

An Arabic Origin of the Persian RubÁÝÐ?*

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The Persian RubÁÝÐ appeared in the first half of the 4th/10th century, displaying a peculiar metre and two rhyme schemes. According to indigenous literary history, the RubÁÝ was simply “invented” in Persia. Western philologists have either accepted this view and tried to find earlier Persian quatrains as forerunners, or they have pointed to an alleged tradition of Turkish four-liners that could have influenced the emergence of the genre. A third view is that Arabic poetry could have played a role, as it is the case in some other instances. The article tries to advance this latter hypothesis, building mainly on the *DĐwÁn* of KhÁlid Ibn YazĐd al-KÁtib (d. c. 270/884) that almost exclusively consists of four-liners.

I

The Persian Rubá'ýĎ is a poetic genre characterised both by its fixed length of four lines and its peculiar metre, which is practically not used in other poetic forms. Furthermore, this metre is distinguished from all other Persian metres by the fact that it can vary in the middle position:

- - - -
- - - - - - - -
- - - -

The two rhyme schemes are *a a a a*, i.e. monorhyme, and *a a b a*. As far as the content is concerned, there are hardly any restrictions. The Rubá'ýĎ not only enjoyed, and still does enjoy, immense popularity in Persia, but was taken over into Arabic in the first half of the 5th/11th century as *dÙbayt*(Ď) and in the second half of the 6th/12th century into Turkish. Even in Europe, it left its traces. German translations were made by the Austrian orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856) and the German poet Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866), and the German poet August von Platen (1796-1835) composed 16 "Rubajat", published in his *Spiegel des Hafis* (*The Mirror of Hafis*). Around 1900 in Europe and the United States, a cult grew up around Edward FitzGerald's (1809-1883) free adaption of the Rubá'ýĎs of ÝUmar KhayyÁm.¹ Today, there are translations of the verses commonly ascribed to YUmar KhayyÁm into countless languages.

The origin of this genre is unknown. Neither the four-line length, the metre nor the two rhyme schemes can easily be traced from the Persian literary tradition, and nor do the neighbouring Arabic and Turkish literatures provide archetypes. The Rubá'ýĎ simply seems to have appeared from nowhere in the first half of the 4th/10th century. Persian literary historians claim that the genre was "invented" in an act of creative genius. Shams-i Qays places this event in ÇaznĎ and ascribes it to RÙdakĎ (d. 329/940-1 or 339/950-1), whilst DawlatshÁh, writing in 892/1487, claims that the invention took place at the court of the founder of the ÑaffÁrid dynasty, YaYqÙb Ibn Layth, who reigned from 253/867 to 265/879. Fritz Meier, commenting upon these anecdotes, has pointed towards similar legends of origin in literary history, as well as to some inconsistencies in these two reports, which moreover are mutually exclusive (Meier 1963, p. 2-4). There is a grain of truth in them, however, because the metre must in fact have originated in Islamic Iran.

The point that is not explained by the two stories about the invention of the genre is the element that has lent it its name: its four-line length. A remark made by Shams-i Qays, namely that RÙdakĎ was so fond of his newly-

invented metre that he only composed pieces of four lines in length, not longer ones, fails to convince. Western orientalists have produced evidence pointing to either Persian or Turkish origin, but the alleged Middle Persian or New Persian archetypes are very few, and for the hypothesis of a Turkish origin we must assume that the oldest known Turkish four-liners had forerunners about one and a half centuries earlier, but that they were not transmitted.

This article will postulate a third hypothesis: the theory of an Arabic origin of the Rubá'iy. This theory has the advantage of having much more textual evidence than the other two, but there remains a certain amount of conjecture, and not least for this reason I will first discuss the Turkish and the Persian hypotheses. This will help the reader to form his or her own view.

II

The most recent advocate of the Turkish hypothesis is the German Turkologist Gerhard Doerfer, who also summarised the arguments of his predecessors Tadeusz Kowalski and Alessandro Bausani (Doerfer 1994). His conclusion is quite cautious: "I think the theory that the Rubá'iy developed in an area of Turkish-Persian cultural contacts, possibly assisted by Arabic influence, is tenable." (Doerfer 1994, p. 54) But there are many objections to his arguments. The textual evidence in favour of the Turkish hypothesis is not particularly impressive. The earliest works quoting Turkish quatrains with different rhyme schemes (not only the Rubá'iy scheme) and with a metre of their own are the well-known dictionary *DĐwÁn lughÁt al-Turk* (completed 469/1077) by Maġmūd al-KÁshgharĐ, the mirror for princes *Qutadgu Bilig* (completed 462/1069-70) by YĖsuf KhÁÒÒ ÍĖjib and the ethical work *YĖtabat al-ġaqÁ'iq* by Áġmad YĖknekĐ (12th century C.E.?). In order to support the theory of a Turkish origin, therefore, we must assume that such poems existed almost two centuries before those specimens recorded by the literary tradition. This is not impossible in theory, but the Old Turkish inscriptions of the 6th to 8th centuries C.E. and the Uighur-Buddhist and Manichean texts of the 7th to 9th centuries C.E. do not contain any four-liners, and even when there appears to be something reminiscent of rhyme, it seems to result from a predilection for syntactical parallelism. One might rather ask whether rhymes in the Turkish quatrains cannot in fact be attributed to Arabic influence.

