

MAIN ASPECTS OF THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL
CONTENT OF BAŞRĪ POETRY UNTIL
THE END OF THE Umayyad
ERA

by

‘AWN AL-SHARĪF QĀSIM

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Agh.</u>	:	<u>Aghānī</u>
'Ajj.	:	<u>Diwān</u> of 'Ajjāj
Aswad	:	<u>Diwān</u> of Abū-'l-Aswad
Bal.	:	Balādhurī
Ch.	:	Chapter
<u>E.I.</u>	:	Encyclopaedia of Islam
Far.	:	<u>Diwān</u> of al-Farazdaq
Ibn-An.	:	Ibn-al-Anbārī
Ibn-Ath.	:	Ibn-al-Athīr
Ibn-Khall.	:	Ibn-Khallikān
Ibn-Qut.	:	Ibn-Qutayba
Ibn-Sall.	:	Ibn-Sallām
Jar.	:	<u>Diwān</u> of Jarīr
<u>Khaw.</u>	:	<u>Shi'r al-Khawārij</u> , ed. Iḥsan 'Abbās
<u>Khiz.</u>	:	<u>Khizānat al-Adab</u>
Mar.	:	Marzubānī
Mub.	:	Mubarrad
<u>Mu'j.</u>	:	<u>Mu'jam ash-Shu'arā'</u>
<u>Muwash.</u>	:	<u>Muwashshah</u>
<u>Naq.</u>	:	<u>Naqā'id</u>
<u>Q.</u>	:	<u>Qur'an</u>
Ru'b.	:	<u>Diwān</u> of Ru'ba
Rumma	:	<u>Diwān</u> of Dhū-'r-Rumma
<u>Sh.</u>	:	<u>ash-Shi'r wa-sh-Shu'arā'</u>
<u>Ṭab.</u>	:	Ṭabari
<u>Waf.</u>	:	<u>Wafayāt al-A'yān</u>
<u>Yāq.</u>	:	Yāqūt

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE OF BAŞRA
UNTIL THE END OF THE Umayyad Era

i. POLITICAL LIFE

1. Early development:

The region of Başra and its vicinity played in Pre-Islamic Arabia a role comparable to that of the Ghassānid and Lakhmid principalities in their relations with the Byzantine and Sassanid empires. The marauding Arabs in the neighbourhood, especially the Banū-Bakr ibn-Wā'il, had already inflicted a defeat on the Sassanid forces in the battle of Dhū-Qār (611 A.D.) and started to raid the western reaches of their empire.¹ The Persians, in an attempt to ward off their harassment, placated the major tribe of Bakr, and appointed their chief, Qays ibn-Mas'ūd of Shaybān, a governor over the region of Ubulla.² Furthermore, its environs were given (aqṭa'a) to him and his people.³ When the Muslims arrived in 12/633 the region was, however, in ruin with a few garrisons 'to prevent the incursions of the nomads in the area'.⁴

The region was familiar to the Arabs in another important respect. The commercial activities of the port

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1. cf. C. Becker, Cambridge Med. Hist., ii, 329 ff;
cf. Agh., xx, 133; E.I.¹, "Başra" by Hartman.
 2. Mar., Mu'j., 200-201; cf. E.I.¹, "Bakr" by Schleifer.
 3. Agh., xx, 132.
 4. Dīnawarī, Akhbār, 123.

of Ubullā had drawn the caravans of Arab traders to the region which was known to them in Pre-Islamic times as 'the land of India' (arḍ al-Hind)¹. It is very likely that the famous fair of Baṣra, al-Mirbad, dated back to this Pre-Islamic era. The fact that it was three miles to the west of Baṣra, on the edge of the desert,² may indicate that it had an independent growth, prior to the establishment of the town itself. The Persian authorities, in their drive to keep the neighbouring Arab tribes at bay, might have determined this site of the fair which came to be known as 'the gate of the desert'.³

Those Arabs in the vicinity especially Banū-Bakr were quick to sense, from their long raiding experience against the Persians, the weakness of their defences, and so resumed their raids under the leadership of Suwayd ibn-Quṭba⁴, some time before the arrival of the official expedition under 'Utba ibn-Ghazwān.⁵ Although 'Utba arrived in the year 14/635, the town was not formally established as a 'miṣr' - border town⁶ - before the year 17 A.H.⁷ The site along the desert border was chosen after three alternatives along the coast

1. Ṭab., i, 2378; Hamdānī, Ṣifat, 204; Yāq., Buldān, i, 641; cf. E.I.¹, S.V. "Obolla" by Kramers.

2. Yāq., op.cit., iv, 484.

3. cf. Ṭab., op.cit., i, 2379; Pellat, Milieu Baṣrien, 35; Muqaddasī, Aḥsan at-Taḡāsīm, 117.

4. Bal., Futūḥ, 337-9, 475.

5. Yāq., op.cit., i, 633; Dīnawarī, op.cit., 122.

6. cf. Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ al-'Alī, an-Nuḡum al-Iqtiṣādiyya wa-'l-ljtimā'iyya fī al-Baṣra, 1-3.

7. Ṭab., op.cit., i, 2486.

had proved damaging to the health of Arab troops.¹ The experience of three years of fighting during which the camp had been repeatedly shifted, indicated to the Arabs the danger of entrenching themselves in the midst of a hostile population. A site bordering on the desert ensured an uninterrupted link with the Arabian heartland in any emergency.² Military considerations were pre-eminent in the whole enterprise. The overriding objective was to contain the Sassanid forces in the area and prevent them from re-inforcing their brothers to the north where the major Muslim onslaught had been under way.³ The speedy successes of the Arabs in the north encouraged the small expedition of 'Utba accompanied by some members of the tribes of Bakr and Tamīm⁴ to storm the main Persian garrisons in Ubulla and put their defenders to flight. The resounding victory and the news of rich booty attracted hordes of Bedouins from far and near.⁵ The tribe of Tamīm was frequently cited by chroniclers as a major source of such emigrants.⁶

The early expeditions used mobile camps, and it was only when the number of expeditionary forces and tribes increased appreciably that the establishment of a permanent

1. Ibid., i, 2380; Ibn-Ath., Kāmil, ii, 411.

2. cf. Bal., op.cit., 483-4; Yāq., op.cit., i, 640.

3. Yāq., op.cit., i, 638; Ṭab., op.cit., i, 2377-8.

4. Yāq., op.cit., 638.

5. cf. Dīnawarī, op.cit., 124.

6. Ibn-al-Faqīh, Buldān, 188.

garrison town was considered necessary.¹ The makeshift nature of the initial stage is demonstrated by the ephemeral construction of the Camp where tents and pavilions were used first,² followed by structures of stalks and reeds.³ Later unbaked bricks were used to give the garrison a more permanent base.⁴ The prospects of ever increasing sources of riches were a powerful stimulus to a steady flow of emigrants from all parts of Arabia, especially from the neighbouring regions of Bahrein (Baḥrayn) and Yamāma. The warriors came at first without their women folk,⁵ giving the impression that the enterprise had been deemed temporary and short-lived. The turn of events, however, rendered the creation of a permanent post to control the military activities in the region imperative. Seven quarters (dasākīr) were constructed and men were distributed among them⁶ on a tribal basis.⁷ It is important to note here that from the start the tribes were left under no misapprehension as to where the real authority resided. The caliph 'Umar I seized the earliest opportunity to replace Mujāshi' ibn-Mas'ūd of Sulaym, the man put in charge by 'Utba before he finally left for Medina in 17 A.H., by al-Mughīra ibn-Shu'ba of Thaqīf, making it clear that the urban dwellers (ahl al-madar) were more entitled to be

1. Yāq., op.cit., i, 640; Bal., op.cit., 483-4.

2. Bal., 476.

3. Ibid., 483-4; Ṭab., op.cit., i, 2487.

4. Jāḥiẓ, Bayān, ii, 226.

5. Among 'Utba's 600 men there were only 6 women, Yāq., op.cit., 639.

6. Ibid., 639, 641.

7. Dīnawarī, op.cit., 125.

appointed governors than Bedouins (ahl al-wabar).¹ It was, however, to the governorship of Abū-Mūsā al-Ash'arī-(17-29/638-650 with an interruption of one year (21-22/642-643) - that the town owed its early development. The grouping together of diverse tribes within the bounds of one town was a new experience to most of them and frictions and strains were inevitable. Tensions had already been mounting when Abū-Mūsā was commissioned by 'Umar I who indicated to him that he was sending him to a people 'among whom the devil had pitched his camp'.² Abū-Mūsā built the mosque and government headquarters with bricks and mud, and it was during this time that date-palms were cultivated, and individuals were granted permission to cultivate wastelands.³ The drive towards acquiring and exploiting lands was so strong that the caliph had to warn the people of Baṣra not to undermine the fertility of the land by exhausting the soil.⁴ This urban development stands in sharp contrast with the military function of a garrison town which Baṣra was initially meant to be. From its inception an increasingly important section of its population began to lay the foundations of a settled community which the frequent movement of troops did not disturb. Although the town preserved its military function and character for over a century, it is essential to note that it was the resident,

1. Yāq., op.cit., i, 642; Ibn-Ath., op.cit., ii, 379-380.

2. Ibn-Sa'd, Ṭabaqāt, iv, Part I, 81.

3. cf. Bal., op.cit., 490.

4. Jāhīz, op.cit., ii, 226.

and hence the permanent, urban community of Baṣra that left its mark on the records of early Islam.

The early development of the town was not always a smooth process. It soon became evident that the influx of emigrants drawn by the exceptionally lucrative ventures of the early conquerors could not be matched by a comparable increase in revenues. The slackening in the wave of conquests at such a formative stage of the development of the town, could only force a portion of the ever-increasing population of the town to fall back on other means of securing a livelihood, thus accentuating the drive towards more urbanization. This early crisis explains the complaint of the governor of Baṣra in 22/643 to 'Umar I about the over-crowding of Baṣra and the shortage of kharāj which could only be put right by transferring to Baṣra some of the kharāji lands of Kūfa, a measure which 'Umar readily approved.¹ The eloquence of al-Aḥnaf ibn-Qays, the leader of Tamīm, was put to service in a passionate appeal to 'Umar to alleviate the hardships of the people by making certain concessions.²

2. The Arab tribes in Baṣra:

The civil and military aspects of the life of Baṣra became so intertwined that an attempt to separate them would be fraught with difficulties. For the continued prosperity of urban life depended in great measure on the revenue

1. Ṭab., op.cit., i, 2672-3.

