TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

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ARABIC LITERATURE: POETICS AND STYLISTICS. IV: MEDIEVAL ARABIC PANEGYRIC: TRADITION AND CREATIVE PERSONALITY

Classical Arabic poetry refers to the traditionalistic type of art and, as a specific form of artistic creation, possesses its own peculiar features. By starting from the beginning of the 20th c., scientists have devoted a lot of attention to examining just what exactly makes it peculiar. However, most of their works have a sufficient drawback. The specifics of creative principles of medieval Arab poetry and the forms according to the norms of the European literature poetics of the 19th—20th c., which led to misunderstanding of medieval poetics and underevaluation of aesthetic importance of classical Arabic poetry.

In the interpretation of scholars of the first half of the 20th c., medieval canons were a burden for Arabic poets and limited their art: only the most outstanding authors could resist them. However, even their art looks like a "lance aux chaînes" (the leerolit of R. Blache's book) about a great Arabic poet al-Mutanabbi (1). What concerns poets of average talent, they did not have a chance to create artistically valuable works and either imitated "old" authors, or created versifications which were technically perfect but of no aesthetic value.

According to this interpretation, all of the best examples of classical Arabic poetry were rewrites of overriding canons — works which were created against the principle of canons which lay at the core of creative activity of medieval Arabic authors. The weak point of the abovementioned interpretation is that it considers a whole creative system to be a defective one.

To define the specifics of a certain unfamiliar phenomenon it must be compared with a known phenomenon. This is what the researchers of the first half of the 20th c. did. However, it is totally wrong to say that in the context of the Arabic poetry and its poetics were one-sided. They managed to show (and they were very convincing in that) that the factors which make up aesthetic value of literary works of the 19th—20th c. Europe do not work or are limited in classical Arabic literature. However, these scholars failed to make an opposed comparison necessary for a typologically correct description of a phenomenon. They did not ask themselves a question whether there were specific factors which were different from the contemporary ones and which were capable of creating an artistic value in a literature based on canons.

It is necessary to make another preliminary remark. The incomprehension of classical Arabic poetry by scholars of the second half of the 19th—first half of the 20th c. is least of all incomprehension of an "exotic" culture by the Europeans, as sometimes specialists in Arabic studies of the earlier generation declare. It lies in incomprehension by the 19th—20th c. people of medieval culture on the whole (and Arabic-Muslim poetry as part of this culture). One can make certain of that if we look at what the Europeans said about their own medieval culture. More than a hundred years ago a coryphée of Provencal studies Friedrich Dief wrote a phrase which for a long time determined the attitude of researchers towards works of traditionalistic type: all old Provencal literature "can be taken for works by one poet" [2]. Such ideas were expressed by many first-rate researchers of the art of troubadours at the end of the 19th—beginning of the 20th c., as well as by specialists on other literatures of antiquity and the Middle Ages. As early as in the beginning of the 1920s—1930s it was fashionable among researchers to express regrets about little individual look at books and the medieval literature, in particular "mistakes of many works created in the period of domination of traditionalistic creative consciousness.

The actuality of the question of one-sided approach to Arabic classical literature has become especially evident in the last four or five decades under the influence of the process of reconsideration of many historical, cultural and literary problems of the Middle Ages. As we do not have the possibility to discuss this subject in detail, we will only look at books and the medieval literature, and in them at numerous works on medieval literatures' poetics and will distinguish in them two ideas which, in our opinion, are especially important for the understanding of the nature of medieval Arabic poetry.

According to the first one, canons in literature are results of a certain type of social consciousness, the existence of which is determined by many objective factors, and as such, can not act as a limiting factor in the development of literature. They appear and act in the conditions of domina-
tion of a certain type of ideology. They disappear with the decay of this type of ideology.

According to the second one, the system of canons in limited time overcomes sufficient transformations and evolves following changes in ideology, as well as under the influence of immanent laws of canonical art itself, which explains the existence of a "double" and the "triple" or even "upper" (up to several centuries) preservation of its creative activity.