The Persian poet ManĖchihrĐ (d. c. 432/1041) recommends Turkish or Oghuz poems (*shiYr-i turkĐ*, *shiYr-i ghuzzĐ*) as poetic models, but this does not solve the chronological problem. Furthermore, there is no reason to think that he had quatrains in mind. Early Chinese quatrains have been considered as indirect proof of Turkish quatrains; Doerfer points to contacts between the Chinese and the ancient Turks in the 6th to 8th centuries. He also mentions a

quatrain rhyming *a b a b* by the Chinese poet Li Bo (d. 762 C.E.). In addition, he draws attention to Turkish loan words in New Persian and tries to remove several other obstacles to the thesis of a Turkish origin, but all this cannot resolve the principal problem, i. e. the non-existence of any textual evidence of Turkish four-liners prior to the middle of the 11th century C.E. The great effort Doerfer has put in to promoting the Turkish hypothesis may be explained from the fact that the characteristic of the four-line length cannot sufficiently be derived from the Persian literary tradition.

III

Doerfer's presentation of the Turkish hypothesis is richly documented and put forward in an undogmatic manner. The Iranian hypothesis, on the other hand, tends to be formulated apodictic² even though its empirical underpinning is in no way less problematic than that of the Turkish hypothesis. A comparatively detailed representation of less than two pages has been given by Benedikt Reinert, who incidentally fails even to mention the possibility of a Turkish origin (Reinert 1990, pp. 286-287).³ Reinert integrates the literary genre of the Rubá'ýġ into an allegedly widespread old Persian tradition of quatrains and thus concludes: "The real innovation of the Rubá'ýġ is just its metre". But what about the four-line length?

Of the Middle Persian long quatrains of ten to fourteen syllables, Reinert says that they were used "largely in stanzas". But there is a fundamental difference between stanzas four lines in length and self-contained quatrains. Moreover, the existence of these entities is far from established.⁴

There are only two New Persian poems dating from before the emergence of the Rubá'ýġ that can be cited as examples of an alleged tradition of popular quatrains. The first has been handed down to us in al-Óabarġ's (d. 314/923) annalistic history. The street urchins (or: the people of KhurÁsÁn) are said to have mocked the governor Asad Ibn YAbdallÁh al-Qasrġ after his defeat in the year 108/726 with the following lines:

*az KhuttalÁn Ámadhġh * bÁ rÙ tabÁh Ámadhġh * ÁwÁr bÁz Ámadhġh *
bġ-dil farÁz Ámadhih*

"He's come back from Xotlan; he's come with a sour face; he's come back on the run; he's come down sick at heart!"

(Óabarġ: *TÁrġkh* II 3, 1492 line 13; 1494 line 8; 1602 line 14 - 1603 line 1. Translation as in Elwell-Sutton 1976, p. 176. Further literature in Doerfer 1994, p. 57 no. 7; cf. also ĦafÁ 1988, p. 149)

In the third line, the syllable /wÁr/ can be interpreted in the same way as in the later New Persian prosodic system, i. e. as a combination of a long and

a short syllable. The result is the following metre in all four lines: - - ~ - / - ~ -, which is identical with the metre of the later Turkish short quatrain. The reading of the poem is uncertain, however, in that it differs from the wording given in the edition. This in turn has been emended on the basis of differing readings in the various manuscripts. Even the four-line length is something that can only be encountered in the third quotation (p. 1602f.); the first two quotations give only two and three lines respectively. The only thing which is absolutely certain is the rhyme - a phenomenon uncommon in Persian poetry in pre-Islamic times.⁵

The other piece is ascribed to a certain AbŪ I-Yanbaghġ YAbbĀs Ibn ŌarkhĀn, who lived in the first half of the 3rd/9th century:

*Samarqand kand-mand * ba-dhġnat kŷ afkand * az ShĀsh tu bih-ġ * hamġsha tu khu-ġ*

“Samarqand, you ruin, who has thrown you into this [state]? But you are prettier than ChĀch, you are still pretty.”

(Ibn Khurrahġdhbih: *MasĀlik* p. 26, ll 8-9; transcription and translation based on Meier 1963, p. 12)

What is conspicuous again is the rhyme, here in the *a a b b* scheme, which is unknown with the RubĀġġġ. The author with the strange *kunya* is an Arab poet who is said to have left a small *dġwĀn* (*GAS II*, p. 602).

These two pieces of evidence are not sufficient to establish a genre of popular early New Persian quatrains. They could simply be fragments of longer poems or purely accidental four-liners. The same holds true for six later poems composed prior to c. 900 C.E. with the rhyme scheme *x a x a*⁶ Laurence Elwell-Sutton rightly says of them in his chapter “The ‘RubĀġġ’ in early Persian literature”: “It must be emphasized at this point that our treasury of early Persian poetry is so scanty that we have to be cautious about basing conclusions on it.” Finally, there are two poems dating from the first and the second halves of the 3rd/9th century that display the rhyme scheme *a a b a*, which is one of the RubĀġġġ schemes.⁷ But this proves very little because every first two lines of a *qaŌġda* with an inner rhyme in the first verse (*taŌrġġ*) would show this scheme.

It must be concluded, therefore, that the evidence which can be put forward to substantiate the Iranian hypothesis is unsatisfactory in quantity and lacks the desired formal similarities with the real RubĀġġġ.

IV

Regarding the problems of a Turkish or Iranian derivation of the RubĀġġġ, one’s attention is inevitably drawn to an Arab poet who wrote almost

exclusively four-liners. This is KhÁlid Ibn YazĎd al-KÁtib, whose *dĎwÁn* was edited in 1981 by YÙnus Aġmad al-SÁmarrÁĎ and a second time by Albert Arazí in Paris.⁸ The number of his poems in Arazí's edition is 582, and of these 541 are quatrains. As KhÁlid al-KÁtib died no later than 270/884,⁹ while the first RubÁĎs emerged only around 930 C.E., the assumption that there might be a connection is obvious. The immense role of Arabic poetry in the development of New Persian poetry has been well documented. As early as 1963, the German orientalist Fritz Meier expressed the view that Arabic poetry influenced the development of the RubÁĎ (Meier 1963, p. 12).