2. Jāḥiẓ, op.cit., i, 251-2; Ṭab., i, 2538-9.

resulting from fresh conquests. The bulk of the Arab population continued to draw, as we shall see presently, regular stipends ('aṭā') from the public treasury, even though they did not participate in the actual campaigns. The justification for the 'aṭā' was the readiness with which the various tribes offered recruits when called upon by the authorities. This system ensured both a regular supply of fresh troops to extend the thrust of Muslim forces eastwards, and a steady flow of funds to maintain the gradually developing Urban community. It is in this duality in the character of Baṣra, that a fairly reasonable explanation of its tumultuous history should be sought. The reluctance of the Bedouin tribes to submit to centralized control which the government was keen to impose, was heightened by the policy of this same government which continued to maintain the tribal structure for military and financial reasons. This subtle contradiction helped to endow Baṣra with a virile and unruly character.

The fact that the settlers in the town and its vicinity were largely from tribes of the eastern part of Arabia such as Tamīm, Bakr and 'Abd-al-Qays, who had revolted against the central authority after the death of Muḥammad, goes a long way to account for the persistence of many of them in defying most efforts to blunt the edges of tribal rivalry within the miṣr. But it must be realized here that although tribal friction had always been a potential menace, even during the

early days of 'Umar I,¹ the impact of Islam on tribal relations was enormous. The aftermath of the "ridda" wars, when the central government in Medina reasserted its position by imposing its authority on the recalcitrant tribes, was a semblance of unity forged between the Arab tribes which lasted until the murder of the third caliph, 'Uthmān, in 35/656. The zeal with which the concerted efforts of the Arab tribes were directed towards conquests along the Persian frontiers helped these tribes to sink their differences for some time. Although their vast majority were not fully aware of the details of their new religion, the fact that they were fighting in the name of Islam and receiving their commands from a central authority in Medina was in itself a revolutionary concept which, given sufficient time, was destined to change their existence immeasurably. Though the army was organized on tribal lines, members of one tribe usually fighting under one of their chiefs, the overall command was the prerogative of the caliph or his lieutenants. The various tribes fought not to further mainly their own ends, as they did previously, but to further a more general cause: that of the Islamic community which was symbolized by the caliphate. They surrendered their authority to that of the central state under which they served as a unit. With this conception looming at the back of their minds, a resurgence of tribalism on the full-fledged Pre-Islamic (Jāhili) model

1. Jāhiz, Bayan, ii, 233 where he refers specifically to friction between tribes in a letter to Abū-Mūsā and exhorts him to deal severely with the culprits.

became a remote possibility. Islam attempted to remove some of the causes that previously invited rivalry and war. Their allegiance was gradually shifted from the tribe to the state. The booty and war pensions were divided among them equitably according to a rigid system. But tribalism did not disintegrate. The new conditions only transformed it. A kind of tribalism in an Islamic setting, taking cognizance of the caliphate as the binding force and then as a bone of contention, was definitely given a fresh lease of life. The scope of its activities was, however, restricted on the whole by certain political, social and sometimes religious considerations derived generally from the natural growth of the Islamic empire.

3. The death of 'Uthmān and its aftermath:

With such vague notions of Islamic unity the Arab tribes moved eastwards and settled in Baṣra. The policy of 'Umar I was as indicated earlier¹ sternly against appealing to tribalism. The combined efforts of members of different tribes in the unified armies dispatched from Baṣra, and the reciprocal relations between the various groups inside the town itself, all tended to promote a spirit of solidarity among them. The death of 'Umar I in 23/644, however, brought to a head a development which had been seething for some time. The drive towards extending the peripheries of the empire had already started to take its toll on Arabia in general and on

1. cf. P.8 note 1 above.

Medina in particular. The amṣār attracted the cream of the Arab race, causing to a large extent the depletion of the heart of Arabia. In becoming the centres of military power they inevitably became the wielders of actual power in the empire, thus robbing Medina of a sizeable part of its influence as the seat of the central government. The position of Medina was further weakened by its increasing dependence on the revenues from the provinces, especially Iraq. All this helped to augment the prestige of the amṣār and tilt the balance of power in their favour, a position which they would naturally be tempted to exploit when circumstances served. The iron hand of 'Umar I and his rigid discipline together with the relatively less complicated problems attending the early growth of the empire helped to keep the lid firmly in position. The caliphate of 'Uthmān (23-35/644-656) gave vent to a variety of tendencies which had been brewing for some time. The machinery of government was becoming more complicated and the frontiers of the empire were extending far beyond the administrative capacity of the government in Medina. The problems and difficulties encountered by the Arabs in their new settlements in the provinces were beginning to take definite shape and hence had to be countered with definite solutions. More important, the Muslim armies were experiencing increasing resistance in their drive eastwards, and successes in battle were achieved at higher costs. The stresses and strains of social and political change were

heightened by some measures of 'Uthmān's. Under him, the ideal of Islamic commonwealth, which was the bulwark of the empire and the only guarantee of its unity, was dangerously challenged by the steadily increasing power of Quraysh as a whole and Banū-Umayya in particular. Thus the delicate balance between the tribes was seriously disturbed as a result of the exploitation of communal effort by the members of this tribe.¹ In 29/650 'Uthmān replaced Abū-Mūsā al-Ash'arī by his young cousin, 'Abdallāh ibn-'Āmir. Under him the people of Baṣra took part in the conquests of Iṣṭakhr, Fārs, Khurāsān and Sijistān and the Islamic dominions were pushed as far as the Oxus.

4. The pattern of tribal alliances:

The tribal situation in Baṣra after the murder of 'Uthmān was far from clear. The alignments appeared to be dictated by the pressure of events rather than by a definite line of political thinking. Although Baṣra came to be known as the staunchest supporter of 'Uthmān and the seat of his partisans, the 'Uthmāniyya,² the stand of the various tribes was not

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1. The grumbling of the Arabs against Quraysh was expressed by 'Amr ibn-Ma'dī-Karib the Yemenite warrior and poet, even during the caliphate of 'Umar I, when he addressed him in verse: 'When we are killed and nobody mourns us, Quraysh says: Oh! That is fate! We are given equality in receiving piercing thrusts [of lances], and denied it when receiving dīnārs.' Al-'lqd-al-Farīd, i, 297-8.
 2. 'lqd, vii, 280. This term, earlier used to denote those who espoused the cause of the murdered caliph, later assumed philosophical and theological dimensions reflected in Jāḥiẓ's book on the sect.

uniform. Already the tribal structure within the town was beginning to take its final shape. The Confederations between tribes and clans according to common descent, pre-Islamic or Islamic affiliation dictated the division of the town into five tribal sectors (akhmās, singular khums). Although the term was mentioned for the first time just before the battle of Şiffīn (37/658),¹ the actual division dated in all probability from further back. The khums of Tamīm and the khums of Ahl al-‘Āliya represented the Muḍarite tribes. The two khums's of Bakr and ‘Abd-al-Qays represented the Rabī‘ite tribes, while the khums of Azd represented the Yemenite tribes.²

The year 36/656 was a dividing line not only in the history of Baṣra but also in that of Islam. The majority of Muḍar with the exception of the clan of Banū-Sa‘d of Tamīm, and the Yemenite Azd supported ‘Ā’isha, and were called ‘Uthmānīs for this reason, while the majority of Rabī‘a (Bakr and ‘Abd-al-Qays) rallied to the support of ‘Alī. Although the religious consideration was prominent, the actual division was largely dictated by sectional and tribal interests. We shall see from now onwards the survival and sometimes the rejuvenation of certain pre-Islamic practices within the structure of the major political forces involved. Thus at a time when religious qualms impelled only a few

1. Naṣr ibn-Muzāḥim, Şiffīn, 131; cf., however, Ṭab., i, 3455.

2. cf. Pellat, op.cit., 22-34, for a full treatment of the akhmās.

individuals to be neutral,¹ tribal solidarity drove the influential clan of Tamīm, the Banū-Sa'd under the leadership of al-Aḥnaf ibn-Qays, to stand aloof from both camps although they were 'Uthmāniyya² because the partisans of 'Uthmān demanded the life of Ḥurqūṣ ibn-Zuhayr of Sa'd who played a leading role in the regicide. The Banū-Sa'd protected their member and broke away from their main tribal alliance. The Rabī'a (Bakr and 'Abd-al-Qays) felt the supremacy of the combined forces of Muḍar and Azd when over 600 of those who marched against 'Uthmān from Baṣra were ruthlessly butchered.³ Ṭalḥa and az-Zubayr showed their preference to Muḍar by giving them the highest pensions to the exclusion of Rabī'a, who attacked the treasury as a counter measure, but were repulsed with great losses.⁴ Thus Bakr and 'Abd-al-Qays, after the battle of az-Zābūqa shortly before the arrival of 'Alī, were virtually driven from Baṣra and had to await the arrival of 'Alī outside the town.⁵ This battle which took place inside Baṣra precipitated the pattern of tribal alliances in the Battle of the Camel and hardened the division of Baṣra into two warring factions: Rabī'a versus Muḍar assisted by Azd. This polarization, however, was not so complete as to overshadow some other important forces, which, as we shall consider later, were at work at the same time and

1. cf. Ibn-Sa'd, vii, Part 1, 82; iv, Part 2, 27; Ibn-Ath., iii, 171.

2. Ṭab., op.cit., i, 3131; Ibn-Ath., iii, 178.

3. Ṭab., i, 3156.

4. Ṭab., i, 3131.

5. Ibid.

resulted in splitting a good number of the major tribes and thereby disrupting their solid communal affinity.¹ The Battle of the Camel (36/657) was on the whole a dress-rehearsal of the complicated pattern into which tribal affiliations fell during the Umayyad period. While the tribes took sides to decide such a public question as the caliphate, they had a wider latitude for manœuvres to entrench their respective interests. The major consideration in supporting the rival claimants to the caliphate was the natural advantages accruing from backing a winning horse. The shifting pattern of tribal allegiance represented the conflicting interests of the various groups within the town.

The defeat of 'Ā'isha and her Baṣrī supporters in the Battle of the camel left Baṣra in the hands of 'Alī who appointed 'Abdallāh ibn-'Abbās as its governor. The immediate result of the defeat was the flight of some 'Uthmānīs to al-Jazīrah, in the jurisdiction of Mu'āwiyā,² and the rallying of a good number of Baṣrīs to 'Alī especially the Banū-Sa'd who had formerly been neutral.³ In the Battle of Ṣiffīn (37/658) representatives of the five tribal groups were present in the ranks of 'Alī under their leaders.⁴ The qurra' of Baṣra, of whom we shall hear later on, emerged in this battle as a distinguished group under the leadership of Mis'ar ibn-Fadakī.⁵

1. cf. Ṭab., op.cit., i, 3168-9, 3178, 3179; See pp. 28-31. below.