The above-mentioned one-sidedness led to characteristic features in the assessment of the whole of Arabic poetry, as well as of its separate genres, in particular madhūb. As many authoritative researchers state, it is a stark, invariable (or slightly changing over centuries genre which does not give freedom for an artist. More than 90 years ago L. Ju. Knechtkovskii wrote about the panegyrics of the 10th c. scholar al-Wa'aw as about something self-evident:

"We cannot count on peculiar originality here — the hero has long become a banal type and it would be a waste of time to try to find in him any portrait features in al-Wa'aw's poems as well as it would as it is among the works of a representative of the earlier or later epochs." [3]

Ca. seventy years another authoritative scholar in Arabic literature R. Blache described madhūb in 10th c. Syria in the following words:

"Le foist on est malheureusement d'une pauvreté et d'une monotone exaspérante. Pour les panégyristes c'est un sort terrible, qu'on ne pardonnera pas [...] comme un coup de mort aux poètes qui se prêtent aux étoffes "les mosaiques aboutissement hyperboliques" [4].

Almost in the same words R. Blache spoke about the panegyrics of a great Arabic poet al-Mutanabbi (915—965). According to the scholar, al-Mutanabbi represents the type of a "poète courisan qui n'appartiennent à aucun temps et à aucun lieu, de même pour une bonne partie son oeuvre est impénitrable, apparaît plutôt comme l'émancipation artistique d'un milieu que comme la projection d'un homme", a "foist on est malheureusement d'une pauvreté et d'une monotone exaspérante. Pour les panégyristes c'est un sort terrible, qu'on ne pardonnera pas [...] comme un coup de mort aux poètes qui se prêtent aux étoffes "les mosaiques aboutissement hyperboliques" [4].

Continuing this line, we would like to raise in the pre-

sent article the problem of correlation of madhūb with reality, tradition and creative individuality, based on the idea that these correlations will have a special, compared with modern literature, character. Let us try to get into the inside world of praise by one famous Andalusian poet Ibn Darragh al-Qastalli (958—1030) written in the honour of the actual ruler of Muslim Spain al-Mansur (976—1002).

To Ibn Darragh of Cordova, the capital of the Umayyad caliphate in Arabic Spain, where at that time the all-powerful al-Mansur (prime-minister) of the Umayyad caliph al-Hakam II was strongly in power and was coming to the peak of his fame. Here is a short characteris-
tic that the greatest contemporary historian of Muslim Spain E. Lévi-Provençal gave to him: al-Mansur proved oneself an "éminence de la gloire de l'islam dans la Pénin-
sule ibérique", recorded "aux fastes de l'empire hispano-
arabe, au sommet des élans de la souveraineté christi-
tienne", for more than twenty years he seemed "comme le seul et véritable souverain d'al-Andalus, tandis que le calife en titre..." and was "tant à l'arrière-plan de la scène politique" [10]. According to Arabic sources, during his reign al-Mansur organized not less than fifty-seven successful military campaigns against Chris-

In the period between 992 and 1002 Ibn Darragh dedi-
cated more than 30 works to al-Mansur. A sufficient part of the panegyrics is connected with military actions against the
enemies of the Cordova caliph's power (starting a campaign, returning back from a successful campaign, capturing key cities, establishing new caliphates, at the time of the Cordova caliph's power). Let us try to look at these works from the point of view of their documental and historical accuracy. It is known that Ibn Darrūjī's works appear in the history of Andalusia that we possess there is too little information about military campaigns of Muslims against Christians in the epochs of Ibn Darrūjī and Ibn Mayūr (12). But Ibn Darrūjī's works do not fill this gap. On the contrary, only using the data from historians' works makes it possible to "decode" the information in Ibn Darrūjī's panegyrics. From the Dwālīs itself we can sometimes infer the date if a poem was written (from the medieval comment to a poetic text), almost always the recipient (from the comment and the text of the praise), occasionally the occasion (from comments and in exceptional cases from the text), sometimes the names of enemies of the person praised (from comments and the text), sometimes the places where events took place (usually from the text).

Thus, if the comments do not contain the date and references to the occasion, then it was written, it is exceptionally difficult to determine their basis on the text only. We do not speak here about the absence of important comments (which is in the case of most panegyrics, additional historical information does not often help. The "value documentary" of panegyrics is very limited and at some cases is insignificant. This leads us to the conclusion that "works on some occasion" which, as it seems, should have been connected with reality, have little "value documentary".

