِّبُونَ لَعْمُ لَتَلْبَسُ

5. Ibid., p. 119.
Al-Radi was keen on musing on life and death in his poetry in general. He made use of the contents of the Nahj al-Balâghah, repeating the same implication and similar words. He says:

\[ \text{داخلنا الماء، وانطلقنا} \]
\[ \text{السبا، وانحرنا الزهاب.} \]

This line was quoted from the Imam 'Ali's saying which runs as follows:

\[ \text{بأوص من داز أولئك عناء، راهمها عناء.} \]

In the Imam 'Ali's eyes, people of this world are asleep while they are driven towards their fate. He says:

\[ \text{أهل السيا لرب نيا، بم ركيم يام.} \]

Al-Radi has a similar meaning. People in his eyes also are driven on by the driver of their fate. He says:

\[ \text{لوقتُ الألقادير سائى، فلست.} \]

Generally speaking, al-Radi in his digress not only borrowed meanings from the Nahj al-Balâghah but also assimilated the spirit of pessimism and disappointment of this work.

In this respect there is much in common between them.

As for the artistic aspects of al-Radi’s dirges, the first outstanding feature is the length of his elegiac odes. His dirge on al-Sāhib b. ‘Abbūd, for instance, numbered 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. 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 elegized person’s deeds and qualities. In his dirge on his maternal uncle he started speaking of the speedy passage of time and the inevitable end of one’s life.

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-Ṣāḥib runs as follows:

Like unto a mountain which tumbled down
Had it fallen into the sea, the sea
would have raged in incessant foam.

A similar idea was applied again in the opening line of al-Raḍī's dirge on al-Ṣāḥib in 385/996 - the poet says:

2. Ibid., p. 294.
The death of al-Radzi'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 Na‘ali and Yalamam.

Al-Radzi 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.

2. Ibid., p. 666.
3. Ibid., p. 737.
When he lamented his sister he said:

If the eye is empty of you, yet
the heart has been filled with you.

The same meaning was applied in other odes and al-Raḍī transferred it from one poetical theme to another.3

Al-Raḍī 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.

In the course of his poetical development al-Raḍī 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.

The expression of defending deceased persons in al-Raḍī'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-Raḍī in his lamentation often regretted that he was not able to defend the dead and repel fate from them.¹


The other artistic aspect of al-Râdi'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 Jâhilite and early Islamic period. 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. 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 'Abbâsid poetry this traditional expression was still alive, for instance, in al-Buhturi and al-Mutanabbi's poems, but those two poets economised in the use of this sort of expression.

Al-Râdi 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-Šâbî is a case in point. It begins as follows:

Have you known whom they bore aloft
on the bier?
Have you seen how the light of our
assemblage is extinguished?

He applied this form of opening in his dirge on al-Sāhib b. 'Abbad and repeated it six times. He used it in many other odes as well. 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?

Questions beginning with where, whom and who are frequently introduced in al-Radī'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-Radī'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-Thaʿalībi in the Yatīmah referred to this point when he stated that al-Radī dealt with his dirges skilfully. Although al-Radī 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, metaphor, similes and words.

In his dirge on the poet Ibn al-Hajjāj who specialised in obscenity and jokes, al-Radī abandoned the traditional method which he used to apply in his elegy. 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 dirge on these leaders breathed the spirit

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.

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.

2. Ibid., p. 477.
When he lamented the Hamdanid prince Abu Tahir b. Hasiir al-Dawlah he also adopted the same method. He addressed the dead man's tribe as follows:

Oh Rabiah b. Hizar, lay down your arms.
Death has caused to perish your great and daring leader.

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 Jinni 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. 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-Radi's time. It is likely that such kind of mourning might be considered a sign of weakness. However,

in the eyes of the critic Ibn Rashiq, dirges on women are rather difficult. It is probable that poets did not find established traditional principles to follow in this respect.

Al-Raḍi paid noticeable attention to dirges on women. This may have been due in part to his mother's influence. Al-Raḍi 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 forbearance and forgot my glory and strength.

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.

Such a high estimation of his mother as a woman may have had some bearing on al-Raḍi's opinion of women in general. It may provide an answer to the reason for about ten dirges which our poet devoted to them.

Al-Radi 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 elegized as well as his brother's two daughters. The poet seems to have had some difficulty 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 Manṣūr'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. In the same manner he elegized 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.

Al-Radi 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

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

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


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

SHI'IISM IN AL-RADI'S POETRY

We are a people doomed to misfortune,
we gladly accepted our fate

بهلبا لبا ３، ３، ３، ３

al-Radi
Shi'ism made its first appearance on the political and religious scene in the form of the Imam 'Ali's supporters when Muslims split on the question of the prophet's successor. Those who advocated and supported 'Ali's right to succeed the Prophet formed the early Shi'ites. 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 'Alide to the caliphate.

Shi'ites themselves divided into different sects when they disagreed over the personality of each subsequent Imam after the martyrdom of al-Husayn. Many extremist branches now appeared among which were the Kaysaniyyah and the Saba'iyyah. The moderate wing, the Zaydite, made its appearance under the leadership of the Imam Zayd b.


'Ali. In the 'Abbāsid period the Ima'mites became a distinguished Shi'ite sect which has persisted up to the present day. In the political struggle the Shi'ites under the leadership of the 'Ali and other pro-'Ali leaders continued a deadly strife and revolt against the the Umayyads who were considered usurpers. The list of 'Ali martyrs increased during the course of history. The Umayyads treated them cruelly and put them down mercilessly. 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 Hashimite victory. But the Hashimite party which consisted of the 'Ali and 'Abbāside now split and the latter deemed themselves the legitimate heirs of the Prophet, denying the right of the 'Ali. The 'Ali with the support of their partisans resumed their unsuccessful struggle against their cousins the 'Abbāside who exemplified the continuity of oppression and injustice and became the new usurpers of the 'Alid s'right to the caliphate as 'Alid and Shi'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.

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 Imāmitūn 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'īites 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 'Abbāside was mostly replaced by sectarian disputes between their followers the Sunnites and Shī'ītes. Each sect raked up the past and lived on the memory of its celebrated champions. The Shī'ītes for their part revived the "day of the Ghadīr" on which they alleged that the prophet had appointed 'Ali 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'īte poetry was a vivid and living record of the Shī'īte 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 Shi'ite strife. Moreover, Shi'ite doctrines, convictions and feelings made themselves felt in this poetry. Among the first pro-‘Alid poets was Abū al-Aṣwad al-Du‘all. He was the Imam ‘Alī’s friend and remained unwavering in his Shi‘ite convictions. He praised the Imam ‘Alī in his life and lamented his death. His poems reflect the early Shi‘ite conviction in its simplicity and spontaneity. The poet expressed his love and affection for the Imam praising his Islamic virtues and his close connection with the prophet. In his dirge Abū al-Aṣwad 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.

Al-Ḥusayn’s martyrdom after his abortive rebellion against the Umayyads marked a turning point in the Shi‘ite movement as well as in Shi‘ite poetry. Mourning for al-Ḥusayn became a permanent and tragic aspect of Shi‘ite poems. Meanwhile, the Shi‘ites, who called the Imam al-Ḥusayn 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 Shi‘ite poetry which is called "Shi‘r al-Tawwabin", the poems of repentance. In this poetry there is also a call for revenge and retaliation.


on the 'Alida' enemies. In the meantime, the extremist branches in the Shi'ite movement were represented in poetry. The two extremist poets al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī (d. 173/789) and Kuthayyir ʿAzzah (d. 105/723) advocated the extreme Shi'ite school which is called al-Kaysāniyyah. They believed that the son of ʿAlī, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyyah was alive and never died and that he would return at the right moment. This messianic side of Shi'ite poetry became a permanent aspect from this time onwards as we shall learn later.