Many of KhÁlid's poems are composed in long metres, with each verse containing 24 to 28 syllables. They can therefore hardly be put on the same level as the RubÁĎ line with its 10 to 13 syllables. But slightly fewer than a fifth of the poems, 104 in all, display short metres containing just 16 to 18 syllables.¹⁰ In the cases of these, comparison is justified.

Many of these 104 poems have a rhyme at the end of the first hemistich (*miÒrÁY*, *shaÒr*). Strictly speaking, such pieces consist of four verses of two hemistichs each. This is underlined by a tendency to fill the individual hemistichs with independent syntactical units. But many of the poems with shorter lines - 63, to be exact - do not display a rhyme at the end of the first hemistich. These are listed below, arranged on the basis of frequency and metre:

Ramal (25 poems): 9. 52. 69. 99. 112. 183. 190. 328. 357. 367. 368. 372. 398. 416. 443. 444. 461. 474. 480. 482. 542. 543. 544. 566. 571

KhafĎf (12 poems): 154. 171. 184. 203. 258. 365. 390. 455. 464. 498. 568. 582

WÁfir (10 poems): 44. 63. 66. 96. 111. 160. 194. 380. 471. 488

KÁmil (5 poems): 19. 24. 71. 411. 499

Mujtathth (4 poems): 98. 371. 437. 493

MutaqÁrib (3 poems): 395. 479. 535

SarĎY (3 poems): 147. 293. 556

Hazaj (1 poems): 449

Of all these poems, only four display a hemistich border in all four verses which is identical with the end of a word (that is, 111 [WÁfir], 380 [WÁfir], 437 [Mujtathth] and 499 [KÁmil]). In comparison to this, the border plays a relatively insignificant role, even in those metres where it is traditionally not bridged, such as no. 66 (WÁfir):

- 1 - يُلَامَ عَلَى الْبُكَاءِ أَخُو اشْتِيَاقٍ غَابَ وَاحِدُهُ
 2 - فَهَاتُوا مَنْ يُعَلِّلُ مُقْلَتَيْهِ أَوْ يُسَاعِدُهُ
 3 - إِلَى الشَّكْوَى وَطَالَ بِهِ السَّقَامُ فَمَلَّ عَائِدُهُ
 4 - أَرَى الْأَيَّامَ تَكَرَّهُ أَنْ تُقَرِّبَ مَنْ يُبَاعِدُهُ

- 1 - The longing one, whose only love is distant, is censured for his weeping.
 2 - So bring (to the loving one) someone who can entertain his eyes and listen benevolently.
 3 - to the complaint - the sickness has dwelt for a long time in him, and those who visit the sick one are tired.
 4 - I see that the days are not willing to bring him near who keeps (the lovesick) distant.¹¹

Similarly, the hemistich border is also bridged in the KÁmil metre, e. g. no. 411, first and last verses:

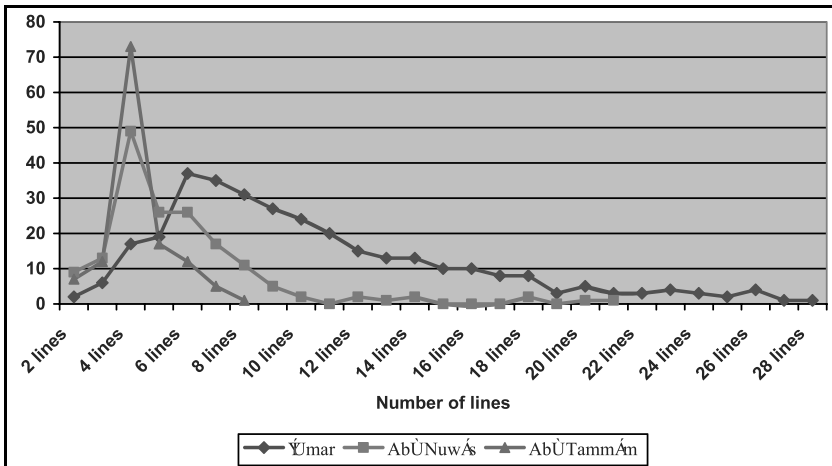
- 1 - يَا مُشْرِقًا مَلَأَ الْعَيُونَ فَلَحْظُهَا مَا يَسْتَقِلُّ
 2 - أَوْفَى عَلَى شَمْسِ الضُّحَى حَتَّى كَأَنَّ الشَّمْسَ ظِلُّ
 3 - يَا زِينَةَ الدُّنْيَا وَمَنْ مُلْكُ الْأَنَامِ لَهُ يَقِلُّ
 4 - لَا تَقْتُلْنِي بِالْجَفَاءِ فَإِنَّ قَتْلِي لَا يَحِلُّ

- 1 - O shining one on whom the eyes rest with pleasure, so that he despises their glances!
 2 - He surpassed the sun of the fore-noon so that the sun seemed to be the shadow.
 3 - O ornament of the world, for whom kingdom over mankind is insignificant:
 4 - Do not kill me by averting yourself, for it is not allowed to kill me!

In several Ramal poems, the hemistich border is bridged in all four verses (nos. 368, 474, 542 and 544), and this is twice the case in KhafĎ poems (nos. 258 and 390). Generally speaking, the structure of the 63 pieces in short metres without an inner rhyme in the first line is not so markedly determined by the half-verse border that we have to exclude them as possible presursors for the RubÁYĎ; they can be regarded as quatrains rhyming *a a a a*. They make up about 12 percent of KhÁlid's *dĎwÁn*, so we have to assume

that poems of this type were more widespread than is known to us today. A total of at least 63 poems provide much more evidence than the few late poems that have been submitted as evidence of the Turkish and Persian hypotheses.