However, this is not all. Insignificant documentary correct details in the panegyrics by Ibn Darrūjī become surrounded with elements of opposite meaning. Thus, for example, in the Dwālīs praising describing his "deeds" the poet uses stable elements. In the appearance of the praised only one feature is noted which is connected with the fact of praise - this leads us to the fact that the model is not only noted, but in some cases is deliberately "replaced" in poetic work even more important, greater in importance to depict the function of an object rather than its appearance[32].

This peculiarity of composition and creation a roughly determined portrait of the praised. Comparisons point at moral merits of the praised, traditional rather than individual advantages are praised and must be presented. Panegyrics were dedicated in a certain person, however this did not mean that the poet had to represent in his work specific features of that person. Panegyric is not a 19th-20th c. portrait-painting and one should not speak of the object with the "model". Although certain details in the image of an ideal praised may bring it closer to the "portrayed", this happens, unlike, not as a result of painting, but at such traditional feature in the image of a praised as his noble origin.

Ibn Darrūjī's Dwālīs were really of noble origin and Ibn Darrūjī in his works mentions real ancestors of the khawāj. However, in his panegyrics dedicated to other rulers of Andalusia Ibn Darrūjī often lacks “ancestors" for the glory of the emirs. The Dwālīs is dedicated to "Ali b. Hāmid (33), the poet keeps speaking about noble old Arab roots of the Berber (1) ruler (r. 6-7-66), and there are many such examples in Ibn Darrūjī's Dwālīs.

In the works of modern research such "inaccuracies" are usually viewed as defect, the tendency to ascribe to the praised of low achievements, in order to defend the claims for power. Such explanation seems to be incorrect. Such "inaccuracies" must not have been a secret for the critics the Dwālīs is devoted to classical Arab poetry, and there are many cases when the Dwālīs is either told lies which were deemed beforehand, or flattened. It seems that either case would not come have brought him."
would be noticeably different from the preceding ones: a more intensive use of a certain motif or, on the contrary, a more frequent use of the lines of a universal genre scheme individual author’s accent and sufficiently affected the poem on the whole.

A study of panegyric by Ibn Darraj [42] in the aspect of the relation between the praised (mamduh) and the praiser (maltah).

A study of panegyric by Ibn Darraj at al-Mansur’s meeting on December 2nd, 992. It begins immediately from a panegyric theme. The poet states that his "heart and life, his beauty and his generosity" indeed has no limits and who is always accompanied by luck (b. 1–4). Then he speaks about the generosity that were addressed to the praiser (b. 5–9).

In this context, there are many kinds of gradual and poetical works were addressed to the praiser (b. 20–21)."Will the truth shame?" — the poet does not approach his sovereign who too trusting listens to slanderers (b. 23–31).

The poet says: "And I am not the first, whose works are burdened with the handicap of my inspiration is inscrutable. The praise is eager to show how high are his skills in poetry, prose, eloquence (b. 32–40).

The poet emphasizes his duty to his noble master, and he also says that he does not have a different fate: "Among all my hopes I only set my hope upon God" (b. 41–56). The poet performs his duty in front of God, helping the true faith’s advocate and the legal heir “crowned to reign”, who defeats "huge turban" of Islam’s enemies (b. 45–56). "The world handed the reins of government" to the sovereign not only generous, but also wise, who can hide his fury (b. 57–59).

The poet concludes with an address to his sovereign: "And the sword of the right way you took out only to make the blood of the enemies of Allah flow. Let the day of glory be proud of you, oh, al-Mansur, you left nothing to the past glorious days but to be proud of it" (b. 29–30).

The story of the praise in this qasida does not come to the forefront. The praiser is only present in the poet’s praise to make a “fair” assessment of the deeds of the praised who answered “the call of Allah”. There is no place left in this qasida for personal relations between the praiser and the praised, the personality of the praiser is absorbed in the panegyric. The poet laureate is absorbed and play a second part. However, these motives are present in the qasida, and the image of the praised, which demonstrates some personal relations between creator and his audience. The emphasis placed on traditional motives in the praiser’s art and the lack of the patron’s favour and ignorance of his good intentions and merits, turn the “praise” into a “complaint”.