Shi'ite poetry in the Umayyad period was also characterised by its polemical tone. Poets put forward statements against those who deprived the 'Alida of their right to the throne as the Shi'ites believed. These statements in the poetry of the extremists like al-Ḥimyarī, for instance, were combined with the abuse of the early Orthodox Caliphe and the expression of hatred towards them because they were considered usurpers of the 'Alid right. In addition, the Imām ʿAlī's personality and also those of his heirs were clothed with legends and myths. Al-Ḥimyarī and Kuthayyir represented this trend openly. This fictitious side of Shi'ite poetry continued down to the fourth Islamic century and established itself in this sort of poem.

The moderate Shi'ite sect "the Zaydites" had its own advocate. The poet al-Kumayt b. Zayd (d. 126/744) according to the Zaydite doctrines more than 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 Shi'ite articles of faith and supported the vindication by logically argued proofs. 

This distinguishing feature of his poetry was inherited by Shi'ite poets and became a traditional section in their poetry. The Ḥāchimiyyāt 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 Shi'ite point of view. Meanwhile, he advocated the legitimate right of the 'Alide, shedding his tears on the tragedy of the prophet's home. In general, Shi'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 Shi'ite poets who also called on the rulers to revenge the 'Alide 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-Ḥāchimiyyāt with commentary by Muhammad Mahmūd al-Rāfi'i, Cairo 1912, pp. 34, 39, 71; see also Khūliycy op. cit., p. 226.

poets Sudaif b. Haymūn and Ibrāhīm b. Haramah.1 But the
days of peace between the two Hāshimites 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 Shi'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 Shi'ite poet Di'bil al-Khuza'i (765-
860) well exemplified the development of Shi'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

Malāmīh Qasīdat al-Tahayyu', pp. 102-103.
3. B. I. art. Di'bil, written by A. Schaade.
The tragedy of Karbalāʾ held a noticeable position in Dībilʾs 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 Shīʿite poetry re-emerged in his poetry.

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 Shīʿite sect in Baghdad and Iraq in al-Rādiʾs 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. The Shīʿite Imāmites lived on their hope and their leaders also laid down their arms. Consequently, the messianic hope became frequent in the Shīʿite poetry of the fourth Islamic century. They pinned their hopes of revenge on the 'Alids' enemies on the Imām's return from his concealment.

The other distinguishing feature of Shīʿite poetry in the fourth Islamic century was the increased use of

4. 'Abd al-Razzāq Muḥyī al-Dīn, op. cit., p. 73.
legends and myths which clothed the personality of the Imam 'Ali and his sons. This legendary aspect of Shi'ite poetry can be traced to the poet al-Sayyid al-Kimyar, but it became limited during the course of time until it was abundantly revived in al-Radi's day. Many Shi'ite poets paid great attention to the versification of some of supposed Prophetic traditions which were related by Shi'ite transmitters serving the 'Alide' claim and the Shi'ite convictions. These and other accounts portrayed the Imam's personality as superior to human nature and clothed it with mythical power and supernatural attributes. The poets Mihyār and al-Šāhib b. 'Abbād were fond of depicting this fictitious side in their poetry. Among many legends which these Shi'ite poets often repeated was one telling that on 'Ali's account the sun was caused to remain in the horizon without setting. Another recounted that the Imam killed the 'Afreets during the battle of Badr.¹

The sectarian struggle and intensive antagonism between the Sunnites and Shi'ites made itself felt in Shi'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-Khawārizmi and Badi' al-Zamān al-Hamadānī gave vivid examples of polemical poems in which they attacked each other and both argued

on sectarian and religious points of view. Mibyūr was also considered among Shi'ite poets who used to curse the Sunnite and their champions while 'All b. Ṭāh al-Sakkari was called the poet of the Sunnite because he used to glorify the Orthodox Caliphs and oppose the Shi'ites. Al-Sāhib b. 'Abbād was also involved in this poetical dispute, as his Diwan reveals.

Another noticeable aspect of Shi'ite poetry in this period is that most of it was composed on the scene of the 10th of 'Ashūrā', the day of al-Husayn's martyrdom, to describe its tragedy and horror. The day of al-Chadīr was also celebrated by Shi'ite poets. They considered it their religious festival because the Prophet had assigned 'All as his successor on that day. A glance at Shi'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 Shi'ite poets there are many odes which are suitable for reciting in a public lamentation on al-Husayn. Here is an example of al-Radī's odes which is still used for this purpose up to the present. He says:

Oh Karbala', you are still a misfortune and calamity, what the son 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?

3. al-Sāhib, Diwan, pp. 97, 170.
In the *Divān* 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-Kakkī and al-Kūfī. He often ended his Shi'ite dirges with a specific request to them to sing or recite his poems.  

3 - *Shi'ism in al-Radi's poetry*

Al-Radi, 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-Radi not only believed in the superiority of the Imām 'Ali 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. It is clear that his 'Alid background played its part in

stimulating his aspiration towards the caliphate.

Shi’ite convictions, terms and doctrines found their way into al-Raḍī’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-Raḍī 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.

Al-Raḍī 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

In general, Shi‘ism made itself felt in different poetical themes of al-Radî’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 Shi‘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-Ghadîr. In addition, in line with Imamite convictions he came to the conclusion that there was no doubt about the superiority and the supernatural qualities of the Imam ‘Ali. He reiterated that he was the son of Muhammad and ‘Ali and his mother was Fāṭimah the Prophet’s daughter. He says:

Is it not enough for you that your mother is Fāṭimah, your father Haydarah (‘Ali) your forefather the Prophet.

The poet also made use of Shi‘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 Muhammad
bring it back.
The staff (of the caliphate) is not yours,
neither is the garment (of the Prophet)

2. Ibid., p. 314.
In the same poetical piece al-Radi made use of the Imam ‘Ali’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.

Al-Radi portrayed the Imam ‘Ali as the noblest hero of Islam in history, endowed with supernatural qualities and powers. Like other Shi’ite poets, he believed that the Imam ‘Ali had no rival in bravery, decency, courage and wisdom; proofs which were observed in his life and in every battle in which the Imam performed his heroic deeds. Al-Radi also referred to ‘Ali’s mythical power and superhuman personality. He mentioned in his poetry that on account of the Imam ‘Ali the sun was caused to remain without setting. The poet also enumerated ‘Ali’s virtues not for only historical sectarian purposes as other Shi’ite poets did, but to attribute these deeds and glories to himself as one of ‘Ali’s heirs. He often

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-Raḍī often identified the Imam Alī by the term executor (al-waṣī) which means, according to the Imāmī belief, that the Prophet appointed him his successor on the "day of al-Ḥadīr". Al-Raḍī repeated the term al-waṣī 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.

Al-Raḍī succeeded in creating and maintaining a close connection between Shi'ite convictions and opinions with regard to the Alīd family and his own aspiration and aims. He made it clear that the Alīd tragedy was his own and this caused him profound sorrow and pain. He also deemed the glorious Alīd heritage as his own and this gave him an inexhaustible theme for his poetry.

Al-Raḍī's opinion of the Imam al-Mahdī's return seems to be obscure in his Shi'ite and other poetry.

This important dogma in Imámite circles, as we have already said, implies that the twelfth Imám, al-Mahdí, would return from his concealment to re-establish justice and remove the oppression which had been imposed on the 'Alída and their adherents. Shi'ite poets, as we have seen, often referred to this Imám's return. Al-Ra‘í in one of his odes enumerated the twelve Imáms according to Imámite belief and mentioned al-Mahdí as the final one for whom people would await. This implies that the 'Alída 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-Ra‘í 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. He never mentioned the Mahdí's return again in his poetry.

This revolutionary element in his Shi'ite belief implies a contradiction to the Imámite dogma of the Imám's return. It is clear that the Zaydites conceived of their Imám as an active fighter and belligerent leader of believers, while the Imámites considered their Imám a passive leader attaching themselves to the Hidden Imám's return and pinning their hope on his reappearance.