2. Ṣiffīn, 16, 39.

3. Ṭab., i, 3414.

4. Dīnawarī, op.cit., 176; Ṣiffīn, 131-2.

5. Ṣiffīn, 235; Ṭab., i, 3283.

The Battle of Şiffīn and the fiasco of the arbitration followed by the massacre of Nahrawān, where the Khārijites, the majority of whom were from Baṣra,¹ were killed, reinforced the conviction of many an Arab that the struggle for the caliphate was waged only for the benefit of one section of Quraysh or the other. The lukewarm attitude of Baṣra as a whole is indicated by the reluctance of both the 'Uthmānīs and the supporters of 'Alī to join forces with their respective sides. The repeated appeals of 'Alī for reinforcement brought him only just over 3,000 out of a population of 60,000 able-bodied men according to Ibn-'Abbās,² 'Alī's governor in Baṣra. In 38/659, Mu'āwiya, in a bid to win the sympathy of Baṣra to his cause sent 'Abdallāh ibn-al-Ḥaḍramī to the town to instigate the people against 'Alī.³ Though the episode ended in burning the emissary alive,⁴ its real significance lay in kindling more than ever before the tribal strife and deepening the rift between the factions. The 'Uthmāniyya (Muḍar and Azd) were divided in their attitudes to Ibn-al-Ḥaḍramī; the Banū-Qays, a branch of Muḍar, let him down because of the inclination of their leader, aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn-Qays, to 'Alī, while Tamīm, the other branch, supported him because he had taken refuge with them. The Rabī'a who had previously supported the 'Alid cause

1. Ṭab., i, 3382; cf. E.I.¹, S.V. "Khawārij";
cf. Watt, Integration, 94-104.

2. Tab., i, 3370-1.

3. Ibid., i, 3414.

4. Ibid., i, 3415-7.

refused to help Ziyād, the deputy of Ibn-‘Abbās and the representative of ‘Alī, because the leader of Bakr, Mālīk ibn-Misma‘ was inclined towards Banū-Umayya,¹ while the Azd who were anti-‘Alid, defended Ziyād mainly because he had sought their protection.² The Banū-Sa‘d, who had been neutral before, gave their support to the Azd because their leader Jāriya ibn-Qudāma thought their interest could be best served by that arrangement.³

Thus the consequence of the civil war in Islam was an entrenchment of the activities of tribes as far as the struggle for the caliphate was concerned. They began to view the whole situation from the angle of tribal interest. The lack of any definite line of policy to dominate the scene and give the town a semblance of unity as was the case in Kūfa or Syria or Ḥijāz, put the town squarely in the grip of conflicting loyalties which rendered the maintenance of the sensitive balance of power inside the town very difficult. The Baṣrīs' preoccupation with their internal problems and conflicts reduced drastically their active participation in the major conflicts. The internal development of the town was producing other problems, but at the same time creating conditions conducive to the growth of a parochial outlook despite the tribal superstructure.

1. Ibid., i, 3414.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibn-Ath., op.cit., iii, 156-7.

5. The Umayyad era:

The reigns of Mu'āwīya and Yazīd (41-64/661-683) witnessed the restoration of peace and order in Baṣra after the brief term as emir of 'Abdallāh ibn-'Amir (41-44/661-664) had thrown the town into chaos and corruption.¹ Under Ziyād (45-53/665-672) and his son 'Ubaydallāh (53-64/672-683) the miṣr was subjected to strict administrative measures designed to curb all sorts of lawlessness and rebellion against the government. Tribes had to be brought to heel by stemming their tendency to revive their old desert practices and assert their power over that of the government. The task was formidable and the attempt to achieve it costly.² The degree of chaos and the complete breakdown of administration since the Battle of the Camel in 36/657 is indicated by the famous speech of Ziyād.³ He imposed a curfew on the town and put any transgressor to the sword. The severe measures paid dividends in time. The twenty years of uninterrupted rigid control helped to put Baṣra firmly in the path of urban development in all respects. The town grew rapidly in population, wealth and culture. Concerted military efforts were directed against the rebellious Khawārij.

The death of Yazīd I in 64/683 and the ensuing deadlock over the caliphate triggered off all the public indignation

1. Ṭab., ii, 67.

2. Ibn-Ath., iii, 384: the deputy of Ziyād, Samura ibn-Jundab is reported to have executed 8,000 men in 6 months.

3. Ṭab., ii, 73.

felt by Baṣrīs over the Umayyad policy of repression in the town. 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād fled and the town was once more left in the grip of tribes. The struggle for power inside the town was complicated by yet another important external factor. The garrison town was gradually dragged into the welter of tribal conflicts in the East. The eastern front where the cream of Baṣrī troops were dominant¹ was beginning to rob Baṣra of a large measure of its initiative. Conflicts and clashes between the Baṣrī tribes in Khurāsān, where they represented the majority, came steadily to leave their impact on Baṣra and poison the relations between the resident members of the various tribes. This tended, as we shall see presently, to diminish the overall effect of the other civilizing factors which were steadily working for the elimination of tensions between the dwellers of the town. Thus the increasing importance of conditions in the East and the profound influence they came to exert on the course of events in Baṣra tended to divert the attention of Baṣrīs once more from the public questions and embroil them in their endemic conflicts. This, as we have noticed earlier, diminished the importance of Baṣra as a force to be reckoned with in any major strife as far as the caliphate was concerned.

Hatred of Umayyad rule drove the majority of factions to agree on paying allegiance to 'Abdallāh ibn-az-Zubayr as caliph.² They also settled for 'Abdallāh ibn-al-Ḥārith,

1. Ṭab., ii, 1290-1, at the time of Qutayba ibn-Muslim, there were in Khurāsān 40,000 from Baṣra, 7,000 from Kūfa and 7,000 clients.

2. Bal., Ansāb, v, 188.

the Hāshimite, for their governor.¹ At this juncture, however, events in Khurāsān threw their dark shadow on the home front. The Muḍarite ‘Abdallāh ibn-Khāzim of Sulaym, a clan of Qays, inflicted a heavy defeat on Rabī‘a in Harāt.² This revived the old hostilities between the two branches of ‘Adnān: Rabī‘a and Muḍar. The immediate consequence of the encounter was that the Rabī‘a and Muḍar in Baṣra took arms against each other in support of their respective brethren in Khurāsān. But the power of Muḍar, with the influential tribe of Tamīm as its leader, outweighed that of Rabī‘a. So Rabī‘a were hard pressed to contact the Azd for support and to offer the renewal of the ancient pact that had existed between them in pre-Islamic days.³ Thus the pact between Bakr, the major branch of Rabī‘a, and the Azd was rejuvenated and their combined forces fought Tamīm and its confederates for about nine months.⁴ The town became the scene of destruction, arson, pillage and lawlessness. The Azāriqa, a good number of whom were released from prison,⁵ seized the opportunity and dealt the town devastating blows. All the factions suffered heavily at their hands. The Khārijite menace overshadowed all other differences. In point of fact, it was the growing intensity of the Khārijite assaults,

1. Ṭab., ii, 444; Dīnawarī, 292; Naq., 112.

2. Ibn-Ath., iv, 130; cf. Naq., 727.

3. Ṭab., ii, 449-451; cf. Naq., 113, 728-729.

4. Bal., Ansāb, ivB, 115.

5. Dīnawarī, 292.

threatening as they did the very existence of Baṣra as such, that hastened the cessation of hostilities between the tribal belligerents. The outbreak of a severe epidemic at the time¹ depressed the situation further. They appealed for help to Ibn-az-Zubayr who sent them al-Ḥārith ibn-‘Abdallāh, nicknamed al-Qubā’, as governor.² Peace was concluded and energies were directed against the Azāriqa under the command of al-Muhallab ibn-Abī-Ṣufra. The defeat of al-Mukhtār of Kūfa in 67/686³ left Muṣ‘ab in complete control of Iraq. Meanwhile the fateful Battle of Marj Rāhiṭ between the Yemenite Kalb and the Muḍarite Qays put ‘Abd-al-Malik ibn-Marwān and his Yemenite supporters in control of Syria. The confrontation between the Zubayrid and the Marwānid claimants to the caliphate was imminent. But the stand of Baṣra, as usual, was not uniform. Although the majority of Baṣrīs supported Muṣ‘ab against al-Mukhtār and paid allegiance to Ibn-az-Zubayr, a number of them double-crossed him when Khālīd ibn-‘Abdallāh ibn-Asīd entered Baṣra behind the back of Muṣ‘ab to rally the people to the Umayyads.⁴ Some notables of Baṣra had already entered secretly into negotiation with ‘Abd-al-Malik.⁵ But as the Battle of Jufra outside Baṣra in 71/690 revealed, they did not maintain their promised support to the Syrian detachment outside their town which was defeated by the forces of Muṣ‘ab.⁶

1. Ṭab., ii, 580; Ansāb, ivB, 123; Ibn-Ath., iv, 173.

2. Ansāb, v, 188, 220.

3. Dīnawarī, 312-314.

4. Ṭab., ii, 799; Ansāb, ivB, 155.

5. Ansāb, v, 280.

6. Ṭab., ii, 800; Ibn-Ath., iv, 253; Ansāb, ivB, 160-1.

The Umayyad attempt failed because the petty internal conflicts overshadowed the major issue. The Tamīmites stood by their fellow tribesman, 'Abbād ibn-al-Ḥuṣayn al-Ḥabaṭī who happened to be the security officer of Ibn-Ma'mar, the deputy of Muṣ'ab in Baṣra. The Rabī'ites and Azdites supported Mālik ibn-Misma' the leader of the Rabī'ite Bakr who had granted refuge to Khālīd ibn-Asīd, the Umayyad emissary. They fought for 40 days before agreeing to evict Khālīd from Baṣra as a compromise.¹ It is important to note here that the Qaysites did not side with their Muḍarite Confederate, Tamīm, as they had done before in the troubles of 64 A.H. against the combined forces of Rabī'a and Azd. The rift in the Muḍarite camp in Baṣra was caused by what had been taking place in Khurāsān. The same forces which had brought about the polarization of the population of Baṣra into two major conflicting camps were at work again and resulted in splitting the Muḍarite camp. The same 'Abdallāh ibn-Khāzīm of Qays who caused the first upheaval, attacked his former allies Tamīm who reacted by killing him.² Thus the political scene in Baṣra increased in complexity by this development. From now onwards events inside the town would be influenced by the strife of four tribal blocks: Qaysite, Tamīmite, Rabī'ite and Yemenite. This is in marked contrast with the workings of the official Umayyad policy which was based on the major tribal blocks: the Southern Arabs

1. Ibn-Ath., iv, 252-253.

2. cf. ibid., 171-173, 210, 212, 282.