KhÁlid Ibn YazĎd was descended from a KhurasÁnĎ family. Arazi doubts that he himself was born in the Iranian east and maintains rather that he was born in Baghdad (Arazi 1990, p. 8 footnote 2). Nevertheless, he could still hypothetically have been exposed to and influenced by a popular Persian quatrain tradition in Baghdad. It is not necessary, however, to make such an assumption; we can rather integrate KhÁlid into the Arabic trend towards four-line love poetry presented by Thomas Bauer in a seminal article on "AbŪ TammÁm's contribution to YAbbÁsid love poetry". This trend first becomes recognizable in the love poems of AbŪ NuwÁs (d. c.200/815) and AbŪ TammÁm (d. 231/845) and reaches its culmination in KhÁlid, in that the tradition was not continued after him (Bauer 1996, p. 18). One might also add that the trend had already started in the poetry of YUmar Ibn AbĎ RabĎYa (dd 93/712 or 103/721). The development can be visualized in the following diagram:¹²



Generally speaking, the curves have an analogous form but the peaks become shorter and steeper. The highest value (the so-called mode) shifts towards the left; with YUmar, it is at six lines, with the other two poets, it is at four. The development might be explained by the fact that love poems were increasingly used as song texts in early YAbbÁsid times.

In AbŪ NaĎr al-SarrÁj's (d. 378/988) handbook on ŅŪfism, there is a chapter "On those who dislike the hearing of music and its presence at places

where the Qur'Ān is recited melodiously, where Qa'Ōddas are recited and where people go into ecstasy and dance". There, he says:

"Others dislike it because they think that there are only two classes of men who listen to these *rubĀYiyyĀt*; either they are hedonists, people of pleasantries and temptation, or else they are men who have reached exalted status and comfortable positions in life, killed their longing souls with exercise and strain, left the world behind them and devoted themselves exclusively to God."¹³

This quotation is anonymous, and therefore we know only that the opinion was expressed no later than the end of the 4th/10th century. Another opinion clearly belongs to earlier times, as it is part of a conversation between Aġmad Ibn MasrŪq al-ŌŪsŌ (d. 298/911) and an anonymous interlocutor:

"Ibn MasrŪq was asked about the listening to (sung) *rubĀYiyyĀt* and said; our hearts do not like pious deeds by natural disposition, but only reluctantly, and so I fear that they will turn to general indulgence when we make concessions to them. I therefore think the listening to *rubĀYiyyĀt* should only be permitted to someone who is righteous inwardly and externally, of a stable constitution and perfect in knowledge."¹⁴

In another work by the same author, the ŌŪfŌ Junayd (d. 298/910) is asked with respect to his novices:

"Why do they not go into ecstasy when they hear the Qur'Ān? He said: There is nothing in the Qur'Ān which gives reason to go into ecstasy. God's word came down with command and prohibition, promises and threats, and (therefore?) it overwhelms. It was said: Why do they not go into ecstasy when they hear qa'Ōddas? He said: Because these are their own work. It was said to him: Why do they not go into ecstasy when they hear *rubĀYŌs*? He said: Because these are the speech of lovers and insane people."¹⁵

The last sentence seems almost to be aimed at KhĀlid personally; he composed nothing except love poems and is said to have spent the last part of his life mentally deranged.¹⁶ It must be admitted that, strangely enough, KhĀlid's poems are not quoted in the common books of ŌŪfism.¹⁷

In all the above quotations, the *rubĀYŌs* mentioned will most probably be in Arabic, at least according to the prevailing opinion of Western scholarship.¹⁸ The Iranian scholar ShafŌYŌ-KadkanŌ, however, contests this and thinks of poems rather in DarŌ or Iranian dialects.¹⁹ But as we now know a sufficient number of suitable types of Arabic poem from early times, it is not necessary to make such an assumption.

KhÁlid's poems and the last of the reports quoted above show that the Arabic quatrains seem to have been confined to the realm of erotic poetry. The Persian RubÁÝDs are not tied to any thematical restrictions; they "can be poems of praise or invective, elegies, religious, mystical and philosophical poems, poems attacking religion, political poems or love poems of all kinds" (Meier 1963, p. 22).²⁰ The thematic opening must have taken place between the mid-3rd/9th century and the time of the appearance of the first RubÁÝDs, i. e. the middle of the 4th/10th century in the Persian region. The first author of whom more than just fragmentary RubÁÝDs have been handed down is RÙdakĐ, who died in 329/940 or after 339/950. 40 RubÁÝDs are attributed to him, but the transmission of RÙdakĐ's poetry in general is problematic,²¹ and this holds particularly true for the RubÁÝDs.²² Whatever one thinks about this question, it is clear that love was an important subject of the RubÁÝDs from their earliest days. The following could be authentic, as there is a strong thematic affinity with KhÁlid's poems:

1 - *chashm-am zi ghamat bahr-i YaqĐqĐ ki bi-suft*

2. - *bar chihr hazÁr gul zi rÁzam bi-shikuft*

3 - *rÁzĐ ki dilam zi jÁn hamĐ dÁsht nihuft*

4 - *ashkam bi-zabÁn-i ÍÁl bÁ khalq bi-guft*

1 - Out of sorrow for you, my eye, with the carnelians it pierces,

2 - made thousand roses blossom on my face because of my secret,

3 - a secret that my heart has hidden from myself:

4 - my tears told it by their mute expression to the world.