Al-Raḍī, in his poetry in general, and his Shi‘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 Shi‘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. 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 Shi‘ite poetry differs from other Shi‘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 Shi‘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

the Prophet. On this point al-Rađī did not abuse the Prophet's companions and never considered them usurpers or deviators as many of his contemporaries did. Al-Rađī seems to be nearer to the Zaydī doctrine. This moderate wing in the Shi'ite movement did not share the absolute condemnation of the companions of the Prophet which was wide-spread in Shi'ite circles.

Al-Rađī in his Shi'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 Shi'ite poets accused the 'Abbāsids of injustice and ill-treatment of the 'Alids. Meantime, the Shi'ite rulers of the Buwayhid family had the upper hand in Baghdad and the caliph was weak. However, al-Rađī's attitude reflected his openmindedness and his refraining from indulging himself in accusing and cursing the 'Abbāsīd 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 Buwayhids' policy which deprived the caliph of his real authority, yet they publicly kept feigning respect to him. Secondly, al-Rađī was polite and respectful. He also held a religious position which demanded exemplary conduct in his public and private life.

Al-Rađī's poetry was also characterised by its

2. Goldsziher, Mohammed And Islam, p. 263.
indifference to sectarian struggles and religious antagonism, which had become widespread in the fourth Islamic century and always resulted in bloody skirmishes between Sunnites and Shi'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 Shi'ites.2 Furthermore, al-Raḍī 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.3 In general, al-Raḍī's opinion of the Prophet's Orthodox Caliphs and his attitude toward sectarian disputes seems to be moderate.

Al-Raḍī composed five odes relating to the observance of the 'Aṣḥābā, the day of repentance and mourning in memory of the Karbalā' catastrophe. This memory became a public lamentation in the Būwayhīd period under whose protection Shi'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

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-Raḍī's dirges on al-Husayn is the close connection between the calamities of his 'Alid family and al-Raḍī himself. He deemed himself obliged to revenge the 'Alid martyrdom 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 Shi'ite dirge of al-Raḍī 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-Raḍī 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. 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 Shi'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

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-Raḍī 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).

Al-Raḍī 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 ʿAlids in the course of history. He mentioned this point but he did not identify them. He says:

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.

The tragic side of al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom was well portrayed in al-Raḍī's odes and a 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 Ḥurārah as follows:

Oh day of Ḥurārah 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.

Al-Raḍī then presented the tragedy of Karbalā' in close connection with his own personal feeling. He says:

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 Imami soul has not
quenched its thirst?
While maidsome 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.

In al-Raḍī'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 fringe 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.

In general, al-Radi exploited fully the Shi'ite sources in regard to the massacre of Karbala, 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-Radi in his Shi'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 Shi'ite dogmas in many respects. He proved himself openminded and forbade himself from indulging in the extremist wave which had become strong in Shi'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.

My love-poetry is not due to anguish in my heart, 
but I weep and lament because of my time.

الله فيني أني فهلب لومة. 
ولكش أني زمانيا رازنب 

al-Radi
I = I τ ι 

I n the Arabic language three overlapping terms: ḍhāsāl, taṣḥībīb and ṇaslīb. Our dictionaries draw no distinct line between these words. In al-Jawhari’s opinion the word al-ḍhāsāl means to converse with women and tempt them. When he defines the word taṣḥībīb he applies the word ṇaslīb and vice versa. They both imply the mentioning of women in an amatory manner. The same explanation is given in other dictionaries. Medieval Arab critics have much the same difficulties with these words relating to love-poetry. Qudāmah b. Jaʿfar tried to make a distinction between ṇaslīb and ḍhāsāl. He came to the conclusion that the former concerns the expression of grief, anguish and reminiscence of the beloved’s abode. The ḍhāsāl in his opinion means to mention the conversation or circumstances occurring between the lover and the beloved. Al-Ḥakarī in al-Sināʿatsayn prefers the word taṣḥībīb. He gives it the same definition applied by Qudāmah to the word ṇaslīb. As for Ibn Rashīq he suggests that there is no difference between ṇaslīb, taṣḥībīb and ṭagḥazzul. However, as time passed on the term ḍhāsāl

4. Sināʿatsayn, p. 139.
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 ta'ahhib or masab as well.¹

The amatory section of odes was the first part with which Jahilite poets commenced the Mu'allagät. 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

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'allaqät 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'allqa in particular, and his love-poetry in general. Zuhayr and al-Mārit b. Ḫillīzah also declined to make any sexual references in their amatory preludes of the Mu'allaqät. They concerned themselves with their beloveds' ruined abodes and their departure. Imru' al-Ḳayb, Ṭarafa 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

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1. Mu'allaqät, pp. 123-125; see also 'Antarah b. Shaddād, Dīwān, ed. by Kāram al-Butrānī, Beirūt, 1956, pp. 38, 76.
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 Sarhah (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

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 Rabī'ah was the head of this

2. Kinany, op. cit., p. 133.
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-Mijāz 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 characterized by its playful and optimistic spirit filled with details and novel pictures of woman's indoor life at that time. In the Diwan 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


'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. '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. 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-adventures 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. Jamîl Bûthaynûh represented this

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.

\[\text{Udhrite poets were destined to suffer in their love and to bear lovesickness and frustration, accepting this fate submissively. Many factors contributed to bolster and nourish the development of this puritanical trend in Arab love-poetry. It is out of the scope of this introduction to review them in detail. Stress, however, must be laid on the fact that traits of decency and profound grief in love-poetry can be traced back to the ancient poets and the early Islamic age. Religious elements had their bearing on this trend. It is likely that chastity and the puritanical spirit in 'Udhrite love reflected a sort of compromise between love and religion. Furthermore, the refined and wealthy society of al-Hijaz} \]

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 panegyrical 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 Jahilite poets; while the desert seems to have remained the scene of their love-poetry. Nonetheless, 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 Jarir'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. Meanwhile, 'Umarite love-adventures and daring remarks on love-affairs found their echoes in the Diwan of al-Farasdaq. Jarir.


engaging in a polemic poetical struggle with al-Farazdaq criticized 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. Noontime, 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. Rabī‘ah and his colleagues was cultivated and elaborated to a noticeable degree at the hand of the poets Bashshar b. Burd, Muṣ‘ī b. Yaḥṣā and Abū Nuwās. It became more brilliant, daring and sophisticated in images and style.

filled with clove hints and overloaded with sexual remarks and obscenities. Those 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.

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

of 'Udmnite love within it. 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 'Abbasid period still clung to the old poetical conventions. They retained the amatory prelude, with some modification and adjustment. Abū Tammām and al-Huburtī 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-Mutanabbi 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. Decency can be considered a visible aspect in it in comparison with the current poetical trend at that time. Our poet al-Raḍī not only followed al-Mutanabbi in his attachment to bedouin life and values in his love-poetry but he went

further as we shall see later.

3 - Al-Rađī's love-poetry (Qasāl)

Al-Rađī 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-Rađī 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. However, al-Rađī 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-Rađī paid great attention to love-poetry as his Diwān 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-Rađī's

love-poetry. 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.

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.


Al-Radi 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.

These alternate tendencies between love of glory and love of beauty or women in al-Radi'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.

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Ho suggested at times that love weakens his firmness and his chivalrous character. He says:

I lost love in order to maintain my firmness; variously love is preserved in the heart of that whose determination is lost.

It is interesting to note that al-Mutanabbi and al-Raḍī 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-Mutanabbi, for instance, in one of his odes says:

May every mincing female walker be a ransom for every easy-paced she.

He also gives reason for this judgement saying:

But they are the cords of life, and trick the enemy, and repel injury.

Al-Raḍī put forward the same idea in preferring horses and mounts to woman, he says:


The foam in the mouth of the mounts is sweeter than your lips, 
and the desert shrubs are more appealing 
and pleasant than you.

هُنَّوَابِيَ سَيِّدَاهُ بُهْبَ
رَبِّيِّ السَّيِّدَ مَهْدُوهُ رَهْبَ

He also says:

I desire not to shake hands with pretty women 
while my fingers engage with the reins of (the mount).