(Yemenites) represented by Kalb, versus the North Arabs ('Adnānīs) represented by Qays.

The defeat of Muṣ'ab and his death in 72/691 placed Baṣra once more under the control of the Umayyads who utilized the tribal conflicts to their advantage. The Umayyad policy of attempting to maintain power through encouraging tribal strife and playing off the conflicting camps found a fertile field in Baṣra judging by the brief term of the governorship of Bishr ibn-Marwān (74/693), as we shall see later. Meanwhile the intensity of Khārījite assaults were causing concern, and Muhallab was short of men and supplies due to the jealousy of Bishr, who did his best to thwart the activities of Muhallab and bring his family to shame.¹ The death of Bishr in 74/693 came as a relief to the Baṣrī forces facing the Khawārij and they deserted en masse. The gravity of the situation called for the repressive measures of al-Ḥajjāj (75-95/695-714) who followed Bishr. His stern proclamations and a few executions sent the people of Baṣra in their thousands to reinforce the troops of al-Muhallab,² and he himself led a contingent to cover Muhallab's rear. Al-Ḥajjāj's decision to reduce the allowances already approved by Muṣ'ab³ provoked a rebellion led by 'Abdallāh ibn-al-Jarūd of 'Abd-al-Qays. Al-Ḥajjāj was on the verge of destruction when the tribal affinity ('aṣabiyya) of his stock,

1. cf. Pellat, 270; Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom, 227-228.

2. Ṭab., ii, 873-4.

3. Ibid.

Qays, came to his rescue. They declared, 'We shall never allow a Qaysite to be murdered and plundered'.¹ This gave al-Ḥajjāj a breathing space to organize his forces and weaken the ranks of his adversaries and finally liquidate their leaders.² The revolt was, in essence, a reflection of tribal jealousies. The Rabī'a and Azd saw in the appointment of al-Ḥajjāj a triumph for Muḍar, while Tamīm viewed in it the supremacy of Qays. Al-Ḥajjāj did not take long to justify their suspicions and fears by indicating his preference for his own people, Qays.³ By now it had become evident that the authority of the state could not be effectively maintained without the backing of powerful tribal support.

The repressive measures of al-Ḥajjāj which produced social and religious upheavals, in addition to his preference to Qays, precipitated the rebellion of 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān ibn-Muḥammad ibn-al-Ash'ath in 81/701. His defeat left Qays in complete control of the whole of Iraq and the East. Al-Ḥajjāj was quick to remove Yazīd ibn-al-Muhallab the Yemenite from Khurāsān and replace him by a Qaysite, Qutayba ibn-Muslim of Bāhila. He persecuted and imprisoned the Muhallabids until 90/709 when they escaped from prison and sought refuge with Sulaymān ibn-'Abd-al-Malīk, then the governor of Palestine, who interceded on their behalf to the caliph al-Walīd, who

1. Ibn-Ath., iv, 311.

2. Tab., op.cit.; Ibn-Ath., iv, 312-14.

3. cf. Mub., Kāmil, iii, 179-180 for an example of his Muḍarī 'aṣabiyya.

pardoned them.¹ Meanwhile, al-Ḥajjāj built his capital in Wāsiṭ, between Baṣra and Kūfa,² and from there his Syrian garrison held all those territories in submission until his death in 95/714.

The ultimate result of the Umayyad policy was that the caliphs in the latter part of their reign appeared to be the heads of particular parties rather than the sovereigns of a united empire.³ Thus the accession of Sulaymān to the Umayyad throne in 96/715 brought about a reversal of policy by favouring the Yemenite against the Qaysite party. This produced repercussions in Iraq and Khurāsān. It spelled the decline of the Qaysite power which had been dominant for about 20 years. Qutayba was killed in Khurāsān by the combined forces of Yemen, Rabī'a and Tamīm,⁴ and Yazīd ibn-al-Muhallab was reinstated as governor of Iraq⁵ and then of Khurāsān in 97/716.

The short-lived attempt of 'Umar II in 99/717 to overhaul the system and inject some fresh blood was destined to fail. He imprisoned Yazīd ibn-al-Muhallab and tried to stop the tribal drift but to no avail. His early death in 101/719-20 brought Yazīd ibn-'Abd-al-Malik, who under the influence of his Muḍarite mother patronized the Qaysite party. Meanwhile, Yazīd ibn-al-Muhallab, forestalling the caliph's

1. Ibn-Ath., iv, 207, 215, 223.

2. Ṭab., ii, 1125-6.

3. cf. Hitti, History of the Arabs, 281.

4. Ṭab., ii, 1289-98.

5. Ibid., 1305.

designs against him, managed to escape from prison and attempted the capture of Baṣra in the face of strong resistance by Qays and Tamīm. His defeat by Maslama ibn-ʿAbd-al-Malik eliminated the danger of a Yemenite triumph in the eastern flank of the empire, a danger which forced the hostile camps of Qays and Tamīm to compose their differences in the face of the common enemy. But relations between them were soon exacerbated when Yazīd II appointed ʿUmar ibn-Hubayra, a Qaysite of Fazāra, as governor of Iraq. The shift to the Yemenite axis by Hishām in 105/723 set the ʿAdnānī versus Qaḥṭānī or Yemenite conflict in motion. He dismissed ʿUmar ibn-Hubayra from Iraq, and appointed Khālīd ibn-ʿAbdallāh al-Qasrī, a Yemenite, as a governor over Iraq, and Khurāsān in 106/724.¹ The policy of al-Qasrī was fanatically anti-Muḍar. He imprisoned his Qaysite predecessor Ibn-Hubayra and the Tamīmīte poet al-Farazdaq, and killed ʿUmar ibn-Yazīd al-Usaydī,² while his brother Asad persecuted many of them in Khurāsān. The common danger brought Qays and Tamīm once more together as Muḍar versus Yemen and Rabīʿa. This explains why a poet like al-Farazdaq praised Ibn-Hubayra when he fled from prison after he had lampooned him previously,³ while Qays appealed to Hishām for the release of al-Farazdaq. The two factions were unanimous in complaining of the repressive policy of the Yemenite Qasrī. Hishām responded by dismissing

1. Ṭab., ii, 1484.

2. Ibid., 1495.

3. Ibid., 1497-8; Ibn-Ath., v, 56.

Khālīd al-Qasrī from Khurāsān, but the Muḍarites maintained their pressure until he was removed altogether from Iraq in 120/738. Muḍar asserted its power by the appointment of Yūsuf ibn-‘Umar ath-Thaqafī (120-126/738-744)¹ over Iraq and Naṣr ibn-Sayyār over Khurāsān.

The fact that the rich provinces to the east became the fulcrum of political activity, thus reducing the role of Baṣra to that of echoing, on the whole, the distant confrontations, was not without salutary effects on the urban development of the garrison town.

ii. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The preceding analysis of the political forces impinging on the community of Baṣra sheds some light on the austere conditions attending the development of the miṣr. Taken in isolation, these political conflicts present a picture of utter degradation and decay which is at variance with what was really taking place. The picture has to be corrected by considering the other factors which helped the systematic growth of the town despite the powerful forces militating against its development as an urban centre.

1. Tribalism in urban setting:

The centrifugal forces of tribalism which tended to undermine the basis of urban life, were being eroded through-

1. Tab., ii, 1658, 1717, 1725; Ibn-Ath., v, 163.

out by subtle forces working for reconciliation and harmony within the town. The small number of people who settled there - it is reported that one slaughtered she-camel was enough for them at first¹ - increased rapidly with the increasing tempo of conquests. In just over 20 years the number of able-bodied men registered in the Dīwān was reckoned at 60,000 in addition to their women, children, clients and slaves.² With the exception of a few prominent men like some Companions of the Prophet and men of comparable standing, the vast majority of these people emigrated as part and parcel of clans or tribes and settled in the miṣr, as noted earlier, according to tribal divisions. The preponderance of the 'Adnānī Bedouin tribes whose adherence to desert customs and tribal affinity ('aṣabiyya) has been noted earlier, had been in marked contrast with the situation in Kūfa where the majority was drawn from Yemenite tribes who were relatively more used to organized control.³

It has been indicated that despite the division of the town into tribal sections the administrative powers were vested in the governor of the miṣr who was answerable to the central government. The akhmās themselves were, in part, a by-product of conditions prevailing in the miṣr at the time. Administrative and military considerations were paramount in their creation. They were in a sense administrative

1. Yāq., i, 641.

2. Ṭab., i, 3370.

3. Massignon, Kūfa (Arabic trans., 12-13).

divisions as was the case in the asbā' of Kūfa, and the army divisions were in line with them. The Arabs had to adapt their desert institutions to the new conditions of urban settlements. The ancient clan system "'ashīra" was convenient from an administrative and political point of view. The system was tuned to general Islamic conceptions and was adopted in the miṣr. The members of the clan had common rights and duties before the law. For instance they inherited the estates of the heirless member, and paid the blood-money collectively in the case of unpremeditated killing by one of their members. But this responsibility did not extend beyond the members of the clan who were already registered in the Dīwān of pensions in the miṣr.¹ This in effect meant that the members of the clan settled in the miṣr and included in the Dīwān were cut off from their kinsmen in the desert.² Due to the unsystematic emigration of clans they were not used as a basis for the distribution of pensions at first. The discrepancy in the membership of clans forced the adoption of other units called 'irāfas. A limited amount of money would be allotted to each 'irāfa for distribution. The money would be given to the leaders of the akhmās (or asbā' in Kūfa) who would hand it to the 'arīfs and their assistants for distribution.³ This system led inevitably to the subdivision of larger clans into smaller units for the purpose of distribution.

1. cf. Shaybānī, Jāmi' Kabīr, 209-10; Abū-Yūsuf, 'Āthār, 221; Al-'Alī, op.cit., 30.