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Qasida No. 120 was written by Ibn Darraj under the impression from al-Mansur’s campaign in Santiago de Compostela, which was the first conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, beginning from the 9th c. became the most famous place of the Christians’ pilgrimage in Western Europe. Santiago was then reached by the frontier of Santiago and the folds of the town’s gates; the latter were then used for the roof of the nave attached to the big mosque of the Christians (b. 2–4).

In the panegyric Ibn Darraj shows the atmosphere of the expedition. The fall of Santiago is depicted as the biggest victory over “paganism”, “atheism” (b. 5–6).

Then the poet tells about the role which Santiago had played for all European Christians and describes pilgrimage to the grave of the apostle, and the “brilliant victory” of the army of the truth led by al-Mansur: “A great place for (Santiago) to the fire in which all faithless — each and every one — turned into ashes. Oh, a beautiful scene over the righteous men, oh, what delight for the hearts of Muslims in a temporal term of eternity” (b. 15–16).

And the end of the picture — the description of Ber- murdo II (982–999), a Christian king’s escape who in this campaign followed Al-Mansur (b. 17–22). Bermurdo II will not escape his fate. The poet addresses al-Mansur: “Can he defeat you, when you took out your sword of the right way and the victory appearing in front of him?” (b. 22). In bayan 23 — 4 he speaks about the devastation of the town of Iria Flavia (24 km from Santiago). The end of the panegyric is dedicated to the assessment of al-Mansur’s military campaign (b. 25–30), it also stresses the sufficient contribution of the Muslim leader in the victory.

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The epoch which put Ibn Darraj forward will become past. Andalusia will never again be as powerful military and economically as in the 10th c. Not a single poet, author of panegyrics, until the end of Muslim domination on the Pyrenean Peninsula will be able to claim, according to medieval historians, for the role of the “tongue of his time” and to speak on behalf of al-Andalus. It is a famous poem, and the Almoravid and Almohad’s adoration of the Andalusian and Qasida ‘if’ and the Almoravid reign the authors of panegyrics will base in their work on different ideas and concepts ofthe world compared with the poems of the 10th c. And their praises will sound in a different way.

The “holy war” subject will still appear in the works of the time that author’s (Muslim Spaniards), but it will sound in a different way as an echo of an age like an echo. The advance of Christianity and the gradual retreat of Islam will be depicted as an inevitable catastrophe in the oppositions between the good and the evil and as a sign of the forthcoming end of the world. That is why along with the theme of the “holy war” in their works there will appear eschatological motifs. The theme of the “holy war” will shift from praises to the lamentations about the lost “lands of Islam”.

In panegyrics the poets will wish happiness and prosperity to their patrons, as well as long years and wealth. Of course, the military theme will not disappear completely from Arabic panegyric. The poets will glorify the successes of their sires on battlesfields (for example, Ibn Zaydun and Ibn Ansar) will praise the conquests of the rulers (of Seville) but this will not be the main theme in their works. It is possible, that in the changing conditions the type of the monarch-wracher could not be the main “icono- graphical” type of the praised in Andalusian art.

The contents of panegyric poetry of Andalusia changed throughout the 10th c. under the influence of economic, historical and other factors — in this respect it was Andalusian poetry inspired by Andalusian conditions. That is why the analysis of Andalusian praises as documents of the epoch which reflected the concepts and the spirits of certain layers of Andalusian society must give sufficient data in the epoch, which is far more important than the results of the obsolete “documental” analysis of these works. The analysis of Andalusian praises shows that tradition provided the authors with specific resources for demonstrating their creative individuality within the limits of canons of classical Arabic poetry.

Notes

5. Ibid., p. 343.
7. Ibid., p. 90.
11. Ibid., p. 225.
12. Ibid., p. 324.
14. Ibid., No. 101, a, 45.
15. Ibid., No. 130, a, 45.
16. Ibid., No. 102, a, 32.
The life of the text and the fate of tradition. V: Method of allegorical interpretation of the Qur'ān (ta'wīl) and the symbolic language of Persian poetry of the 11th—12th centuries

M. Reisner

The use of the symbolic-allegorical method of the Qur'ān interpreting called ta'wīl [1] as the basis for formation of the norms of esoteric expression in the sphere of mystical practice of Islam is well-known. However, the stages of formation of this specific language and its fixation in the canon of classical Persian poetry, as well as the real contribution of certain authors into this process, which began in the 11th c., has not been studied enough, if we mean the literary, or, to put it more precisely, the poietological aspect of the matter rather than the ideological-religious or predilect aspect.