رَأْيَهُ مَمْلَكَةُ الْخُلْفَةِ
أَءِنَّمُ اسْتَفْتَ بِهِنَّ بَيْنَ الْمَيْتِ

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-Radi 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 naqib, 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 wth his puritanical religion.

1. D. R. Vol. I, p. 60; see also p. 305. 
moral ideals and integrity. Al-Raḍī 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.

Al-Raḍī also made it clear that he never knew fornication but by its description. He used to be decent even when he imagined or described his love-affairs in his poetry. This suggests that our poet was denied the actual experience of love. He suffered his torment, longing for women and living in a dream of desire and hope rather than engaging his love.

Al-Raḍī 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

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2. Ibid., p. 85.
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 tradi-
tional 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 'Amir, 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

other love-poetry. These sites not only indicate al-Raḍī's close connection with desert life, but also give his poems a sort of religious tone.

Al-Raḍī 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.

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.

2

As for the physical qualities of woman, al-Raḍī 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 recure in classical love-poetry. The favourite ideal lady in al-Raḍī's eyes is of a bedouin

2. Ibid., p. 665.
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 traditionist 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-Raḍī 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-Raḍī gave nothing individual as far as the physical charm of his beloved were concerned.²

Three recurrent aspects are visible in al-Raḍī'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-Raḍī 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

used to allege that the reason for the beloved's indifference to her lover was due to the emergence of grey hair in his hair. Al-Raḍī 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. He says:

Verily darkness (in hair), regardless of youth, is blindness, while whiteness (shayb), despite its weakness, is discernment.

المراد على لدأن لخت
لعبة الميلي على عمرته لبشر

Al-Raḍī 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-Raḍī's brother al-Murtaḍā 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

with shame and fornication. 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. 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. 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."

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 mistrees and her journey. As for the first, it is obvious that the description of the


2. al-Murtada, Tayf, pp. 93-117.


ruined abodes of the beloved had become a hackneyed poetic 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-Raḍī. 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.  

This poetical expression shows us how cleverly al-Raḍī 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-Raḍī shows his fair success in approaching another approach

1. Ibn Kh. III, p. 120.
ancient and traditional image related to the description of the beloved's caravan and her journey. The scenes which al-Raḍī 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 Howdah, 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.

The word al-Ḥijāziyyāt is a plural relative noun formed from Ḥijāz. It is applied in Arab poetry to denominate almost forty odes of love-poetry written by al-Raḍī. It is difficult to discover whether this word was first used by the poet himself or by those who

1. I. C. Vol. 6, 1933, art. Literature, Poetry, p. 151.
collected his poems. However, in many explanatory prefaces this word is used to distinguish two sorts of al-Hijaziyya't. The first is called al-Hijaziyya't 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 (Lawahiq) he concerned himself much more with expressing his yearning towards Hijaz, Mecca and other religious and desert sites, revealing his profound grief and longing for the days he spent there.¹

In al-Hijaziyya't al-Radi 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.

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-'Aqiq 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 raiment I wish I wore.
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 consumers, I would have cried
Oh!

Al-Raḍī in the above ode tells us that he fell in love with Lamyāʾ. 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 love sickness 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 languour. 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.

Al-Raḍī 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-Nafs). These references occur in al-Hijāziyyāt. Al-Raḍī, for instance, says:

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?

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. 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

2. Kinany op. cit., p. 268; see also Diwān of Majnūn Laylā, annotated by 'Abd al-Mutaṣīl-al-Sā'īdī, Cairo, n.d. pp. 18, 37, 56; see D. J. pp. 74, 101, 112.
for the beloved's residence.¹ As for al-Raḍī 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-Raḍī 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-Raḍī 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:

O breeze of Najd, when did you come over from Najd? Your gentle blowing fanned my burning passion.

Similar expressions of the 'Udhri spirit occur in al-Hijaziyyat. Al-Raḍī, 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!

Al-Raḍī 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 mistresses' 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 Ha'cā' (the sandy grounds) covered with flowers?

Have the rains refreshed Khamilah al-
Tulh (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.

Like the 'Udhri poets, al-Rađi 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-Musallâ,
for a greeting received is a part of reunion.

'Udhri poets also suffered from lovesickness. They
believed that their beloveds were the cause and the only
cure of their unhappiness and lovesickness.' Abd Allah

1. Ibn Kh. Vol. III, p. 119; compare with Ibn Khalikân
Arabic version, Vol. IV, p. 46; see D. R. Vol. I,
p. 398.


b. al-Dunaynáh tells us that he tried everything to cure himself but in vain.  

1. Al-Rádí also pretended that he was afflicted by love-sickness 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.

Many 'Udhri expressions found their way into al-Hijaziyyát.  

The 'Udhri poet al-Simmáh al-Qusayrí, 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.

Al-Rádí 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. Kinány, op. cit., p. 293.
Al-Raḍī, 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 Nūṣayb 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.

Al-Raḍī 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.

The above examples will, it is hoped, illustrate the echoes of 'Udhri poetry to be found in al-Hijaziyyat. However, it must be borne in mind that our poet, as has already been learned, came close to the 'Umarites so 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-Hijaziyyat 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-Hijaziyyat, it is necessary to say a few more words on them. This type of love-poetry has fascinated Arab readers both past and

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-Raḍī produced of this type of love-poetry. 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 Ḥāshimīyyāt of al-Kumayṭ, the wine-songs of Abū Mūwās, the ascetic poetry of Abū al-'Āthāriyyah, the poetry of Ibn al-Mu'tazz, famous for its similes, the panegyrics of al-Buḥṭurī. 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-Raḍī 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 'Udhrite and 'Umarite. 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

repeatedly presented in 'Umarite poetry. He also assimilated the 'Udhrī 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 'Umar poetry as far as fresh experiences and minute description of women's life are concerned. He also fell short in reviving the 'Udhrī 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-Rāḍī 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-Rāḍī 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-Hijāziyya set the pattern for a type of artificial amatory prelude in panegyrical odes and other themes for many centuries after Al-Raḍī.²

2. See Ch. XII, below.
CHAPTER XI

AL-RADI'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-Raḍī was a poet with an interest in literary criticism so 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 Dīwān 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 Dīwān 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 weaknesses of style and ideas. The most important point which al-Raḍī 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.

He also referred to the question of words and meanings in his work Talkhīṣ 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 convey the meanings. Al-Raḍī 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-Raḍī 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.

Before entering on al-Raḍī’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-Raḍī’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


of his poetical shortcomings. Although al-Rādī made no references to these close connections, his poems betray them as we shall learn later.

Al-Rādī, 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 slope the oil over the twisted wick.  

Al-Raḍī 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.


3. 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-treasured 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.

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-tashbih al-tamthili. The style is concise, well-built and full of novelty. The poet rested his images on two similes. Al-Rad\'i 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 (tibaq). Al-Rad\'i introduced four subsequent similes as well drawn.

from desert life. Although he applied a short metre, he did not fail to complete his detailed and refined images.

Al-Rađī 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 Ṭarafah's ideas in which the poet expressed his painful sorrow on his relatives' oppression of him. Ṭarafah says:

 Truly, the tyranny of kinsfolk inflicts sharper anguish upon a man, than the blow of a trechant Indian sabre. 1

Al-Rađī 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 Ṭarafah 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.

when you incur men's biting words, the lances of closest kinsfolk are very injurious.

Al-Mutanabbi's poetry was a basic source from which al-Radi borrowed meanings and drew ideas. Our poet sometimes failed to come up to the level of al-Mutanabbi's poetical composition while at other times he had considerable success. Al-Mutanabbi, 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.

Al-Radi took al-Mutanabbi'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.

Al-Ra‘ī, as his two lines show, made no improvement on al-Mutanabbi’s idea. On the contrary, he spoiled the splendour and nobility of al-Mutanabbi’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-Ra‘ī, as his Diwān shows, had some notable successes in his poetry in borrowing and improving on al-Mutanabbi’s meanings. Al-Mutanabbi, 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?