(SaYĐd NafĐsĐ: *MuÎĐŌ-i zindagĐ wa aÍwÁl wa ashYÁr-i RÙdakĐ*, Teheran 1341 *hijrĐ shamsĐ*, vol. III, p. 514)

Carnelians were used as images of bloody tears in Arabic poetry from the 3rd/9th century onwards.²³ KhÁlid does not seem to have used the image, but he frequently speaks of bloody tears.²⁴ Roses were clearly only used in Arabic love poetry of the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries as images of red or blushing cheeks, not for tears, and so this seems to be a peculiar Persian means of expression. *zabÁn-i ÍÁl* appears to be a translation of the Arabic *lisÁn al-ÍÁl*.²⁵ *Secret love that is made public by tears is something to be found in KhÁlid's poetry, too (no. 498):*²⁶

1 - قُلْ لِمُسْتَكْبِرِ أَسَاءَ وَلَوْ شَاءَ أَحْسَنًا

2 - وَلِمَنْ تَاهَ أَنَّهُ مِنْ فَوَادِي تَمَكَّنَا

3 - جِسْمُ نُورٍ إِذَا بَدَا وَقَضِيْبٌ إِذَا ائْتَى

4 - كُنْتُ أَخْفِي الْهُوَى فَأَنْطَقَتْ دَمْعِي فَأَعْلَنَا

- 1 - Tell a proud one who acted badly but who could have acted well if he only had wished,
- 2 - (tell) someone who is haughty that he has taken possession of my heart.
- 3 - He is a body of light when he appears and a twig when he bends.
- 4 - I concealed the love but you made my tears speak, and so they made (the love) public.

The next two RubÁÝÐ authors known to us after RÙdakÐ are AbÙ ShakÙr al-BalkhÐ and DaqÐqÐ, who lived around 336/947 and at the end of the 4th/10th century respectively. Only one piece by each of them have been handed down to us, and they both deal with love:

- 1 - *ay gashta man az gham-i farÁwÁn-i tu past*
- 2 - *shud qÁmat-i man zi dard-i hijrÁn-i tu shast*
- 3 - *ay shusta man az farÐb u dastÁn-i tu dast*
- 4 - *khud hÐch kas-Ð bi-sÐrat Ù sÁn-i tu hast*

- 1 - I have become desolate because of the plenty of grief for you,
- 2 - my stature has become bowed because of the pain caused by your departure.
- 3 - I wash my hands because of your deceit and your tricks.
- 4 - Is there really anyone who has such a character and such a nature as you?

(AbÙ ShakÙr, in Lazard 1964, vol. II p. 87)

- 1 - *chashm-Ð tu ki fitna dar jahÁn khÐzad az Ù*
- 2 - *laYl-Ð tu ki Áb-i KhiÁr mÐrÐzad az Ù*
- 3 - *kardand tan-Ð marÁ chinÁn khwÁr ki bÁd*
- 4 - *mÐyÁyad u gard u khÁk mÐbÐzad az Ù*

- 1 - Your eye, by which temptation has come into the world,
- 2 - your ruby (i. e. your mouth), from which the water of life drips -
- 3 - they have worn out my body so that the wind
- 4 - blows dust and earth out of it.

(DaqDqD, in Lazard 1964, vol. II p. 167)

Both concepts, the beloved as the deceitful one and the hyperbolic depiction of the desolate state of the lover's constitution, can be encountered in Arabic love poetry.²⁷

An element that is difficult to explain is the RubÁÝD's rhyme scheme, which can not only be monorhyme but also *a a b a*. Arabic quatrains displaying this scheme are unknown, and we should therefore entertain the possibility that this was an innovation accomplished in Persia. Perhaps the quatrain, once established, was combined with a qaÖDda beginning; the first two verses of a qaÖDda (in a long metre) with an internal rhyme in the first verse (*taÖrDY*) can be read as *a a b a*. The reason could have been the aesthetic attractiveness of the non-rhyme in the third line, combined with the sense sequence *x x y z* (for which, see below).

The rhymes in RÜdakD, whether - to use Elwell-Sutton's terminology - they be pre-classical (i. e. by poets who died between 1037 and 1124 C.E.) or classical, seem at first sight to contradict this assumption (Elwell-Sutton 1975, p. 640):

	a a a a	a a b a
RÜdakD	32 % (12 poems)	68 % (25 poems)
pre-classicism	91 % (905 poems)	9 % (91 poems)
classicism	30 %	70 %

The irritating impression is that this development is discontinuous. Bearing in mind the uncertain authenticity of the poems attributed to RÜdakD, one might ask whether the figures mirror a pseudepigraphic projection of classical Persian RubÁÝDs (including their rhyme preferences) back to RÜdakD as their alleged initiator.

That poems were intended to be set to music could be one reason for the tendency towards four-liners. Another circumstance favouring this theory might be the fact that a fixed length saves the poet the trouble of deciding which length is appropriate, allowing him to concentrate instead on the semantic structure within the given frame. Thomas Bauer has shown that some obvious developments took place between AbÜ NuwÁs and AbÜ TammÁm; the former liked to build two blocks of two lines, connected only loosely, if there was any structure at all, while the second one favoured a strict scheme of 1/2, 1/2, 1 and 2 verses (Bauer 1996, p. 19). The great range of structuring possibilities that the quatrain offers can be demonstrated on the basis of KhÁlid's poems quoted above. The first one, no. 2, can be disregarded, as its structure is not very distinct. In no. 66, verse 1 tells that the

lover is censured, whilst verses 2 and 3 request the censurers to bring the beloved one with them, combined with a short description of the direct and indirect effects of the lover's grief. The two verses are clamped together by enjambement (*taĀmĒn*). Verse 4 speaks of the somewhat unpromising position of the lover and contains a reference back to *ghĀba* in verse 1 by *yubĀYiduhu*. If we use “+” as a symbol for the clamping of two verses and “R” for a backward reference, the resulting scheme is x y + y z(Rx).

