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AN ANONYMOUS ANDALUSIAN ELEGY ON THE WAR OF GRANADA

Sami A. HANNA
2625 SE Market Street, Portland, OR 97214-4946, U.S.A.

The war of Granada, one of the decisive milestones of the defeat of the Andalusian Arabs and their final departure from Spain in the fifteenth century is here commemorated by an Andalusian elegy.

There has been and there still is a great deal of disagreement among scholars about certain Andalusian elegies, especially those concerned with the fall of great cities, castles and cultural centres in the hands of the Christians which marked the final departure of the Arabs from Spain in the fifteenth century.

During that period, many Arab poets witnessed the great fall and destruction of Arab Spain. Some of them, such as Abū al-Baqā' al-Rundī[1] whose elegies are cited by many scholars, wept for the great losses and cried for help through poetic elegies. Among these great cities and cultural centres which fell, Granada seems to have captured those poets' imagination, emotions and appeals.[2] Moreover, Granada seems to have maintained the intellectual traditions and cultural life which were earlier carried on by the Muwaḥḥidīn. Its culture in general was typically Islamic with its very own character (Al-Dāyah 1976: 26).

Most of the poetry of that period was a direct or indirect echo of the war between the Muslims of Andalusia and their Christian enemies. It was a literature depicting the Andalusians' calamity for losing parts of their country and inciting the people to stand up and continue fighting. The call for *jihād,* the continuation of the struggle and the mourning of the last Muslim country and cities became the major theme of the Andalusian poets. There are many factors which seem to have contributed to the spread of this kind of poetry, such as the gradual "shrinking of the

[1] His full name is Ṣāliḥ ibn Yazīd ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Mūsā ibn ᶜAlī ibn Sharīf al-Nafzī al-Rundī, known as Abū al-Ṭayyib or Abū al-Baqā'. Al-Maqarrī, in *Nafḥ al-ṭīb,* was the first to give him the agnomen Abū al-Baqā' (See Muḥammad Raḍwān al-Dāyah, *Abū al-Baqā' al-Rundī.* Bayrūt: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1976, pp. 11, 33)

[2] Cf. AL-MAQARRĪ, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb,* iv, 510.

Andalusian region, the feeling of the Andalusian that he is gradually being suffocated" and the strong sense of belonging and attachment to the Andalusian soil.

Careful examination of the Andalusian elegies reveals three major elegial trends: first, the elegies for the lost cities which fell in the hands of the Spaniards; second, the elegies for the petty States which were lost during the Arab rule of Andalusia and third, the elegies for the cities which were destroyed as a result of political or social circumstances, such as the destruction of Córdoba after the Berbers strife and that of Alhir after the exodus of its inhabitants (ibid.: 81-2).

In this research we are primarily concerned with the first trend, namely, the elegies for lost cities which fell in the hands of the Christians. More specifically, the purpose of this paper is to bring to light once more an anonymous Andalusian elegy which could have been mishandled, as highlighted since its discovery in Algeria by its real founder (cf. Makki 1980: 361-382), to shed some light on certain important poetic aspects in relation to the tragic fall of great Andalusian cities and, finally, to provide scholars with an edited English translation of the French document for further research. The elegy under discussion was first published in Algeria (1914-1919) in both French and Arabic. It was discovered and investigated by Ṣaualaḥ Muḥammad in Algiers (1914-1919).[3]

The investigator, however, dismisses the idea that the present elegy is authored by the well known poet Abū al-Baqā' al-Rundī. Comparing the elegy with another one, by Abū al-Baqā', included in al-Maqarrī's *Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, translated into French by Grangeret de Lagsange and quoted by Ṣaualaḥ, the investigator strongly believes that the two elegies are quite different. While the anonymous elegy's metre is *ṭawīl* and its rhyme is *-ruhā*, the other's metre is *basīṭ* and its rhyme is *-ani*.