Al-Ra‘ī 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.

Al-Ra‘ī’s style in the above line is simple and eloquent as well. He adorned it with two successful paronomasias

The first is between al-munā and al-qaṣā, the second between al-faḥū and al-fāhā. As for al-Raḍī'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-Raḍī'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-Raḍī's approach to this point will be confined to examining similes as a part of al-Raḍī'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-Raḍī 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:

وَقَبِيلَ كَالْقَبُولِ عَرْضَتَا وَحَنَّمٌ بِاللَّهِ هَبَبُ إِلَيْهِ

In praising the Buwayhids he described them as if they were the rains and the people the green field. He says:

O. Al Buwayh, you are the rains and the people the green fields.

اَلِ بَرِيقُ اَلْحَمْرَاءِ الْرَّمْشَانُ دَلَّبَى أَلْفَ

Al-Radi shows a preference for two sorts of simile. The first is al-tashbih al-baligh in which the point of similarity (wajh al-shabah) is omitted. The second is al-tashbih al-tamthili 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).

يَتَّلِيَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْحَمْرَاءَ مَيَالًا رَنْحَاً

لَرَمْشٍ، وَغَيْرَهَا وَرَوَاهَا مَرَّمَا

2. Ibid., p. 320.
Although al-Raḍî overloaded the above two lines with a collection of nouns, he produced four puns (taurūyāh). The four words 'splendour', 'light', 'abundant rain' and 'foundation of the state' - (Baha'), (Diyā'), (Ghiyāth'), (Qawām) - were among the titles of the Buwayhid prince Bahā' al-Dawlah. Meanwhile, the poet used them as similes as well.

Al-tashbih al-tamthīlī often occurs in al-Raḍî'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:

रास- मा साध्रो वि खल खड़े
मसूम इलेज नि लैख़ू माफ़े

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-Raḍî's picture runs as follows:

Al-Radi 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:

I am but a samhari spear carried by you, an ornament when slung casually, but terrible when directed.

Al-Radi cleverly exploited al-Mutanabbi's image, applying the word sword instead of spear and drawing on the details of al-Mutanabbi'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.

3 - Metaphorical figures in al-Radi'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." 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."

1. Arberry, Poems of al-Mutanabbi, pp. 82-83.
4. Sinā'atayn, p. 270.
Al-Raḍī himself made no distinction between these terms as his book majāzat shows. Later on, the term majāz was used in the broadest sense. It comprises isti‘ārah, kināyah, majāz, muraš, and majāz al-‘aqli. These terms are subdivided into many sorts as 'All al-Jarim indicates and clarifies in his book. 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-‘aqli 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-Khafajī (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. On the other hand, modern scholars appreciate al-Raḍī's figures of speech. Some

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. Abu Tammūm, for instance, was blamed by al-Jurjānī and al-Baqillānī 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-Rādī 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:

\[
\text{يَحَلُّ النِّطْرُ،}
\text{يَحَلُّ النِّطْرُ،}
\text{يَحَلُّ النِّطْرُ،}
\text{يَحَلُّ النِّطْرُ،}
\]

He put the same image once again as follows:

\[
\text{إِلَّا مَا زَدَكَ الْأَحْقَامُ،}
\text{إِلَّا مَا زَدَكَ الْأَحْقَامُ،}
\text{إِلَّا مَا زَدَكَ الْأَحْقَامُ،}
\text{إِلَّا مَا زَدَكَ الْأَحْقَامُ،}
\]

². Jurjānī, pp. 64, 76, 311; see Baqillānī, pp. 138–139.
⁴. Ibid., p. 15.
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', macruqu instead of the common word 'hide' making his metaphor in harmony with his emotional state. He says:

Al-Rađî 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:

Remote and strange metaphors occur in various themes of al-Rađî'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

2. Ibid., p. 666.
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-Ta'ūs as follows:

A king ascended until he scaled the highest peak of sky and humiliated the upper part of the nose of time.

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-Raḍī's poetical development. Later on he dealt with these figures of speech more successfully and skilfully.

Al-Raḍī's metaphorical language is also characterised by the increasing use of al-majāz al-ʿaqli, "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

al-Raḍī for remoteness in the use of pathetic fallacy. This traditionist rhetorician could not imagine that darkness had a brain as al-Raḍī describes it in one of his odes. Ibn Sinān's judgement is correct from a traditional point of view, yet al-Raḍī'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:

In the same ode he attaches illness to determination. He says:

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:

1. Ibn Sinān op. cit., p. 130.
3. Ibid., p. 236.
In the same ode he produced a picture in which swords embrace him and lances kiss him as well.

He also depicted darkness as if it had a baby and this baby is weaned by dawn. He says:

"Metonymy (kināyah) is also used by al-ʿaqlī in his poetry but it is less common than istifārah and majāz ʿaqlī. 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' (sarḥah). He says:

Oh tree in a vale whose soil was not watered by anything other than my blood.

In other odes he called his beloved zābyah. He says:

Oh she-gazelle at al-Bān pasturing in its thickets.
Rejoice, for today my heart has become your own pasture-land.

2. Ibid., p. 803.
3. Ibid., p. 965.
4. Ibid., p. 593.
Al-Raḍī 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.

Before closing these remarks on al-Raḍī's use of metonymy it is convenient to present a comparison between him and al-Mutanabbi in this respect. The comparison has been made by Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr in his work al-Mathal al-Sā`ir. He cited al-Mutanabbi'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.

Ibn al-Athīr remarks that al-Mutanabbi had tried to indicate and assert his decency but fornication is better than the chastity that al-Mutanabbi expressed in his line. Al-Raḍī drew on al-Mutanabbi's idea and improved upon it. Ibn al-Athīr comments that al-Raḍī put al-Mutanabbi's line in a more beautiful form. The poet says:

I am longing for what the veils and adornments contain but I abstain from what is under the security of the apron.

It is plain that Al-Raḍī borrowed Al-Mutanabbi's meaning, but he recast it cleverly and overcame the shortcoming in which Al-Mutanabbi failed by using the word sarāwilātihā which is considered a suggestive and ugly word in this context. Al-Raḍī avoided it and used the word maʿāzir 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

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. Mutābaqah and muqābalah

The term mutābaqah: 'antithesis' means the mentioning of the thing and its opposite. As for muqābalah 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-Mutanabbi is clear. As Ṭahā Ḥusayn suggests, al-Mutanabbi was fond of muqābalah and tibāq and this artistic aspect grew steadily in his poetry. A close examination of al-Raḍī's poetical specimens shows us how far he depended on tibāq and muqābalah to clarify and strengthen his meanings. In one of his odes he says:

The underlined words show us al-Radi's increasing use of *tībāq* 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 *tībāq*. *Mugābalah* was used side by side with *tībāq* when the poet intended to clarify a statement or assumption. He says:

In the first line al-Rāḍī used ṭibāq twice while the second consists of muqăbalah.

Al-Rāḍī, 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 muqăbalah and ṭibāq 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?

Al-Rāḍī dealt with the same meaning again with some alteration, putting it in the form of muqăbalah. He says:

(Because of you) my heart is in the heat of summer, while my eyes are in a spring garden.

---

Al-Raḍī in the preceding line drew on al-Mutanabbi’s image which runs as follows:

My bowel is on the livo coals of love
while my eyes feast in the garden of beauty.

Al-Raḍī 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.

The above specimens show us how al-Raḍī dealt with tibaq and muqābalah and how he drew on previous meanings. The shadow of al-Mutanabbi is present in this respect.

