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Adi b. Zayd (010663)

"Passed around by a Crescent"

Wine Poetry in the Literary Traditions
of the Islamic World

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‘Adi Ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādi and the Origins
of Arabic *Khamriyya*

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The development of Arabic wine poetry into a distinctive poetic genre of the *khamriyya* is closely related to the poetic heritage of the late antique Arab city of al-Ḥira. Some of the earliest attestations of Arabic *khamriyyāt* are attributed to ‘Adi ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādi, an outstanding early Arab poet from al-Ḥira who lived in the second half of the sixth century. This chapter focuses on two texts by ‘Adi Ibn Zayd, poems XI and XIII in his *diwān*,¹ providing examples of his treatment of the wine theme. The discussion of both texts reveals the gradual process of the “emancipation” of Arabic wine song, initially part of the *qaṣīda*, to an independent poetic genre.

Historical and Literary Context

Early Arabic poetry has often been regarded as rooted exclusively in the Bedouin cultural environment of Arab tribal society of the pre-Islamic era.² In acknowledging a dominant impact of the Bedouin culture and recognizing the crucial importance of poetry as the main medium of cultural memory for the Arabs,³ one should also consider the diversity of the late antique context of early Arab cultural history and the complexities of literary developments manifested in early Arabic poetic sources. Already Gustav von Grünebaum pointed to the existence of various schools of early Arabic poetry and attempted to classify them chronologically.⁴ An analysis of stylistic features and metrics led Grünebaum to the conclusion that one of the earliest and most affluent schools of early Arabic poetry, distinguished by the “ideas of non-Bedouin background, and a definite colour of local tradition,” was flourishing in al-Ḥira (Ar. الحيرة),⁵ an Arab city on the western bank of the Euphrates in southern Mesopotamia. Emphasizing al-Ḥira’s outstanding significance as a center

- ¹ For the full Arabic text of the poems adopted from the edition by Muḥammad Jabbār Mu‘ayyid, *Diwān ‘Adi ibn Zayd al-‘Ibādi* (Baghdad, 1965) and my translation into English, see the chapter appendix.
- ² On the influence of this postulate from the perspective of Arab cultural tradition, see Samir Kassir, *Das Arabische Unglück* (Berlin, 2006), 37–42.
- ³ Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich, 1992), 50.
- ⁴ Gustav von Grünebaum, “Zur Chronologie der früh-arabischen Dichtung,” *Orientalia* 8 (1939): 328–45; see also Renate Jacobi, “Die Alt-arabische Dichtung (6.–7. Jahrhundert),” *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie*, vol. 2, *Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Helmut Gätje (Wiesbaden, 1987), 23.
- ⁵ Gustav von Grünebaum, “Abū Du‘ād al-Iyādi: Collection of Fragments,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 51 (1948–1952): 83. See also Grünebaum, “Pre-Islamic Poetry,” *Moslem World* 32 (1942): 151–52.

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