Poem no. 411 is constructed in a different way. Verses 1 to 3 describe the beloved, verse 1 and 3 both addressing him in the vocative. Verse 4 is a request directed towards the beloved. If we use an apostrophe to indicate the vocative, we get 'x x 'x y.

In verses 1 and 2, poem no. 498 contains a request to a third person to inform the beloved of the poet's love, and both verses form a syntactic unit. Verse 3 describes the beloved, verse 4 reports the involuntary disclosure of love. The resulting scheme is x + x y z; this makes it almost identical with the model RubĀYĒ scheme, albeit without a reference back to the first verse in the last. In no. 449, even this scheme is realized:

- 1 - أَلَا أَيُّهَا الْمَوْلى الَّذِي يَسْتَعِذُّ بِالظُّلْمِ
 2 - كَأَنَّ الظُّلْمَ لَا يُكْسِبُ مَنْ يَكْسِبُهُ إِثْمًا
 3 - أَمَا تَرْحَمُ قَلْبِي فِيكَ مِنْ حَسْرَتِهِ يَدْمَى
 4 - مَتَى يَعْدِلُ فِي الْحُكْمِ ظُلُومٌ مُلْكُ الْحُكْمَا

- 1 - O master, who finds it sweet to be unjust!
 2 - As if not injustice makes him who commits it a sinner!
 3 - Can you not show compassion to my heart, which is bleeding with pain for you?
 4 - How could an unjust person to whom rule has been entrusted become a just ruler?

In the first two verses, the beloved, referred to as “master”, is informed of the consequences of his injustice for the fate of his soul. Again, the two verses are clamped together by means of the *Ūlm* at the end of the first and the beginning of the second verse. Verse 3 then begs for mercy. Verse 4 expresses the resigned thought that such mercy cannot be expected from an unjust person; this is a clear reference to the first two lines. The resulting scheme is x + x y z(Rx).

The question as to whether this diversity is typical of KhĀlid Ibn YazĒd cannot be answered here, nor is there time to examine whether the scheme of

2 and 2 verses that is displayed by the three RubÁÝĐs²⁸ quoted is typical of the early genre in general. Nevertheless, I hope to have shown that Arabic poetry after AbÙ NuwÁs fully exploited the potential of the four-line length.

As a form of love poetry, four lines, as initiated by AbÙ TammÁm and carried to an extreme by KhÁlid, proved to be too narrow a corset. In Persia, a further restriction was added by the specific RubÁÝĐ metre. On the other hand, the restriction in content was lifted, resulting in the singular phenomenon of a genre strictly determined in form but almost completely without restrictions with regard to content. How this transformation took place, and whether perhaps popular Persian literary tradition was also involved, we do not know yet due to the lack of evidence. That the Arabic love quatrains were the starting point is not only probable due to the significant number of these pieces, but is also supported by other well-established cases of literary influence of Arabic poetry on New Persian literature.²⁹

Appendix

Length of love poems of YUmar Ibn AbĐ RabĐYa, AbÙ NuwÁs and AbÙ TammÁm

Der Diwan des YUmar Ibn Abi RebiYa, ed. Paul Schwarz, Leipzig 1901-09 (without appendix)

2 verses: no. 202. 294 (2) **3 verses:** no. 25. 46. 172. 239. 272. 335 (6) **4 verses:** no. 7. 44. 58. 65. 69. 113. 162. 170. 203. 214. 229. 278. 283. 285. 306. 313. 314 (17) **5 verses:** no. 20. 34. 40. 57. 62. 66. 70. 112. 148. 152. 163. 177. 194. 196. 212. 213. 260. 291. 302 (19) **6 verses:** no. 12. 21. 32. 75. 85. 86. 98. 99. 105. 110. 117. 121. 129. 149. 156. 158. 190. 220. 233. 236. 259. 264. 265. 274. 276. 277. 289. 292. 296. 303. 304. 312. 316. 317. 320. 325. 333 (37) **7 verses:** no. 24. 35. 48. 73. 82. 88. 101. 116. 124. 128. 142. 154. 157. 164. 167. 182. 191. 199. 200. 222. 223. 224. 225. 226. 231. 238. 249. 252. 257. 275. 280. 282. 318. 326. 334 (35) **8 verses:** no. 17. 36. 49. 56. 79. 96. 120. 127. 134. 135. 144. 151. 157. 173. 201. 204. 207. 219. 227. 235. 245. 261. 271. 281. 288. 298. 300. 310. 311. 322. 324 (31) **9 verses:** no. 30. 60. 61. 68. 71. 94. 106. 108. 136. 141. 143. 175. 176. 198. 206. 208. 215. 218. 221. 234. 250. 251. 268. 290. 301. 307. 319 (27) **10 verses:** no. 4. 14. 59. 76. 83. 103. 109. 130. 140. 161. 166. 169. 183. 217. 228. 232. 240. 244. 258. 269. 279. 321. 327. 330 (24) **11 verses:** no. 11. 27. 63. 84. 93. 97. 118. 119. 133. 145. 165. 193. 241. 253. 255. 263. 267. 273. 328. 332 (20) **12 verses:** no. 3. 28. 122. 125. 160. 171. 180. 185. 186. 254. 256. 266. 284. 295. 297 (15) **13 verses:** 43. 64. 81. 107. 126. 132. 179. 210. 216. 237. 243. 247. 315 (13) **14 verses:** no. 13. 52. 78. 115. 123. 131. 138. 150. 181. 209. 241. 286. 287 (13) **15 verses:** no. 9. 33. 39. 104. 178. 189. 211. 262. 270. 293 (10)

16 verses: 8. 22. 38. 50. 77. 90. 100. 139. 184. 331 (10) **17 verses:** 19. 37. 95. 147. 153. 174. 195. 246 (8) **18 verses:** 26. 67. 72. 87. 92. 155. 308. 323 (8) **19 verses:** no. 18. 80. 89 (3) **20 verses:** no. 47. 53. 55. 192. 329 (5) **21 verses:** no. 10. 16. 137 (3) **22 verses:** no. 42. 102. 168 (3) **23 verses:** no. 6. 45. 54. 187 (4) **24 verses:** no. 51. 111. 299 (3) **25 verses:** no. 41. 146 (2) **26 verses:** no. 5. 15. 31. 114 (4) **27 verses:** no. 188 (1) **28 verses:** no. 91 (1).