Description of the manuscript:

According to the investigator, the manuscript of the elegy is recorded in the National Library Catalogue in Algiers under No. 1627. It consists of eight leaves (15x20 cm); fifteen pages are full except the first page which is blank. The second page contains nine verses, each of the following thirteen pages contains ten verses while the last page contains only five verses, with a total of one hundred and forty four verses, written in dark ink called *smar*. The Arabic script is clearly *maghribi*. The name of God and the Prophet Muḥammad, as well as Islamic terms and expressions and the names of cities are written in larger letters. Many words are fully vocalized and the original copier added a number of useful explanations in red.

Obviously, the manuscript of the elegy is a copy which is dated "Sunday, the second tenth of the month of Shaᶜbān of the year 897 H (June 10, 1492)".

The analysis of the elegy:

The anonymous author begins his elegy with a question which is a rather innovative starting point of an Arabic *qaṣīda*. The question, addressed to a friend (or

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[3] See Ṣaualaḥ Muḥammad, *Une élégie andalouse sur la guerre de Grenade.* (Texte arabe traduit, annoté et commenté.) Alger: A. Jourdan, Éditeur, 1914-1919.

friends) is concerned with the fall of the city of Runda in the hands of the Christians (Ṣaualaḥ 45-46: verses 1-4). In an unusual feeling of shock, the poet asks his friend: "Is it true that the well-fortified city of Runda has fallen in the hands of the Christians? Is it true that the Sun of Islam has set on it for ever? Is it true that darkness befell all over it, that its gardens and palaces had been shaken, that its inhabitants were alarmed, that its buildings were destroyed and that its thrones were demolished?"

Then the poet compares Runda's imperviousness with its recent condition: one a symbol of Islam, now in the hands of the Christians where statues and icons are worshipped, where the church bells toll and its inhabitants suffer from adversities and misfortunes, victims of murder and captivity (ibid.: 46-47, verses 5-9). Further, the poet paints a detailed picture of Runda: the mosques had been transformed to churches; the call for prayer from the minarets had disappeared; the *miḥrāb* is complaining of its deep sadness to the pulpit (ibid.: 50, verses 24-27). The young men gallantly fought and died in glory; the beautiful young girls ended up as hostages in the hands of the enemy; the elderly people suffered from thirst and hunger; the children were forced to change their religion. To poet himself death appears to be much sweeter than living under such conditions (ibid.: 51-55, verses 28-52).

Having accepted the painful fact that Runda had died, the poet once more asks whether Runda could rise again and regain its Islamic character as before, where the call for prayer could be reheard loud and clear and those who were impoverished regain their wealth. Indeed, the fall of Runda had shaken all of Andalusia, its homes, its cities, its ports, its hills and valleys. Everybody was dressed in mourning clothes and every living being expressed his grief; even the mountains would melt and the rivers would dry out in mourning for the separation of the religion brought forth by the Prophet Muḥammad (ibid.: 56-58, verses 54-63).

In the following verses, the poet compares the tragedy of Runda to the sort of other Andalusian cities: Malaga, al-Gharbiyya, Velez, al-Munecar, al-Iqlim, Granada, Gaudiy, Baza and, finally, Almeria (ibid.: 58-62, verses 64-87).[4] To Almeria, the poet gives closer attention: he asks his friends to bid it farewell and leave it to Almighty God who defends it best. "It is the home of your grandparents and mine as well and give her my renewed regards" (verses 86-91).

Finally, the poet speculates about the cause of the calamity that befell the Muslims: they forgot their obligations toward God and the formidable enemy took advantage of their weakness (verses 92-101). Nevertheless, the poet envisages a remedy to the situation: return to the practice of the divine duties and obligations, repentance, submission to God, paying the *zakāt* and the establishment of justice

[4] It is interesting to note that the poet described each of these cities in two verses. To Granada, however, he devoted nine verses. He depicted it as the residence of the superior, the seat of the government (verses 74-75), unparalleled by anything in the ancient Iraq (*al-ʿirāqayn*) or in the whole world (76), defeated by sorrow (77), its inhabitants are mentally bewildered and ist Sultan and its visitors all are as in a funeral (78); all people are stunned by horror (79-80) and the surrounding fortifications are in tears (81).