The opposition of the allegorical comments on the Qur'ān and the anna suggested by the Bāṭīts (ahl al-bā’īn, al-bā’īnyūs) [2] and the literal, historical-philological and juridical-preretorical interpretation called tafsīr ("comment", "interpretation") based on the tradition, did not appear suddenly and was not absolute. The method of allegorical interpretation of the Qur'ān arose in the 5th c. in the circle of the extreme Sā‘ītīs in Iraq, and was later developed by the followers of Ismā‘īlism of all trends, who were the first to be referred to as the Bā’ītin. As a result of the dispute between the supporters of the literal interpretation of the Holy Book, the Zāhīrits (al-zāhīriyya, al-qādī al-‘ām) and those who strove to comprehend its "hidden" meaning, the Islamic community split up. With time the medieval Muslim theologians began to rank among the Bā’ītists, along with the followers of Ismā‘īlism, the supporters of Sūfism, as well as the Mu’tazilīs [3] and other adherents of rationalistic ideas in Islam. The Mu’tazilīs, following other commentators of the Qur’ān, divided dīwān into the "clear" (muḥkamāt) and "vague" (muḥkamāt) verses. The latter, which, according to them, disagreed with common sense, had to be viewed as circumlocutions (muṣbūṭ).

It was the Ismā‘īlīs and Sūfī preachers who introduced the corresponding principles of words' treatment into the literature in the Persian language, including the poetry. Especially intensively Persian poetry developed in the 11th c. in the direction of formation of the "innermost" language. If we speak about the explicitly expressed justifications of the "bā’īnic" principle of words' treatment, the most valuable material is contained in the qaṣīdas by a zealous preacher of Ismā‘īlism and didactic poet Nāṣir-i Khusrav (1064—1088). He was a figure typical of the early stage in the development of the mystical-allegorical trend in the Persian poetry: being at the same time a religious philosopher and poet, he acted not only as an outstanding reformer of the Persian qaṣīda, but also as a theorist of poetry, eagerly talking about its nature and purpose in his works themselves.

In Nāṣir-i Khusrav’s qaṣīdas we can find quite a few statements about the religious aspects of the notion of ta’wīl, which in this or that way are projected on the sphere of poetic constructions:

The body of faith — is the outer [knowledge], while its soul — ta’wīl [is inner knowledge — M. R.], // can a body live without a soul in this world?

If you are alive, why have you died for faith, // unless you heart has been caught in the snare of passions? [4]

In another text the author talks about the nature of faith even more directly, associating its body with the word of the Prophet (i.e. the Qur’ān), and its soul — with the word of his only rightful, according to the Shi‘ites and the Ismā‘īlīs, successor, the fourth pious caliph ‘Alī:

The faith is a palace (aūrā) erected by the Prophet, // so that each mortal enters it calmly...

‘All and his family are gates to that [palace], // blessed are those who enter this house.[5]

Apart from the Prophet Muhammad (al-nūjūm, lit. “the speaking”) [6] and his successor (al-āmīn, al-μαμīn) [7] caliph ‘Alī, other prophets worshiped by the Ismā‘īlīs are also united into such constant pairs. Shīf (Sīf), Sīm, Ismā‘īl, Hārūn, Shāh-i ‘Inān (Sīmūn — obviously, Simon Pet-ter, one of the apostles) were considered the successors of the prophets Ādām, Nūh, Ibrāhīm, Mīlād and ‘Īsā correspondingly. Characterizing as-ṣīlah as the innermost knowledge (al-‘ilm), Nāṣir-i Khusrav mentions the successors, who perform the same function of the “gates of faith” as ‘Alī in the pair with the Prophet Muhammad:

Search for [science] of ta’wīld, as for the Jews // it is the word of instruction of Viša‘īr” ben Nīl [8]

Ta’wīl in the dark night is for Christians // the candle and icon-lamp of ‘Īsā and Shām’īn [9].