(Not incorporated in the diagram: 29 verses: no. 205; 32 verses: no. 23; 35 verses: no. 2; 37 verses: no. 305; 45 verses: no. 74; 57 verses: no. 197; 73 verses: no. 1)

Der DĐwĀn des AbŪ NuwĀs, ed. Ewald Wagner and Gregor Schoeler, 5 vols. and 2 vols. indices, Cairo etc. 1958-2006, vol. IV, 1982

I took into account those poems handed down by Īamza and al-ŤŪĪĐ that are not called *manĪŪl* by al-ŤŪĪĐ. An “f” marks the *mu’annaththĀt* (nos. 1-173), an “m” the *mudhakkārĀt* (nos. 174-391).

2 verses: f17. 39. 106. 118. 119. m81. 214. 253. 300 (9) **3 verses:** f120. 124. 132. 173. m43. 68. 71. 102. 106. 112. 203. 252. 293 (13) **4 verses:** f5. 13. 21. 31. 59. 65. 68. 70. 77. 95. 101. 113. 122. 131. 134. 135. 137. 147. 149. 158. 168. m16. 30. 31. 32. 36. 57. 73. 80. 93. 96. 108. 133. 135. 165. 172. 175. 181. 190. 191. 192. 209. 225. 265. 267. 282. 321. 368. 379 (49) **5 verses:** f9. 12. 19. 28. 48. 53. 54. 93. 121. 151. 163. 166. m21. 34. 86. 132. 142. 184. 187. 195. 202. 278. 313. 316. 318. 320 (26) **6 verses:** f2. 8. 18. 34. 47. 66. 69. 85. 109. 148. 150. m19. 24. 29. 38. 64. 120. 125. 156. 171. 194. 211. 237. 317. 324. 375 (26) **7 verses:** f3. 76. 105. m1. 17. 56. 62. 75. 90. 104. 134. 185. 189. 255. 260. 264. 301 (17) **8 verses:** f41. m22. 42. 48. 110. 152. 154. 160. 219. 230. 365 (11) **9 verses:** f146. m28. 92. 222. 279 (5) **10 verses:** f117. m362 (2) **11 verses:** - **12 verses:** f141. m315 (2) **13 verses:** m66 (1) **14 verses:** f26. 38 (2) **15 verses:** - **16 verses:** - **17 verses:** - **18 verses:** m121. 182 (2) **19 verses:** - **20 verses:** m41 (1) **21 verses:** m47 (1).

(Not incorporated in the diagram: 36 verses: f36)

DĐwĀn AbĐ TammĀm bi-sharĪ al-KhaŖĐb al-TibrĐzĐ, ed. Muġammad YAbduh YAZzĀm, 4 vols., Cairo 1982-87, vol. IV, nos. 210-341

2 verses: no. 216. 223. 245. 306. 307. 324. 330 (7) **3 verses:** no. 222. 225. 246. 249. 257. 258. 275. 283. 293. 318. 323. 334 (12) **4 verses:** no. 211. 212. 214. 215. 221. 227. 229. 230. 233. 234. 235. 236. 237. 238. 239. 241. 242. 243. 244. 247. 248. 250. 252. 254. 259. 260. 261. 262. 263. 265. 272. 273. 274. 276. 279. 280. 281. 282. 284. 285. 287. 288. 291. 292. 294. 295. 299. 300. 301. 302. 303. 305. 308. 311. 312. 313. 314. 315. 316. 320. 321. 322. 325. 326. 328. 331. 333. 335. 336. 337. 338. 340. 341 (73) **5 verses:** no. 217. 220. 224. 226. 232. 251. 253. 256. 264. 266. 286. 296. 304. 310. 327.

332. 339 (17) **6 verses:** no. 219. 228. 240. 255. 267. 289. 297. 298. 309. 317. 319. 329 (12) **7 verses:** no. 213. 218. 231. 270. 290 (5) **8 verses:** no. 210 (1)

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- (*) This article was first published in German in *Asiatische Studien* 53, 1999, pp. 905-936 and then reprinted in Angelika Neuwirth et alii, *Ghazal as World Literature II: From a Literary Genre to a Great Tradition. The Ottoman Gazel in Context*, Würzburg 2006, pp. 15-38. This English version is slightly shortened.