(verses 102-133). The elegy is closed by the poet's imploring the Prophet Muḥammad to intercede in favour of their supplication (verses 134-142).

Who is the author of the elegy?

Ṣaualaḥ admits that one might be inclined to attribute the poem to the elegial poet Ṣāliḥ ben Sharīf, born in Runda and living there to the end of the fifteenth century, who composed an elegy on a number of cities which fell in the hands of the Spaniards (Ṣaualaḥ: 16-17). Furthermore, the investigator adds more conclusive argument to his hypothesis. Comparing two elegies, the one by Ṣāliḥ ben Sharīf and the one under discussion, he sees certain "communion of sentiments" between the two:

les contrées abandonnées sont devenues la proie de l'incrédulité
the abandoned regions have become the booty of the infidels;
les mosqées sont transformées en églises avec des cloches et des croix
the mosques were transformed into churches with bells and crosses;
les chaires se couvrent de larmes et se lamentent
the seats are covered with tears and bewailing themselves;
les habitants réduits à l'esclavage après avoir été des maîtres
the residents were reduced to slaves after having been masters;
les mères sont séparées de leurs enfants
the mothers were separated from their children;
les splendides jeunes filles sont condamnées à des épreuves humiliantes
the gorgeous young girls were condemned to humiliating ordeals;
le poète excite les Musulmans à la vengeance
the poet incites the Muslims to vengeance (Ṣaualaḥ: 17-18).

Despite some features of similarity, on the ground of the investigation and comparison presented, one is nevertheless led to believe that the two pieces are the work of two different poets. As for the literary and poetic style, both elegies, in Ṣaualaḥ's opinion, are far from expressing the same thought. The most decisive proof, however, seems to be derived from chronology. From the evidence, provided by al-Maqarri (*Nafḥ al-Ṭīb*, ii, 782), one can infer that Abū al-Baqā' died before the fall of Baza (December 5, 1489), but the author of the anonymous elegy has alluded to the siege of Granada which took place later on (viz., *qui eut lieu beaucoup plus tard*).

As for the origin of the poet, Ṣaualaḥ seems to admit the possibility that he might come from Almeria:

"the sojourn of my noble forefathers and cradle of my origin,
the first stead which nourished me with its generosity" (verse 89).

Nevertheless, the commentator, undoubtedly a contemporary, contradicts such an opinion noting that the city in question is not Almeria but al-Gharbiyya, a province belonging to Malaga (Ṣaualaḥ 20). From this, Ṣaualaḥ concludes that the poet is a native of that region, i.e. that the author of the elegy cannot be identical with Abū al-Baqā' al-Rundī.

Poetic features of the elegy (based on Ṣaualaḥ's evidence):

The anonymous elegy reveals some features peculiar to Arabic classical poetry. In the first place, there is analogy in the form. The erotic introduction (*nasīb*) of the Arabic *qaṣīda* is lacking as postulated for the classical elegy but the poet, in tune with the poetic tradition, did not fail to address a fictitious friend to help him in these moments of sadness.

In the second place, as with earlier poets, the chronological order is found of no relevance. After lamenting the fate of Ronda, conquered on May 1485, the poet mentions the conquest of Malaga (1487), Velez (1487), Almunecar (1489), al-Iqlim (1491), Granada (1492), then backwards, Gaudix, Baza and Almeria (1489).

The lack of proportion forms a third point of resemblance. In the elegy there are sixty three verses devoted to Ronda, nine to Granada, the capital of the last Moorish dynasty, and only two verses to Malaga. The final fate of each of the other cities is expressed in two verses (ibid.: 23ff).

There is no doubt that the style of the elegy is the usual style of Arab authors.

The use of comparisons:

wa-ṭaᶜnin yurī-l-ḫaṭṭiyya fī muhaji l-'aᶜdā'

ka'aqlāmin ḏāti-l-ḫaṭṭi ḫuṭṭat suṭūruhā (verse 119)

"the plunging spears in the enemy's blood

look like pencils drawing their own lines".