B. Tajnīṣ

Al-Raḍī used different types of tajnīṣ, 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-Raḍī does

1. D. M. Vol. II, p. 411. Before al-Mutanabbi, Abū Tammām dealt with the same idea which was first used by the poet ‘Abd Allāh Ibn al-Dumaynah, see p. 411, the footnotes.

increase the use of tajnāa, 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:

\[
\text{زكنا اللى من عناف الپیا}
\]

Al-Raḍī in the above mentioned line twice used the tajnāa which is called al-jināa al-muḥarruf in which two words differ only in their vocalisation. In the first hemistich there are al-ṣubā which means the upper part of swords or lances and al-ṣiḥā 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-Raḍī devoted some lines to verbal embellishments. He says:

\[
\text{مَسِبِّبُ رَمَّةَ الْمَيْدَانِ}
\]

The poet used various sorts of tajnāa. In the first two lines he applied al-jināa al-muḍāri' in which every two words differ only in regard to a single letter. The

third contains two jinās, the first in jinās mudāri and the second jinās muharraf. In the fourth line the poet used al-jinās al-mudāri and combined it with tībāq. Those lines show us how al-Raḍī 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 tībāq at the expense of tajnīs. Even in the early stage of his poetical development tībāq and muqābalah rated higher than tajnīs. A close examination of his odes shows us that the increasing use of tībāq and muqābalah coincided with the comparatively limited use of tajnīs.

C. Husn al-ta‘lil: "ingenious assignment of cause"

This rhetorical adornment is applied by al-Raḍī 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‘lil 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.

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-Radi's eyes was that fire comes from wicks. He says:

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.

In one of his dirges he consoled Bahā’al-Dawlah on the death of his son using husn al-ta’līl many times in order to comfort his patron. He says:

2. Ibid., p. 649.
Al-Naḍīl 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 mubālāghah 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 (mubālāghah) as al-ʿAskārī says is considered a rhetorical method of strengthening meanings and bringing them up to achieve their ultimate objectives. In his eyes hyperbole (ghuluw) is excessive exaggeration which reaches the


2. Sināʿatayn, p. 357; see also Bāqillānī, p. 122.
stage of absurdity or inconceivability. Such excessive exaggeration is called ifrāṣ by Ibn Rashiq. Al-`Askari also considers hyperbole worse when it is burdened with ugly words and inadequate metaphors.

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 mubālaḥah and ghulūw. Al-Mutanabbi 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-Mutanabbi's Diwān here and there. However, he remarks that ifrāṣ is the method of poets contemporary with him. He calls on poets to consider the limitation of the use of these rhetorical embellishments.

Like al-Mutanabbi and other poets al-Raḍī does show exaggeration and hyperbole in some of his metaphors, similes and other rhetorical figures. As has already

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-Radî’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.

Al-Radî 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.

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.

2. Ibid., p. 78.
In another ode he also praised his people in an extravagant tone. He says:

Sacred people seek shelter in our homes; even the fleeing wild beasts of the desert do the same.

Al-Raqi is on the side of al-Mutanabbi with regard to the increasing use of exaggeration and hyperbole. Taha Husayn regards mubalagha as a characteristic aspect of al-Mutanabbi's poetry. He sometimes used it to the extent of spoiling his poetry. Al-Raqi'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 (gāfiyah). However, they agree that the rhyming

3. Taha Husayn, Ma'a al-Mutanabbi, p. 51.
letter is the operative consonant of the rhyme by which
the odo is called a 'ba'-$iyah' 'lamiyah' and so on.\(^1\)

In traditional Arab poetry the rhyming letter is applied
in two forms. The first is called al-qafiyyah al-
mugawya'dah in which the rhyming letter is vowelless.
The second in al-qafiyyah al-mu'tlaqah 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 ba', dāl, rā', mim, lām and nun are very common.
The letters hamzah, tā', jīm, ḥā', cūn, 'ayn, fā', qāf,
kāf and yā' are less common in comparison with the first
group. The letters dād, tā' and ḥā' are rarely used by
poets while thā', khā', dāl, zā', shin, gād, zā', ghayn
and wāw are very scarcel\(^2\).

In al-Raḍī's poetry the frequency of different
rhyming letters is as follows: ba' 21%, lām 13%, rā' 11%,
dāl 10%, mim 10%, nun 9%, and 'ayn 8%. The rhyming
letters qāf, hamzah, ḥā' and cūn are less common in
comparison. These simple statistics show al-Raḍī in
line with other Arab poets. An interesting point to

\(^1\) Ibrahim Anis, Musiqā al-Shi'r Cairo, 3rd edn. 1965,
pp. 246-247; see Safa' Khulūsyy, Fann al-Taqti'\(^4\) al-
Shi'rī wa al-qafiyyah, Beirut, 3rd ed. 1966, pp. 213-
216.

\(^2\) Khulūsyy, Fann al-Taqti', pp. 215-216; see Anis,
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 thāʾ, tāʾ, and sād in a considerable number of his odes and proves capable of dealing with them. This point indicates that al-Raḍlī'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 thāʾ. 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. However, there is no doubt about the odes' eloquence. The poet had the same success in applying the letter sād and tāʾ 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-Raḍlī'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 Ishaq al-Ṣābī. The latter applied the letter nūn as a rhyming letter and preferred it unwavilled. The metre was zawīl. He opened his ode as follows:

2. Ibid., pp. 431, 433, 445, 446, 449.
Al-Raḍī in his reply to his friend used the same rhyming letter but he applied it pronounced with the vowel point kasraḥ. He also used the metre basīt instead of tawsīl. The first line is as follows:

The poet justified this alteration on the grounds that there was incongruity between the unwound letter nūn and the tawsīl meter. He found the metre basīt suitable with the rhyming letter nūn, using it with the vowel kasraḥ. In general, al-Raḍī paid attention to the congruity between metres and rhyming letters.

The third interesting aspect in al-Raḍī's poetry as far as the rhyme and rhythm are concerned is the use of internal rhymes (al-taṣrī). The poet enriched his poems by rhyming the end of both hemistiches of the opening line of his odes. He also similarly rhymed

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:

In the same ode he says:

In another he uses ṭarṣīl frequently. He says:

Then he goes on:

The poet used the internal rhythm (tarṣīl), which suggests, by internal rhyme, the division of the line into several sections. He says:

In another ode he also says:

Al-Raḍī shows success in applying internal rhyme to attach importance to some statements he wanted to make. He once says:

He also says:

He succeeded in combining internal rhyme with other sorts of rhetorical figures. In one of his odes he applied tarsī with kīnāyah, tībāq with jinās. He says:

2. Ibid., p. 173.
The poetical metres in Arab poetry number sixteen plus al-majzū'at 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'at 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. In second place comes kāmil and basīt then wāfir and khafīf. 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 13%, khafīf and raml 5%. In the Diwān of al-Mutanabbi the rates are as

2. Ibrāhīm Anīs op. cit., p. 59; see Khulūsy Fann al-Taqī', p. 43.
follows: tawil 26%, kāmil 19%, basīt 16% nāfir 14%, and rājaz 2%.

In al-Raḍī's poetry the rate of use of tawil 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 rājaz 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 tawil, 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-Ṣāḥib ʿAbbad and on his mother and father, in which he used kāmil, are a case in point.

The other interesting aspect of al-Raḍī's poetical composition is the increasing use of rājaz in different poetical themes. This metre is the oldest and the simplest of all Arab metres. It is considered himār al-shuʿarāʾ owing to its simplicity. It occurred in

Jāhiliite poetry and developed in the Umayyad age at the hand of the famous rajjāz al-ʿAjjaḥ (d. 90/708) and then his son Ruʿbah (d. 145/762). In the ʿAbbāsid period rajjāz declined. Rajjāz in general, is used in two forms. The first is similar to the qaʿيdah in which the poet applies 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 wरjūzah by the same rhyming letter throughout the poem.¹

Al-ʿRaḍā used rajjāz as one metre among others. He also composed the arājāz which forms 9% of his Diwān. This rate is rather high in comparison with his contemporaries. It is plain that al-ʿRaḍā made a contribution towards reviving this poetic art in a period of its decline. His pupil Mihyār also paid attention to rajjāz as his Diwān shows.² As for al-ʿRaḍā he applied rajjāz in his different poetical themes. It is likely he found it well-suited for certain types of these 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 ʿAlī al-Fārīsī rajjāz 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

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there in his *arājīz*, he exploited them well in conformity with his themes.