2. Ibn-Sallām, Amwāl, 227; Wellhausen, Skizzen, iv, 25.

3. Ṭab., i, 2496; Al-'Alī, 98-99.

The anarchy following the death of 'Uthmān brought the wave of conquests almost to a standstill and disrupted the flow of revenue from the eastern provinces to Baṣra. Ziyād reorganized the administration of the town by making the clan as such a financial unit and appointed a 'arīf responsible for the distribution of the 'aṭā', thus making the financial system agree with the social system which rested on the clan. The 'arīfs were responsible in addition for recruitment when required,¹ and were influential as agents of the government with their people.²

The Diwān system created a sort of homogeneity between the tribes who received more or less equal stipends from the state, but the system did not cater for the majority of the non-Arabs or the Arabs who were not actually enrolled in the Register.³ For the major duty of the pensioners "ahl al-'aṭā'" had been to serve in the army and the clan was taken as the recruiting unit and was obliged to bring forward a definite number of warriors on demand. The clan thus seemed to represent the smallest military unit in the army. It also seems that military considerations dictated further the grouping of clans into larger units of related ancestry⁴ as was reflected in the Battle of the Camel where three larger groups emerged as Tamīm, Bakr and Azd,⁵ each of which

1. Ibid., ii, 866, 870, 902; cf. al-'Alī, 37ff.

2. Ibn-Sa'd, Ṭabaqāt, v, 293.

3. Ṭab., i, 2414 where 'Umar I is reported to have said, "The fay' is solely for the people of amṣār and those who joined them and lived among them. No one else is entitled to it'.

4. Wellhausen, Skizzen, iv, 27.

5. Ṭab., i, 3169, 3179, 3311.

comprised three clans each with an independent leader.

The reorganization of Ziyād took as its base the division of the town into akhmās, each comprising a number of clans each with a chief with definite responsibilities. But the authority of the parent tribe was not always overriding over its clans which continued to be the basic units in the social, financial and administrative system, and their members continued to bear the name of their common ancestor rather than that of their tribal ancestor. In fact conflicts and rivalries between related clans resulted in weakening the solidarity of the tribal block as was reflected in the stand of Tamīm during the Battle of the Camel when it divided into three groups.¹ But, as the political analysis showed, the tribal group was important in the major disputes in view of the bigger weight and the ability to protect its members more effectively than the smaller clans. Furthermore it was more convenient for the government to deal with the relatively more powerful representatives of the larger tribal groups.

The exclusive nature of the Diwān system played some part in weakening tribal solidarity, as hinted earlier. This demanded the enrolment of those in active service to the exclusion of all others. The ceiling was determined by the demand for fresh warriors, which was in turn determined by the level of actual fighting involved. It was inevitable that as revenues fell short of accommodating the larger

1. Tab., i, 3179.

not in receipt of stipends found themselves outside the effective control of the clan. Many of these had to gain their livelihood by engaging in trade and similar occupations. The nature of these occupations would oblige them to establish new relations based on mutual interest with other people not related to them by blood. The growth of such relationships was destined to drive many people to jettison all sorts of tribal trappings.

2. The growth of an oligarchy:

Urban life with its inevitable restrictions and obligations was destined to bring about profound changes in the lives and relations of the Arab tribes who chose to settle in the miṣr. The gearing of the whole tribal system, as noted above, to the administrative machinery of the government, led inevitably to an appreciable decline in the authority of the tribes. The political efficacy of the tribe and the bond between its members based on blood relationship were appreciably weakened by the very act of settling inside the miṣr and submitting to the authority of the emir, governor, who did not derive his powers from the bond of blood. His jurisdiction which covered the whole miṣr, and sometimes extended beyond, tended to limit the sphere of influence of tribal chiefs who were themselves in most cases appointed by the central government.¹ The gradual increase in the powers of the emir invariably diminished the freedom of action of the tribes.

1. cf. Bayān, i, 200-1; iii, 74; 'Iqd, i, 296.

At the beginning the emir found the maintenance of peace and order an intolerable task due to the intractability of the Bedouins and their adherence to their nomadic practices. But as his powers gradually became tangible and effective, he became more and more the central figure to whom allegiance had to be paid. His control over the financial system and his influence on tribal leaders increasingly forced those leaders to vie with each other in gaining his favours, in order to enjoy a greater measure of authority over their own people on that account. This evidently resulted in the erosion of their effective power and the decline of their importance. It was highly unlikely that the Bedouin community would be able to maintain rigidly and for long the balance between its inherited institutions and the rising authority of the emir, which was invincible.¹ The growth of the miṣr necessitated the erection of a kind of administrative machinery which required the employment of officials to run it. Most of these were drawn at first from non-Arabs who had no tribes to support them and so their loyalty was solely to the emir; this helped to consolidate his powers. The police force was an important instrument which the emir relied upon to entrench his power. The earliest example was the 400 Sayābija who had been entrusted with guarding the treasury and the prison since the time of Abū-Mūsā.² Ziyād created a bodyguard of 500 commanded by two

1. Ansāb, ivB, 29.

2. Ṭab., i, 3125.

prominent Arabs.¹ The 'arīfs were an important instrument in carrying out the directives of the emir. The chiefs of the akhmās were likewise under his jurisdiction² and whatever power left to them was limited to their **tribes**.

The early emirs used to command the armies in person, but with the expansion of conquests and the increase in administrative responsibilities, they gradually delegated this duty to prominent men who were appointed according to their power and standing among their tribesmen. This in turn drove these men to take especial interest in the welfare of their tribes from which they derived part of their power. But with the establishment of the empire and the decline of conquests, the state was more in need of administrators to run the conquered lands than military leaders. The administrative ability was, on the whole, more important than the measure of tribal support enjoyed by the candidate. The advantages that accrued from such posts were evident.³ The way to secure them was not through the clans or tribes, but through the emir. This enhanced the prestige and authority of the latter and caused all those who aspired to occupy administrative posts like 'āmil, 'arīf, qāḍī, etc., to attach themselves to the inner circle that surrounded the governor. An index of the magnitude of this tendency was the decision

1. Ibid., ii, 79.

2. Ansāb, ivB, 79.

3. A proverb was coined in Baṣra during the governorship of Ziyād: 'How nice is the imāra even over stones', Bal., Futūḥ, 390.

of Ziyād to register 500 of the shaykhs of Baṣra in the Dīwān as his companions and offer them allowances on that account ranging between 300 and 500 dirhems,¹ presumably in addition to their regular stipends. A number of the Companions of the Prophet were employed by Ziyād.²

All this tended to increase the number of highly placed men whose personal interests increasingly came to be linked with those of the emir and his administration. This oligarchy increased its powers progressively at the expense of the tribal community and other groups which were gradually disarmed. It was only in times of general chaos when the iron hand of this administrative machinery was lifted, that these elements found their chance and wrought havoc in the miṣr.

The power of the emir and the efficacy of his coercive machinery reached such heights under figures like Ziyād, his son 'Ubaydallāh (41-64/661-684) and al-Ḥajjāj (75-95/695-714) that reactions and criticisms of official policy had to take violent courses as was the case with the different groups of Khawārij, Shī'ites and others. The rulers in their desire to establish their authority utilized all forms of persuasion and intimidation. They used the poets and the quṣṣās³ to propagate their points of view and lampoon their enemies.

1. Ṭab, ii, 78.

2. Ibid., 79.

3. cf. Goldziher Memorial Volume, Pederson, "Quṣṣās", i, 233 (Budapest, 1948); cf. Maqrīzī, Khiṭaṭ, ii, 253; Pellat, 108-110.

The profusion of panegyric poetry was a response to a real demand. Threats,¹ imprisonment, which was particularly repulsive to the Arabs, deportations² and ultimately force were used to break any resistance.

It is worth noting here that the excessive zeal of the various groups of Khawārij in their enmity to the Umayyad regime dealt Baṣra a severe blow. Their fierce and incessant attacks disrupted the flow of its trade and endangered the life of its citizens. The wealthy classes and the ordinary people were deeply affected. This external danger brought the divergent groups together on many occasions,³ which strengthened the hand of the state.

3. Influence of the bādiya and Khurāsān:

The picture is complicated by yet another factor. For the life of the garrison town was not cut off from its neighbouring desert "bādiyat al-Baṣra", where life continued largely unaffected by the subtle influences of urban dwelling. Larger sections of the tribes, part of whom settled in Baṣra, continued to roam the desert in search of water and pasture. Their pattern of existence was hardly disturbed by the upheaval caused by the new religion. They persisted in practising their pre-Islamic customs undeterred by any effective official control. With the exception of the su'āt (tax-collectors) who came at certain periods of the year, the

1. cf. Bal., Ansāb, ivB, 89

2. cf. Ibn-Sa'd, vii, Part, 77, 79.

3. cf. Tab., ii, 580; cf. E.I.¹, "Khawārij"; cf. Watt, Integration, P.100 ff.

official presence was not often felt.¹ But these Bedouins were linked with the miṣr in various ways. The trading activities of the town attracted them and the famous market of al-Mirbad which catered largely for their wants was an index of their important role in the commercial life of the town. They had relatives and resident members of their clans in the miṣr. Furthermore they provided a constant source from which fresh recruits could be drawn for the army. In times of crisis when the authority of the government was at its lowest, they often swelled the ranks of their urban fellow tribesmen and took part in their fights.² The waves of violence and anarchy which often threatened the life of Baṣra were often due to their presence in the miṣr in numbers larger than could be accounted for by the Diwān. The encroachment of this Bedouin element on the urban life of Baṣra often detracted from the effectiveness of the other factors of stabilization treated earlier.

This pull by the neighbouring desert is accentuated by that of remote Khurāsān. The political ramifications of this factor were, as noted earlier, considerable and so were

1. cf. Mub., Kāmil, ii, 130 for the account on an Arab shaykh who was not aware of the death of 'Umar I, some time after 65 A.H; Ḥamāsa, ed. Freytag, 800 for an anecdote about a Bedouin who never heard the adhān before coming to Baṣra.
2. cf. Kāmil, ii, 129 where a specific reference is made to the Bedouins of Tamīm who swelled the ranks of fellow townsmen in the Battle of Mirbad after death of Yazīd I. cf. Ṭab, i, 3080, where a'rāb are specifically mentioned in the murder of 'Uthmān. cf. Mub., Kāmil (ed. Marṣafī) ii, 124, for an account of a war that started in bādiya and extended to Baṣra.

their social consequences. It has been pointed out that the considerable number of the troops in Baṣra which had settled in garrison camps in the East found themselves increasingly alienated by tribal jealousies and frictions. The army service which gave prominence to tribal affiliation tended to bolster up the tribal spirit. The difficult conditions in which these tribesmen found themselves in these regions forced them gradually to break away from the bonds that their settlement in Baṣra had forged. The numerous forces that had impinged on their lives in the miṣr and tended to reduce tribal friction were suddenly removed in these remote regions. They found themselves in conditions of fighting and relative freedom from control similar to those of their pre-Islamic days.¹ The prospects of new riches and their realisation of their strength and their remoteness from any direct control by the state all tended to assert tribal solidarity as being the most effective device for rallying support and securing protection in those wild conditions. The fact that the revenue of Baṣra was largely derived from the labours of these men explains the powerful influence the events of the East exerted on the daily life of Baṣra.