Further, Ṣaualaḥ emphasized the poet's skill in playing with words, his ability to exploit lexical means offered by derivation, skillful use of alliteration, assonance and other means, such as:

al-'aḏān (the call for prayer) - *al-'āḏān* (ears), as in: *wa-hal tasmaᶜu-l-'āḏānu ṣawta-l-'aḏāni* (55); or:

ḫaffa (to decrease, become little) - jaffa (to become dry), as in: *faqad ḫaffa nādīhā wa-jaffa naḍīruhā* (69); or:

ma'mūmuhā (its citizens) - *'imāmuhā* (its Sultan); as in: *wa-mamūmuhā sāhī-l-ḥijā'*

wa-'imāmuhā (78); or:

zā'iruhā (its visitor) - *mazūruhā* (its native); as in: *wa-zā'iruhā fī ma'tamin wa-mazūruhā* (ibid.); etc.

Another important feature is the poet's search for antitheses which are frequent in Classical poetry, e.g.: the sweetness of sugar (sukkar) contrasting with the bitterness of colocynth (*ᶜalqam*): *wa-sukkaruhā qad buddila-l-yawma ᶜalqamā* (70), or:

mourning garments (*ṯawb al-ḥidād*) vs. joyous ones: (*malābis ḥusn*): *wa-qad labisat ṯawba-l-ḥidādi wa-mazzaqat * malābisa ḥusnin kāna yazhū ḫubūruhā* (60), etc.

Ṣaualaḥ gives due attention to various poetic scenarios borrowed by the anonymous poet from various Classical sources. The rainy clouds presented as a good omen may be quoted as one of typical examples (verse 14).

The Holy Qur'ān is reflected in a number of places. For example, the poet alludes to the story of Moses known as the interlocutor to God (*kalīmu-llāh*):

kanafsi kalīmi-llāhi 'iḏ dukka ṭūruhā (verse 80), or the poet's reference to Paradise with its houris: *tuzānu lahā ᶜaynu-l-jināni wa-ḥūruhā* (30), as well as frequent allusions to the life and mission of the Prophet Muḥammad and his noble attributes. The Prophet is "the best creature" (*ḫayru-l-bariyya*) (93); intercessor for the mankind (*shafīᶜu-l-warā*) (63).

The elegiac nature of the poem is stressed by an overwhelming atmosphere of melancholy which may be sometimes perceived as exaggerated in wording:

*shaᶜābībi damᶜin bil-dimā'i mashūbatin * yusājilu qaṭra-l-ghādiyāti dūruhā* "downpours of teras mixed with blood, (my) pouring tears are similar to the rain of morning clouds" (22).

In his sincerity, the poet pays homage to the valour of the enemy. He admires the Spaniards and finds them fierce combattants for the triumph of the cross (96-101), as in: *waqad ᶜawati-l-'ifranju min kulli shāhiqin * ᶜalaynā fawwaqat lil-ṣalībi nuḏūruhā* (99).

At the same time, the poet also exhorts the believers to the holy war with virile resolution:

*'alā wa-staᶜiddū lil-jihādi ᶜazā'iman * yalūḥu ᶜalā layli-l-waghā mustanīruhā* (114) "let us go, determined and ready for holy war whose brightness appears over the night of war."

In a touching tone, the poet shows the consequences of indolence (122-126) pointing to the reward beyond death (117, 120, 121). With bitter feelings of pessimism, the poet asks himself whether one would ever hear the mu'azzin calling for prayer from the high minarets:

*wa-hal tasmaᶜu-l-'āḏānu ṣawta-l-'aḏāni fī * maᶜālimihā taᶜlū bi-ḏāka ᶜaqīruhā* (55).

Finally, with obvious agony, the poet asks the Muslim community whether they could return to it once more:

*wa-yā millata-l-'islāmi hal laki ᶜawdatun * li'arjā'ihā yashfī-ṣṣudūra ṣudūruhā.*

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