- 1 - Whether any Rubá'iyats were really composed by 'Umar Khayyám, and which ones these might be, is a matter of conjecture, cf. de Blois 1992-94, pp. 362-365. For the reception of FitzGerald's *Poem*, cf. John D. Yohannan: "The fin de siècle cult of FitzGerald's 'Rubaiyat' of Omar Khayyam", *Review of National Literatures* 2, 1971, pp. 74-91; for the sources used in FitzGerald's work besides "Khayyám's" Rubá'iyats, cf. Parichehr Kasra: "FitzGerald's recasting of the *Rubā'iyāt*", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 130, 1980, pp. 458-489.
- 2 - Cf., e. g., C.-H. de Fouchecour in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. VIII, Leiden 1995, s. v. "RUBÁ'YĪ": "Its [sc. the Rubá'iyat's] emergence in literature can be pinpointed, but it is certainly of pre-Islamic [sc. Iranian] origin" (p. 579).
- 3 - Earlier proponents of the Iranian hypothesis include Jan Rypka, Iosif Braginskij, Evgenij Bertel's and Armanu? Kozmojan.
- 4 - Shaul Shaked/Jerusalem, whom I wish to thank for the information given, wrote to me: There is nothing in all these [sc. Middle Persian] poetic compositions to suggest a ruba'i form. The occasional four-liners that you have come across are purely accidental."
- 5 - On this question, cf. de Blois 1992-94, p. 45: It is thus in principle altogether possible that these few samples of rhymed [sc. Middle Persian] poetry were all written in conscious imitation of Arabic poetry."
- 6 - For these poems, cf. Seidensticker 1999, p. 914.
- 7 - Cf. Seidensticker 1999, pp. 914-916.
- 8 - Al-Sámará'ī's edition was not available to me. For the edition of Arazī, cf. the critical reviews of Abdallah Cheikh-Moussa in *Bulletin Critique des Annales Islamologiques* 9, 1992, pp. 14-14 and by myself in *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literature* 3, 2000, pp. 95-98.
- 9 - The diverging dates of his death are discussed by Arazī in his introduction (Arazī 1990, p. 10, footnote 9). He has reservations about al-Mas'ūdī's report that Khālid, as a successful poet, had already had an encounter with Hārūn al-Rashīd before the fall of the Barmakids.
- 10 - This number is exceeded only occasionally in the Kāmil and Wāfir metres.
- 11 - In verse 3, Arazī changed *ilā* to *yalā*, but this seems to be neither necessary nor possible.
- 12 - Exact figures are given in the appendix.
- 13 - Abū Na'ūr Ibn 'Alī al-Sarrāj al-Ōsūd: *Kitāb al-Lumayf fī l-ta'āwuf*, ed. R. A. Nicholson, Leiden 1914, p. 299. (The chain of Ibn al-Sarrāj's reasoning does not culminate here, of course.)
- 14 - Abū 'Abdalrāimān al-Sulamī: *Ōbaqāt al-Ōfiyya*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Sharība, Aleppo (2nd ed.) 1986, p. 239.
- 15 - Abū 'Abdalrāimān al-Sulamī: *Ādāb al-Ōulba wa-ġusn al-Ġishra*, ed. M. J. Kister, Jerusalem 1954, p. 49.
- 16 - Cf. Arazī 1990, pp. 25-45.
- 17 - Cf. Arazī 1990, p. 39. The one occasion on which Khālid appears in an Ōfīc context (namely, in al-lālī's *dīwān*), he is quoted anonymously.
- 18 - W. Stoetzer in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. VIII, Leiden 1995, p. 583b; Reinert 1990, pp. 294 and 299 footnote 32; Reinert 1974, p. 221.
- 19 - M. R. Shafī'ī-Kadkanī: "Rūdakī wa-Rubā'iyat", in *Nāmwara-i Duktur Ma'īn-ud Afshār*, vol. IV, Teheran 1989, pp. 2330-2342, here p. 2336 and p. 2339.

- 20 - The most detailed survey of the thematic diversity of the RubĀ'īd is by Elwell-Sutton 1975 and Reinert 1990, pp. 288-291.
- 21 - Cf. de Blois 1992-94, pp. 223ff.
- 22 - Cf. Elwell-Sutton 1975, p. 639: For Rūdakīd the gap [sc. between his death and the first source transmitting a RubĀ'īd] is more like three centuries, and even then we have only one example, and must wait another three centuries for the remainder". Cf. also Meier 1963, p. 14: "In his *MaykhĀna*, composed as early as 1040/1630-31, Īsan b. LuŌfullĀh is said to have attributed the greater part of the large quantities of RubĀ'īds thought to have been composed by Rūdakīd to QaŌrĀn (died 465/1072-72) and to have accepted only 20 pieces as actually coming from Rūdakīd."
- 23 - WKAS II 47 b 9-15.
- 24 - *bakaytu daman ĩattĀ baqĒtu bi-Ī damin* (120/3); *bakat Īaynun daman* (441/1); *fa-lim bakat muqlatĒ Āalayhi daman* (450/1); *wa-l-jafnu dĀmin* (457/3); *muqlatun tadmĀ* (471/4) etc.
- 25 - Cf. WKAS II 621 b 41 - 622 a 16; an early instance is Ibn al-Rūmī, ed. Īsayn NaŌŌĀr, 6 vols., Cairo 1973-1981, vol. VI, 1235/15 (my thanks to Manfred Ullmann for this quotation).
- 26 - Cf. also no. 166/4, 359/3 and 434/1 and the quotations from other poets in Bauer 1998, pp. 387-389.
- 27 - For the first concept, cf. ch. 10 of Bauer 1998 on the motif of the reproach of the beloved one, especially paras 4 "Ungerechtigkeit" ("injustice") and 5 "Grausamkeit und Unbarmherzigkeit" ("cruelty and mercilessness"); for the second concept, cf. the frequent use of the root nĪl in KhĀlid's *dĒwĀn* nos. 372/3, 374/2, 375/2, 390/1, 394/1, 401/4, 402/2, 404/3, 445/3 etc.
- 28 - Rūdakīd's example displays x + x + y + y, AbŪ ShakŪr's x x y y, DaqĒqĒ's x + x y + y.
- 29 - Cf. Gregor Schoeler: "Älteste neupersische Strophendichtung. Rūdakīds *musammaŌ*, sein arabisches Vorbild und seine persischen Nachfolger", in *Asiatische Studien* 51, 1997, pp. 601-625 (on the *musammaŌ* and, pp. 623ff. footnote 67, on the *mathnawŌ*).

* * *

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- مجلة فصلية محكمة.
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