Before closing these observations on al-Raḍī'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 Diwān. In this ode he applied *al-kāmil al-ahadhīj* in which the feet run as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{ئر مي زيت رفائي البغير} \\
\text{--/u--/u-uu}
\end{array}
\]

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:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{سِيل يُصَب رعانيه كَنْنَم} \\
\text{--/u-uu/u--} \\
\text{--/u-uu/-u-uu/-u-uu}
\end{array}
\]

However, the above mentioned metrical deficiency does not mar the high degree of al-Raḍī's poetical talent displayed in his Diwān.

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Judging by what has already been mentioned, al-Radi'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-Mutanabbi, Abū Firās, to some extent, al-Radi and his brother al-Murtadā. Our poet's share in this is noticeable. 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 widespread in al-Radi's time, he is moderate in using them in comparison with his contemporaries. In this respect he stands side by side with al-Mutanabbi and Abū Firās.

It is interesting to trace some stylistic aspects of al-Radi's poetical composition which seem to be inherited from al-Mutanabbi. Although al-Radi took pains to outgrow some of al-Mutanabbi's poetical shortcomings and tried to assert his individual approach in his poetry, al-Mutanabbi's shadow still hovered over him. Al-Radi's

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 Shawqi Dayf observes, the poet shows a liking for the Kūfī school and sometimes goes to the point of applying rare usage rather than the common. He says:

1. [Underlined text]

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-Raḍī used this kind of exceptional form many times. He says:

2. [Underlined text]

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:

3. [Underlined text]

Al-Mutanabbī was criticised for his excessive use of the demonstrative pronoun dha and dhi. This is

3. Ibid., p. 300.
4. Jurjānī, p. 73.
considered a sign of weakness in poetry. Al-Raḍī 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. The frequent use of diminutive forms is
another joint aspect of both al-Raḍī's and al-Ṭutanabbi's
poetry. Al-Jurjānī justified al-Ṭutanabbi's use of these
forms for various purposes. Thus there are no grounds
to raise objections to al-Raḍī's application of them.
The final point which may be mentioned is the tendency
of al-Ṭutanabbi and al-Raḍī to apply rare and rough yet
eloquent verbs. However, our poet is less prone to this
than al-Ṭutanabbi.

As for the recurrent use of religious technical terms
in al-Raḍī's poetry, it has already been mentioned that
Shīʿite terms like ʿImām and al-fatā often occur in his
poetical composition. The spirit of Nahj al-Balāghah has
already been shown. Al-Raḍī 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 Allah sufficeth and he is
the best disposer. 2

\[
\text{إِنَّا لِلَّهِ، إِنَّا لَنَاسِيَتَنَا} \\
\text{اللَّهِ، رَبُّ الْكُرُورِ}
\]

Other references can be found in his Diwān. 3 Qur'ānic

619, 894, 949.
commentary by ʿAbd Allāh Yusūf Ṭalī, Lahore 1969, Vol. I,
p. 168, The Ayah 133, sec also p. 62, the Ayah 156.
terms are also used. He applied the verb yansakhū which means in the Qur'ānic sense that God abrogates a verse of the Qur'ān substituting for it another one. Al-Raḍī used it in his poetry as follows:

Security may abrogate (yansakhū) fear and the hope may overcome frustration.

To sum up, al-Raḍī, 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-Mutanabbi hovers over al-Raḍī's poetry here and there. However, al-Raḍī stood the test and did not lose his individual traits. Even when he imitated al-Mutanabbi and borrowed his meanings he did his best to improve upon him, despite his occasional failures.

CHAPTER XII

AL-RADI'S PLACE IN ARABIC LITERARY HISTORY

I am the pure gold which is treasured,
If put to the test by critic's hand.

أنا الفضَّل الذي يُخُذَّب
لو مُلْبَسٌ بِيْنٌ سَفَر

al-Radi
Al-Radî 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 Jinnî took pains to write a treatise on selected odes of al-Radî. Our poet was proud of this interest in his poems shown by such a great and well-known figure of that time, as his Diwan shows.\(^1\) The great writer Abû Ishâq al-Ṣâbi regarded him as the best poet and writer who ever existed. He said that nothing reached the ears better than al-Radî's poetry and prose.\(^2\)

Al-Radî's contemporary, the expert critic and anthologist al-Tha'ālibî illustrates the high place that al-Radî held in his age as follows: "He is moreover the ablest poet of all the descendants of Ḥârîb Ibn Abî Talîb, 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'ālibî made no analytical assessment or comparative study of al-Radî and his contemporaries, despite his familiarity with the poetical product of his time. However, he was impressed by the fact that al-Radî's

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2. Radî ibid, p. 94.
poetry was characterized by a combination of ease and majesty, facility with perfection of art. He added that those poems contain thoughts easy of comprehension and profound in meaning. Al-Tha'labi's zealous estimations imply that the critic placed al-Raḍī at the top of Qurashite poets, among whom were 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah, Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya, al-Walîd b. Yazīd, Ibn al-Mu'tazz, Ibn Tabātabā, al-Murtadā and others. It is plain that al-Tha'labi 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 Qurashite poets made remarkable contributions to Arab poetry. 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah and al-Walîd b. Yazīd are cases in point.

Nevertheless, al-Tha'labi'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 orientalists, as we shall learn later. Ibn Khallikān relates:

The Khatīb al-Baghdādī says in his history of Baghdad, that, being in the presence of Abū al-Husain b. Mahfūz, who held a high rank in the service of the empire, he heard the Kātib Abū 'Abd Allāh Muhammad 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 Mahfūz 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'labī had already declared in his Yatīmah. However, it lacks the basis of comprehensive and objective study. The anonymous men of letters and Ibn Makhfūz 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 Naqīyā al-Baghdādī (d. 482/1089). He was asked to pass judgement on al-Mutanābbī, Ibn Nubātah al-Sa'dī and al-Raḍī. He compared them with three men. The first (al-Mutanābbī) set up high buildings and castles. The second (Ibn Nubātah) came and pitched his tents and canopies around al-Mutanābbī’s buildings. The third (al-Ṣarīf al-Raḍī) came to settle, sometimes here and sometimes there. 3 Ibn Naqīyā’s comparison is rather vague. However,

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 Naqīyā was, to some extent, unfair. There is no doubt about al-Raḍī’s being influenced by al-Mutanabbi, but Ibn Mubātah’s impact on his poems is too limited to give it so much importance as Ibn Naqīyā attached to it. Nevertheless, the significance of this criticism lies in the fact that Ibn Naqīyā freed himself from the dogma of al-Raḍī’s poetical superiority which had already been stated.

The echoes of al-Tha`lab’s judgement on al-Raḍī and the others which were related by al-Baghdādī can be traced down to modern Arab scholars and some orientalists’ 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-Bāṣir’s work Fī al-Adab al-‘Abbāsī and Zakī Mubārak’s study on our poet.¹ ¹Abd 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.


3. “Abd al-Rahmān Shukrī, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī wa Khaṣṣīq Shi’rīh, Majallat al-Riḍāviyah, Cairo 1939, the seventh year, No. 267, pp. 5ff.
accepted, to some degree, al-Tha'alibi'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'alibi may be right." He also ranked al-Raḍī side by side with the famous poets of his time. He says: "Thus in the fourth Islamic century al-Ṣanaʿabārī 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-Murtada 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

3. 'Abd al-Raḍāq Muhīyī al-Dīn op. cit., p. 238.
of which runs as follows:

O, ohe-gaselle at al-Ban pasturing in its thickets.
Rejoice, for today my heart has become your own pasture.