At times it looked as though the influence of these Bedouins, near and far, on the political and social life of Baṣra outweighed that of the settled and domesticated

1. cf. Ṭab., ii, 1301 where the Tamīmīte Waki' on being requested to lash a drunkard and not to put him to the sword, retorted, "I never punish with the whip, the sword is my only means of punishment", in accordance with the Jāhili practice.

community which was often caught between the two conflicting tendencies of tribalism and urbanism. The stormy history of Baṣra during the Umayyad epoch could be viewed as a protracted struggle between these two divergent forces. The struggle often took various shapes according to the attending circumstances and the results were always complicated and difficult to assess due to the complexity and interaction of the forces involved, both internally and externally. This paradox is reflected in the fact that while the town was more often than not the stage of fights and rebellions, very powerful religious and literary currents were gathering speed and steadily transforming the life and the fortunes of the miṣr.

4. The qurrā':

The general effect of Islamic teachings stressing the unity of faith irrespective of lineage were slowly but steadily tempering the scene in various ways. The most important sector where this influence had been greatly felt was that of the qurrā', the reciters and students of the Qur'ān, from whose ranks a good number of the Khawārij emerged. Abū-Mūsā al-Ash'arī is credited with the earliest attempt to teach the Qur'ān in the garrison-camp. He asked 'Umar I to send with him a number of the Companions of the Prophet to teach the people their religion, to which request 'Umar responded by permitting 10¹ or 29² Companions to

1. Dīnawarī, op.cit., 125.

2. Ṭab., i, 2531.

accompany him. A reciter himself, he was enthusiastic about spreading the discipline. To create the incentive he suggested to 'Umar that the qurrā' should be privileged with a higher stipend, irrespective of their clans or their participation in the early conquests.¹ This arrangement encouraged a large number of members of tribes and new converts to occupy themselves with learning and reciting the Qur'ān and to form, in time, a well-knit group capable of exerting pressure. They played important roles in the social and political life of the town. They fought as a distinct group in Şiffīn and it was they who precipitated the deadlock of the arbitration. Their important contribution in sponsoring the cause of the new non-Arab converts was demonstrated by their stand against the measures of al-Ḥajjāj when he ordered them to be sent back to their villages.² They joined forces with Ibn-al-Ash'ath and formed a separate division with a leader of their own.³ The defeat of this rebellion, however, shook their stand in the town immensely, and exposed them to the punitive measures of al-Ḥajjāj.⁴

5. The mawālī:

While the purely Arab elements were struggling for supremacy and giving the town an Arab character through their preponderance at the earlier stages, another development

1. Ibn-Sa'd, iv, 11; Abū-Nu'aym, Hilya, ii, 94; Dīnawarī, 125.

2. Ṭab., ii, 1122; Bal., Ansāb, xi (Ahlwardt), 336.

3. Ansāb, op.cit., 336.

4. 'Iqd, iii, 367-368; cf. Nöldeke-Schwally, Geschichte des Qurāns, iii, 163-169; Pellat, Milieu, 73-80.

was slowly but progressively modifying the picture. The passionate desire of the Arabs to preserve their identity by keeping aloof from their subject nations¹ soon proved to be a contradiction in terms. The early settlers in the garrison camp soon realized the necessity of employing all sorts of professional men to make life in the miṣr possible. They had to keep their hands free from the drudgery of manual work to devote their energies to military enterprises. In addition to the need of builders and of skilled labour to dig canals and erect bridges, the rapid increase in the acquisition of cultivable land around Baṣra, the majority of which was 'ushrī,² i.e. Muslim-owned, in contrast to the Kharājī lands which remained on the whole in the hands of their previous owners as was the case of Kūfa,³ created a strong demand for agricultural labour, which could be met only by drawing indigenous farmers from the countryside. Furthermore, the Arabs took over the Sassanid machinery of administration en masse and with it went its staff who were mainly of Persian stock. War prisoners and slaves were brought into the town in their thousands.

Since its inception more and more of these non-Arabs came to participate actively in the social and political life of the miṣr. During the governorship of Abū-Mūsā about 4,000 Asāwira, who had been a detachment of the Sassanid army, accepted Islam and were given equal status

1. cf. Ṭab., i, 2545.

2. Iṣṭakhri, Masālik, 80; Ibn-Ḥawqal, Ṣūrat, 224.

3. Iṣṭakhri, op.cit., 82.

with the Arab warriors, as far as the stipends went, and were further permitted to settle in Baṣra, where they became clients of the tribe of Tamīm.¹ The Zuṭṭ and Sayābija who were in all probability of Indian extraction² performed the duties of security forces and prison guards. The fact that they were entrusted with guarding the treasury in 36/657 during the troubles following the death of 'Uthmān, indicated that their services were long appreciated by the ruling Arabs. Commercial activities provided vast opportunities for all kinds of skills and professions. The settlement of these non-Arabs in the miṣr reached such an extent as to frighten the ruling circles. It is reported that Mu'āwiya ibn-Abī-Sufyān intimated to al-Aḥnaf ibn-Qays and Samura ibn-Jundab, both from Baṣra, that he dreaded their overwhelming increase and feared that they might stage a coup (wathba) against the Arabs and undermine their authority, and to forestall that he contemplated exterminating half of them, leaving the other half to look after the market and the roads. The report adds that al-Aḥnaf pleaded on their behalf, while Samura was in favour of partial genocide. Mu'āwiya is said to have accepted the stand of al-Aḥnaf.³ It seems that he satisfied himself with removing only a large number of Zuṭṭ and Sayābija to the coasts of Syria.⁴

1. Bal., Futūḥ, 520.

2. Ibid., 522; cf. Pellat, 37-38.

3. 'Iqd, iii, 364.

4. Futūḥ, 524.

In a regimented society such as existed in Baṣra where the Arab element was supreme the most feasible way to secure the interests of other groups was to utilize the system of walā', clientship, and establish some link with one of the Arab clans or families who would act as patrons of the mawlā. The tribal system of jiwār, granting refuge, together with the ancient system of walā' were operative in the miṣr and groups and individuals could avail themselves of them if they wanted to lead any effective life at all in the town. In actual fact the establishment of this clientship relation with an Arab patron, be it a tribe, a clan, a family or an individual, was the most effective means, if not the only one, by which a non-Arab individual could participate effectively in the social life of the town at first.

It is important to note here that the term 'mawālī' is a generic appellation designating different categories of people. It included liberated slaves who were obliged to maintain their relations with their former masters on certain conditions, as well as free non-Arabs who voluntarily opted for attaching themselves to an Arab family. All of them, however, bear the name of their Arab patrons preceded by the word "mawlā" to indicate that their relationship with the patron is a social and not a blood relationship. The arrangement entailed, on the whole some privileges and imposed certain duties. Most of the mawālī were not entitled to 'aṭā'', stipends, and even when they had it, it was not always equal to that of the Arabs.¹ The free clients represented

1. Mas'ūdī, Murūj, v, 174; Ansāb, ivB, 58-9.

most of the professional classes who settled in Baṣra and put themselves under the protection of some influential families a position from which they derived certain benefits. It was this class which was most active. They boasted of a noble origin and were undoubtedly the product of a higher culture and many of them adopted Islam and felt equal with the Arabs. They took to studying the Qur'ān and Arabic language with vigour. Most of them were not employed in military service because of their civilian upbringing, and their relationship with their Arab patrons was not strong enough to commit them to go to war with them. It seemed that their number was greater at the beginning when the authority of the tribe was stronger, but later with the increasing powers of the emir and the gradual growth of urban life, they did not feel the need for the protection of any tribe.

The various non-Arab groups availed themselves of these opportunities at an early date. It is reported that the Asāwira became the clients of Banū-Sa'd of Tamīm,¹ while the Zuṭṭ and Sayābija became clients of Banū-Ḥanẓala of Tamīm.² Ziyād is credited with building a quarter to settle 4,000 Bukhārīs, often referred to as the Bukhārīs of Ziyād.³ Some Persianized Arabs like Banū-'l-'Amm (or al-'Amī) of Ahwāz attached themselves to Tamīm also.⁴

1. Bal., Futūḥ, 520.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibn-al-Faqīh, 191.

4. Ṭab., i, 2537-8.

The arrangement was not confined only to specific integrated groups; individuals too availed themselves of it. The élite of the Sassanid Society who had not been captured or enslaved, the learned classes, the administrators and professionals whose services were badly needed all resumed their services under the new administration. Despite the fact that Persian continued to be the official language of the Dīwāns for over half a century,¹ these mawālī realized early in their career in the new regime that they had no proper place in an Arab Islamic society without first gaining an initial footing in the social structure, to which their attachment to Arab patrons was only a prelude. They felt that their integration in the new society depended largely on the degree of Arabicization and Islamization they achieved. The clientship relationship between the Arab and the non-Arab, where the former was the dominant force, had to reach its logical conclusion of complete Arabicization before the latter could stand on equal footing with his patron at least in the formal sphere of linguistic and religious communication. This realization created the insatiable desire among these mawālī to improve their lot and partake of the privileges that the Arabs enjoyed by exerting themselves to master the Arabic language and Islamic religion.

It was not long, however, before they realized that the royal road to equality was hedged with immense obstacles.

1. Al-Ḥajjāj (75-95 A.H.) is credited with instigating the shift to Arabic, cf. Bayān, iii, 26, note 3.

The clash of interests weighed heavily against the mawālī at first. The Arabs were conscious of their privileged position. Their victory over the Byzantines and Persians put them at the top as a ruling class exploiting all the resources of the empire to advance their fortunes, a fact which heightened the Arab feeling of self-confidence as a distinct élite compared with their subjects. This feeling drove them to discriminate against these mawālī in order to maintain their position of strength, in the social, economic and political spheres. The paradox is that by about 700 A.D. the religion of the Prophet had ceased to be a monopoly of his people, and the Arab Muslims were at last out-numbered by those of the subject nations, notably the Persians. This transformation was rapidly and permanently modifying the civil and religious history not only of Baṣra but of the whole empire. The vested interests of the Arabs as a ruling class were diametrically opposed to extending voluntarily to these overwhelming masses the rights and privileges which they themselves enjoyed. It was obvious, however, that although these interests were real and tangible, they were grounded on shaky and ephemeral bases. The Arabs' intransigence was contrary to the teachings of their own religion, in the name of which they built the empire and appealed to their subjects. It was essentially the hope to realize that equality which Islam advocated that motivated a large number of these non-Arabs to adopt the new faith. Conversion promised the opening up of new vistas in life which the retention of their

former faith could not have realized. For the Arab empire was, after all, theoretically a theocracy. Islam was the common factor between the Arab and non-Arab. By accepting Islam the latter acquired in theory rights similar to those of the former who in practice resisted any such claims. It soon dawned on these non-Arabs that in an Arab hegemony, Islam alone was not sufficient to realize their ambitions. They had, in addition, to penetrate the wall of Arab chauvinism. The system of clientship, and the agonizing schemes by which many of them sought to identify themselves with the Arabs, as we shall see later on, all failed to satisfy all their desires, although they paved the way for self-aggrandizement and improving one's lot.

The cumulative effect of the movement was far-reaching. The pressure of the mawālī on the miṣr reached at times dangerous levels, as noted earlier. The result was the depletion of the countryside and the subsequent failure of agriculture which ended in a sharp decline in the level of revenues. The crisis forced al-Ḥajjāj to resort to the drastic measures of deporting the villagers wholesale to their original homesteads and subjecting them to taxes from which they had been exempted by the act of conversion. The counter measures of 'Umar II attempted to rectify the situation and offer them some redress. The bitterness these measures induced was acute and deep. On the other hand, the sheer weight of these overwhelming masses on the resources of the miṣr and their intense rivalry with the Arabs in all walks

of life engendered the fear and jealousy of the Arabs who felt their entrenched position threatened. Their monopoly of power was rapidly undermined by their gradual transformation from an essentially military class to that of the ordinary subjects of the empire. To stem the rising tide of the mawālī and block their progress the Arabs struck by imposing on them all kinds of humiliating and discriminatory measures.¹ They were not allowed, for example, to occupy certain public posts which carried some authority like that of the judge,² or the commander of the army. It was not until the turn of the century that the first mawla judge, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, was appointed in Baṣra at the time of 'Umar II.³ They were prohibited from marrying Arab women, and were exposed to humiliating penalties if they infringed the ban.⁴

The smooth working of this elaborate defensive mechanism was impaired by the tendency of the Arabs to marry the mawālī females or take them as concubines. The extent of this process of intermarriage could be gauged by the plea

1. cf. 'Iqd, iii, 364-8 for some examples.

2. When al-Ḥajjāj appointed Sa'īd ibn-Jubayr as qāḍī over Kūfa, people complained, "None but an Arab is fit to be a judge". Mub., Kāmil (Wright), 182.

3. cf. Ṭab., ii, 1347; Ibn-Sa'd, v, 251; Waki', Akhbār al-Qudāt, ii, lff.

4. Examples of mawālī marrying Arab women are numerous, cf. Ch.V, p. 293 below; cf. Lisan, x, 103 for an excerpt of a letter of 'Umar II dealing with such marriages; Arab reactions were sometimes severe as in the case of the famous Baṣrī 'Abdallāh ibn-'Awn who had married an Arab and was flogged by Bilāl ibn-Abī-Burda, Ibn-Sa'd, vii, part 2, 26; cf. Agh., xiv, 15 for another example; al-Ḥajjāj himself whose origin was suspect was forced by 'Abd-al-Malik to divorce his Qurashī wife on this account, 'Iqd, i, 302.

of Aḥnaf ibn-Qays, the leader of Tamīm to Mu'āwīya on behalf of the mawālī, alluded to earlier,¹ when he said, "I cannot condone [the killing] of my maternal brother, maternal uncle and mawlā; we have already shared with them blood relationships".² The products of these intermarriages continued to leaven the social and cultural structure of the town. Children were inevitably imbued with their mothers' culture and non-Arab traits, and famous figures like 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād, whose pronunciation of Arabic was impaired by living among his uncles, the Asāwira,³ and others⁴ were early examples of this social and cultural cross-fertilization. The Persian element became so dominant in Baṣra by the end of the Umayyad period that the whole character of the town reflected its traits. Abū-'Amr ibn-al-'Alā, the distinguished Arab philologist is said to have told the Kūfans: "You have the skilfulness and bragging of Nabataeans while we inherited the shrewdness and forbearance of Persians".⁵ Their preponderance ensured the uninterrupted running of the administrative, economic and cultural life of the miṣr, even during the most chaotic periods when the tribes were engaged in killing each other.

1. Supra, 41.

2. 'Iqd, iii, 364.

3. Bayān, i, 75; ii, 167.

4. cf. Ibn-Ath., iii, 305 for 'Abdallāh ibn-Khāzim; Ibn-Ḥajar, Tahdhīb, ii, 144 for another example; Ibn-Sa'd, vii, Part 1, 18-19 for 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Abī-Bakra; ibid, v, 18-19 for al-Ḥārith al-Qubā'; Ansāb, ivB for Khālīd ibn-Asīd, and Ch.IV below for Khālīd al-Qasrī.

5. Bayān, ii, 86.

6. Trade:

The development of Baṣra into a thriving commercial centre provided the solid framework which guaranteed the unimpeded growth of the miṣr, even when its function as a military post no longer justified its expansion and progress. Commercial activity enormously aided the process of transformation of the early military and semi-tribal camp into a settled and prosperous community.

Trade being held in high regard by Islam, many of the Companions of the Prophet and others who settled in Baṣra devoted their energies to the lucrative pursuit. A good number of the commercially minded Qurashites and Thaḳafites settled there and engaged in commercial activities. Men like Anas ibn-Mālik,¹ Abū-Bakra, Nāfi' ibn-al-Ḥārith,² Ziyād and his sons accumulated vast riches. The device by which a man could send a 'substitute' to fight in his place, allowed a vast number of influential men to settle in Baṣra and participate actively in the economic life of the town. The emirs and their administrative staff, the nature of whose posts required their presence inside the town could effectively engage in commerce and secure vast profits.³ The Persian capitalists, traders and professionals conducted their business freely, protected by the state or the system of walā', while the government employed some of them in

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1. cf. Ibn-Sa'd, vii, Part 1, 11 where he is said to be "the most covetous of money among the Companions of Muḥammad"; cf. Ibn-al-'Imād, Shadharāt, i, 100-1.
 2. Ibn-Sa'd, vii, Part 1, 50.
 3. cf. Ibn-Qut., 'Uyūn al-Akhbār, i, 175.

departments like that of minting, tax-collection, clerical and administrative jobs which opened opportunities for many of them to carry on commercial activities and amass riches.

Under governors like 'Abdallāh ibn-'Āmir, who is credited with the task of building the market place,¹ Ziyād,² 'Ubaydallāh and al-Ḥajjāj many canals were dug and streams were cleared to facilitate transportation. Baṣra was quick to replace the ancient port of Ubullā as the major commercial station for the old trade route from India and the East. The famous trade fair of Mirbad increasingly attracted Bedouin traders and captured the major part of trade that used to be conducted in the other fairs in Eastern Arabia in pre-Islamic days. The fair provided in addition to trade, a meeting place for tribes, Bedouins and townsmen. Its contribution to the cultural life of the miṣr was immense and profound.

How far this commercial activity directly affected the tribal structure in the miṣr is difficult to ascertain. In certain respects the increase of the number of rich men in a clan occasionally had the effect of consolidating rather than breaking it up. For the clan used to benefit from its rich members who gave liberally to the poor and needy and others, and this helped, in many cases, to dissipate riches³ and prevent the creation of a stable class of capitalists. This perhaps explains the scarcity of reports about any marked

1. Ibn-Sa'd, v, 33.

2. cf. Ibn-Ath., Kāmil, iii, 376; Ṭab., i, 77-9.

3. cf. Ibn-Sa'd, iii, 156-157; Ansāb, ivB, 3; v, 257; 'Uyūn, i, 239-250.

hostility against the rich in Baṣra, and also explains the persistence of a form of tribal structure in Baṣra for a long time despite the emergence of a good number of rich men in it. On the whole, political considerations were more potent than any other factors in preserving what form of tribalism existed. This is not however to underrate the civilizing element of trade in a cosmopolitan community like that of Baṣra when compared with another like that of Mecca prior to Islam, where the tribal structure had been reinforced by commercial activities.¹ All the factors treated earlier in connection with urbanization in addition to the presence of a vast section of non-Arab population tended to facilitate the establishment of trade relations between Arabs and non-Arabs which helped detribalization in the long run. Relations based on mutual interest replaced those of kinship. As revenues from war declined more and more Arabs were driven to establish links with non-Arab fellow traders which ultimately affected the overall picture of social structure, judging by the powerful role played by the commercial class in Baṣra as early as 64/683 when al-Muhallab was obliged to appeal to them for funds to fight the Khawārij.²

7. Urban Consciousness:

All these stabilizing factors combined to produce a powerful undercurrent of unity within diversity. The

1. cf. Watt, Muḥammad at Mecca; Integration, 5-14.

2. cf. Mub., Kāmil (Wright), 627, 665.



parochial element had been present even in tribal matters which usually militate against any attempt to search for identity outside the sanctuary of the tribe. At times this parochialism, the consciousness of being Baṣrīs, cut across tribal and political differences. Al-Aḥnaf ibn-Qays, the Tamīmite, was expressing this sentiment early in the life of Baṣra, when he addressed the hosts of Azd and Rabī'a (being the adversaries of Muḍar to whom al-Aḥnaf belonged) after the death of Yazīd I in the words: "You are our brothers in religion, our partners in kinship, our neighbours and our hand against the enemy. By God, the Azd of Baṣra are closer to our hearts than the Tamīm of Kūfa, and the Azd of Kūfa are closer to our hearts than the Tamīm of Syria...".¹ The division of tribes into splinter groups in the provinces tended, inevitably, to break in various ways the group solidarity that existed inside the parent tribe formerly. The various groups faced different problems in their respective settlements. Every locality moulded the life of the group that settled in it in such a way as to make it different from that of any other related group living in another locality. The interests of the various groups were gradually determined by the circumstances most directly affecting their existence. Circumstances might shape the interests of a group in such a way as to render them antagonistic to those of their brethren in another locality.