Al-Murtadā composed an amatory ode on the same model as that of al-Radi using the same metre and rhyme-letter. He also borrowed many meanings from his brother's ode. The explanatory preface of al-Murtadā's ode indicates that he deliberately modelled his ode on that of al-Radi.

Al-Radi also influenced his apprentice the poet Mihyār al-Daylamī (d. 436/1036). This poet had been a fire-worshipper but afterwards he made his confession to Islam to al-Radi who was his tutor and under whom he received his training in poetry. 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-Radi's poetry and followed his method in poetical composition. He was also proud of being a faithful follower of al-Radi as far as poetry was concerned. He mentioned that his tutor, al-Radi, admired his poetry and encouraged him to compose in the method of the latter. A close examination of al-Radi's

 punitive and that of Mihyar shows that the points of similarity between their poetry are many and evident. Not only did Mihyar model many of his odes on those of al-Ra'di; but he also borrowed al-Ra'di's meanings, images and expressions. The bedouin spirit and religious tone which al-Ra'di's poetry reflects found their way into Mihyar's as well. In addition, the Hijaziyyat of al-Ra'di were imitated by Mihyar.¹

It is worth noting that the poetical importance and the range of al-Ra'di's influence on Arab poets became visible and increased from the fifth Islamic century onwards. The poets who imitated al-Ra'di'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-Ra'di directly and the second that other poets were influenced by al-Ra'di's pupil Mihyar. The latter also show their preference for al-Ra'di's poems and bear their stamp.²

In the fifth and early decades of the sixth Islamic centuries the two famous poets al-Abiwardi (d. 507/1113) and al-Tawhrid (d. 515/1121) were both influenced by al-Ra'di's poetry in many respects. Al-Tawhrid admired al-Mutanabbi and al-Ra'di's poetry from his youth but the mark of al-Ra'di's poetical influence became clearer later. As-ṢAli Jawād al-Ṭahir suggests, al-Tawhrid's love-poetry


seems to be a copy of that of al-Radi. In addition, al-Hijaziyyat of al-Radi had a remarkable influence over al-Taghri'î's poezy. Al-Radi's odes also served as models for many odes of al-Taghri'î. The latter composed a well-known ode called "Lamiyyat al-'Ujam" on which many commentaries were made, some of which indicate that the poet drew on a vast poetical heritage among which was al-Radi's poetry.

As for al-Abiwardi, his Diwan shows the extent to which he went in imitating al-Radi's poetry and modelling his odes on those of al-Radi. Both poets expressed their preference for the desert and bedouin life and revealed their profound longing for Najd, Hijaz and other places with religious associations. Moreover, al-Abiwardi composed a quantity of odes called al-Najdiyyat relating to Najd. There are points of similarity between al-Hijaziyyat and al-Najdiyyat. Furthermore, al-Radi's expressions and images found their equivalents in some of al-Abiwardi's odes.

The poetical influence of al-Radi's poetry can be traced to the last decade of the sixth Islamic century. Ibn Jubayr, for instance, relates in his travels that he


met the famous historian and great man of letters Ibn al-Jawzi (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-Jawzi) verse is al-Raḍī’s in temper but after the manner of Mihyār."¹ This remark suggests that al-Raḍī’s and Mihyār’s poetry had overlapping influences on some poets, and those who admired Mihyār revealed their leaning towards his teacher al-Raḍī as well. דיי' al-Dīn Ibn al-Athir shows us the tendency towards al-Raḍī and Mihyār’s poetry in his conversation with a man of letters in Damascus. This man committed to heart some of al-Raḍī’s and Mihyār’s poems. Ibn al-Athir tried to draw his attention to the amatory odes of Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbi. The man’s answer was that the love-poetry of al-Raḍī and Mihyār is fluid and simple, while that of Abū Tammām and al-Mutanabbi 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 Mihyār, 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-Ishbili indicates that al-Raḍī’s love-poetry


². al-Raḍīawi op. cit., p. 535.
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-Qastallī (d. 422/1030) and Ibn Khafājah al-Andalusi (d. 539/1144), were fond of al-Raḍī's poetry. Al-Tha’alibī in his Yatimah cites some specimens of Ibn Darrāj's poetry. The first two odes of al-Tha’alibī’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 Diwan that he had been fond of the poetry of al-Raḍī and Mihyar from his youth. His Diwan shows that he modelled some of his odes on those of al-Raḍī and his pupil Mihyar.³

It is interesting to note that in the seventh Islamic century the Sufi poet Ibn al-Farād (d. 632/1234) found in al-Hijāzīyyat 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-Hijāzīyyat found

a warm response from this Sufi poet. In the manner of al-Raḍī he expressed his longing for Mājd, Ḥijāz, Mecca and other religious places related to the pilgrimage. Sufi circles in general became familiar with al-Raḍī's love-poetry. His Hijāziyyāt found a brisk market in their conversations and gatherings as Ibn 'Arabi indicates in his work Muhādarāt 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 Sufis found something in common with al-Raḍī's love-poetry.

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 qaṣidas and apply them to their old and new themes. 'Abbāsid 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 'Abbāsid poets, in some of which he drew on al-Raḍī's poetry. In al-Bārūdī's Diwan 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-Fārid, Diwan, ed. by Karam al-Bustānī, Beirut 1957, see pp. 7-13, 29, 33, 126, 128.
chivalrous spirit and decency of al-Raḍī can be sensed in al-Burūḍī's ode. 1 Al-Raḍī's elegy on his friend al-Qābi also served as a model for al-Burūḍī'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 Mihyār formed a considerable number. The list includes the poets Haydar al-Hillī (d. 1883), 3Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. al-Sayyid Dāwūd (d. 1920), Saʿīd al-Ḥabbūbī (d. 1915) and ʾHasan b. al-Ḥājj Muḥammad (d. 1901). 3 Al-Ḥabbūbī's Diwān, 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 ʿUdhri 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-


Raḍī's poetry and its expanding and lasting impact on Arab poets it is fair to reconsider the assumption that the qa'idas of the last 150 years probably owe more to al-Mutanabbi than to any other classical poet. Al-Raḍī shared with al-Mutanabbi the poetical influence on Arab poetry in general and in the last 150 years in particular. Furthermore, al-Raḍī'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-Raḍī seems to be able to stand on a par with him in this respect.

Al-Raḍī can be placed in the top rank of poets, in comparison with his contemporaries like his brother al-Murtaḍā, 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-Raḍī. His brother al-Murtaḍā followed al-Buḥṭurī'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-Murtaḍā did not pay constant attention to revising and improving his odes as al-Raḍī did. Accordingly, al-Raḍī's poetical composition seems to be more perfect than that of his brother. In love-poetry al-Raḍī's melancholic sentiment

and profound and tender feelings made his ghazals charming and touching while al-Murtada fell short in this respect. In addition, there is no ground on which to compare al-Raḍī’s elegies with those of al-Murtada which seem, in contrast, to be artificial and lacking an individual touch. Al-Salāmī, who was highly regarded by al-Thaʿālibī, also proved his descriptive talent in his poetry. However, he failed to come up to the level of al-Raḍī in other poetical themes. Al-Raḍī can stand the test of comparison with Ibn Nubātah al-Sāʿīdī. This poet like al-Raḍī represented a bedouin and traditional style in his poetry. Nevertheless, the urban elements which were limited in al-Raḍī’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-Raḍī.

It is convenient to draw up a comparison between al-Raḍī and Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī. 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 ṫūmiyyāt which reflect his own bitter experiences in prison and exile. In other poetical themes al-Raḍī seems to be more successful, particularly in elegy and love-poetry. As for poetical style, al-Raḍī 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-Mutanabbi, it has become plain that our poet drew on this great poet as well as other sources. However, the qualities of al-Mutanabbi, 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. He also was able to limit some poetical shortcomings which he inherited from al-Mutanabbi. 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-Mutanabbi. 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-Mutanabbi'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-Thaʿalibī and those who came after him awarded al-Raḍī the title of "a master of elegy". His Shiʿite 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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