1. Bayān, ii, 112; Mub., Kāmil, (ed. Marṣafī), ii, 127.

It was such considerations, on the whole, that impelled the Kūfan tribes to fight against Baṣrī tribes related to them in the Battle of the Camel, when the Kūfan Tamīmites struck at their Baṣrī counterparts as did all the other tribes.¹ The same forces were at work at Ṣiffīn² and other battles where the various sections of the same tribe fought against each other according to their locality and the political candidate they supported. At the height of tribal friction in Khurāsān when Qutayba ibn-Muslim the Bāhilite Baṣrī, anticipating his dismissal from the governorship by Sulaymān in 96/715, started abusing the various tribes, the majority of whom were of Baṣrī origin, his own tribe rebuked him by saying: "You have not confined yourself to the Ahl al-‘Āliya who are your inner and outer dress, but you attacked Bakr who are your supporters ... Tamīm who are your brothers ... and the Azd who are your hand".³

Economic necessities sometimes forced them to stand as Baṣrīs especially in their rivalry with their more prosperous opponent, Kūfa.⁴ The communal stand appeared to underlie the passionate appeal of al-Aḥnaf to ‘Umar I on behalf of Baṣra when he compared most vividly the misery of his town-

1. cf. Ṭab., i, 3202-3.

2. Ibid., 3287.

3. Ibid., ii, 1289.

4. cf. Tha‘ālibī, Laṭā‘if, 167-9; Muqaddasī, op.cit., 33; Ibn-Faqīh, 114, 164, 165, 166, 190, 191, 315; Baghdādī, Tārīkh Baghdād, i, 44, 49.

ship with the prosperity of Kūfa.¹ This solidarity was demonstrated once more when the people of Baṣra stood as a homogeneous group in their dispute with the Kūfans over the possession of certain regions in the conquest of which they had participated.²

These trends and many others underlined the gradual transformation of the concept of 'aṣabiyya. The affinity for the tribe was slowly replaced by the affinity for the town. But the process was often slowed down by the negative effects of other developments. The cohesion of the Baṣrī community was often weakened by two tendencies. The diversity of sectional interests deprived the town of the formulation of a strong political line to which a majority could subscribe. At the same time, the fractionization of the major tribes into largely autonomous clans resulted in depriving the tribes and hence the town of any effective and powerful leaders acceptable to all. The most illustrious figure, al-Muhallab, drew his fame from fighting the Khawārij and spent most of his active life outside Baṣra on battlefields. The other important leader, al-Aḥnaf,³ the leader of Banū-Sa'd of Tamīm did his best to avoid implicating himself and his people in the major confrontations by advocating and practising neutrality. Perhaps it is due to

1. Ṭab., i, 2538-9; Futūḥ, 496-7.

2. Ṭab., i, 2672-3.

3. cf. E.I.¹, article by Reckendorf.

this lack of influential local leadership that the vast majority of the town's governors were drawn from outside. Even when the opportunity did offer itself to the people of Baṣra to choose their own governor after the flight of the Umayyad governor, 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād in 64/683, they agreed on the insignificant Qurashite 'Abdallāh ibn-al-Ḥārith. Because of this fluid situation the aristocracy of Quraysh and Thaḡīf, despite their small tribal backing, maintained the balance between the major tribes.

iii. CULTURAL LIFE

The cultural life of Baṣra was a true reflection of its political and social structures. The conflicting tendencies which attended the slow transition of the Arabs from their Bedouin state to that of mature urban life evoked a variety of equally diverse cultural patterns which faithfully depicted the social scene in all its complexity. Social evolution was not, as we have seen, always uniform, and different stages of development could be seen to lie side by side on the same social plane. The picture of Baṣra torn by political and tribal conflicts which represented in essence the pull of traditional nomadic life and its persistence for a long time to plague the life of the garrison town, has validity only when viewed concurrently with the other picture of Baṣra where the solid foundations of social and cultural life were slowly but confidently laid down by the concerted

efforts of its mixed community. On the cultural plane the resurgence of pre-Islamic poetry and its deep influence on the early Umayyad poets was at the same time accompanied and influenced by other cultural movements which eventually transformed the religious, literary and philosophical outlook of the miṣr.

1. Religious trends:

Although the boastful claim of Kūfāns that 70 Badrī Companions of the Prophet settled among them while Baṣra had been favoured by the sole presence of 'Utba ibn Ghazwān,¹ was a gross misrepresentation, it nevertheless indicates the weak impact the majority of the Companions who settled in Baṣra left on posterity. Though Ibn-Sa'd enumerates over 140 of them² it is safe to assume that most of them had seen the Prophet casually, as members of their tribal delegations in the year of delegations in 9 A.H.,³ and a number of them did not settle in Baṣra itself but in its desert.⁴ Even some of those among them who had been officially dispatched by 'Umar I to teach the people their religion did not impress their audiences immensely and people used to leave their circles to listen to other Companions.⁵ Perhaps it is due to this early weakness in religious teaching that Baṣra lacked any effective religious leadership to offer guidance

1. Ibn-Faqīh, 166.

2. Ṭabaqāt, vii, Part 1, 1-64.

3. 25 are mentioned as members of Tamīmīte delegation and 7 of 'Abd-al-Qays, cf. Ibn-Sa'd, op.cit.

4. Ibn-Sa'd, ibid., where many of the Tamīmīte Companions, for example, are specifically mentioned.

5. Ibid., 17 where Hishām ibn-'Āmir complained bitterly of this practice.

in the many crises that rocked the town later on. This was never more apparent than in the attitudes of the Aṣḥāb al-Jamal. While 'Alī was anxious to divert the attention of Ṭalḥa and az-Zubayr from Kūfa "wherein resided the leaders of the Arabs and their distinguished figures",¹ his two contenders were anxious to reach Baṣra "the forsaken place",² according to their assessment, because it lacked any effective leadership.

The systematic teaching of the Qur'ān which Abū-Mūsā had started early in his career as governor by official sanction and encouragement was, however, the most enduring cultural activity in the town. The movement gathered momentum with the increasing development of the miṣr. The qurrā', or reciters of the Qur'ān, had reached the number of 300 some time before Abū-Mūsā left the town in 29/650,³ and their well known political activities were an index of the important role they played in the political and social life of Baṣra. It is important to note here that although the pattern of cultural development in Baṣra on the whole was a reflection of the cosmopolitan composition of its population, the fervent desire of the non-Arabs to participate actively in the life of the town through mastering the language and religion of the Arabs had been in marked contrast with the apathy and sometimes disdain of the Arab tribesmen to such

1. Ṭab., i, 3138.

2. Ibid., 3100, 3104.

3. Abū-Nu'aym, Hilya, i, 257; cf. Pellat, Milieu, 71-108.

systematic learning.¹ Their preoccupation with fighting and the obvious absence of any major material advantage they stood to gain by devoting themselves to religious or other cultural matters, left the mawālī in almost complete control of these cultural domains. Their steadily increasing participation in religious life could be attested by a cursory glance at the tables devoted by Ibn-Sa'd to the four classes of the tābi'ūn, followers of the Companions, in Baṣra. The first class comprising 21 contained 2 mawlas,² the second class of 55 contained 7 mawlas,³ the third class of 17 contained 2 mawlas⁴ while the fourth class of 64 contained over 30 mawlas.⁵ Nor was the cultural significance of the mawālī a matter merely of numbers. It is worth mentioning that a number of the early Baṣrī mawālī came originally from 'Ayn at-Tamr, a Christian fortress north of Kūfa captured by Khālīd ibn-al-Walīd in 633, and some of them lived for some time in Arabia proper before moving into Baṣra. Sīrīn, the mawlā of Anas ibn-Mālīk lived for some time in Medina,⁶ while Ḥumrān ibn-Abān, the mawlā of the caliph 'Uthmān played an active role in Medina during the caliphate of the latter.⁷

1. cf. Bayān, i, 306-7.

2. Ibn-Sa'd, op.cit., 65-102.

3. Ibid., 103-166.

4. Ibid., vii, Part 2, 1-13.

5. Ibid., 14-50.

6. Ibid., vii, Part 1, 86-7.

7. Ibid., 108.

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was born in the neighbourhood of Mecca and brought up in Wādī al-Qurā.¹ Abū-'l-'Āliya Rufay' ibn Mahrān (d. 90 A.H.) who boasted of having memorized the Qur'ān 10 years after the death of the Prophet² and is counted among the first class of tābi'ūn, was not content with the communicated tradition available in Baṣra but had to go to Medina to hear from the Companions in person.³ It is no wonder that these mawālī dominated the cultural and religious scene in Baṣra at a very early date. The conspicuous contribution of many of them to the spiritual and cultural life of the town earned them respect and honour from all. Ibn-'Abbās is said to have invited Abū-'l-'Āliya up to his platform while Quraysh were seated beneath.⁴ The famous Companion Anas ibn-Mālik used to refer enquirers after legal matters to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī on account of his erudition.⁵ The impact of al-Ḥasan went beyond the cultural sphere to influence the political life of Baṣra as in the revolt of Ibn-al-Ash'ath when it was suggested to the latter, "If it pleases you that they should be killed around you as they had been killed around the camel of 'Ā'isha, then force al-Ḥasan out".⁶ His influence was equally potent during the revolt of Yazīd ibn-al-Muhallab in 101/720 when he campaigned against the Muhallabids.⁷

1. Ibid., 114

2. Ibid., 81

3. Ibid., 82

4. Shadharāt, i, 102

5. Ibn-Sa'd, vii, Part 1, 128; Ibn-Ḥajar, Tahdhīb at-Tahdhīb, ii, 264.

6. Ibn-Sa'd, vii, Part 1, 118-9.

7. Ṭab., ii, 1391-3; Ibn-Khall. ii, 274-5.

It is also important to note that the majority of these men of learning, whether mawālī or Arabs emphasized in their teachings their loyalty to the idea of jama'a community, as is reflected in the activities of individuals like 'Imrān ibn-Ḥuṣayn (d. 52/671) and Muṭarrif ibn al-shikhkhīr (d. after 87/706) who expressed their concern about the jama'a in no uncertain terms.¹ Their general moderation in political and religious matters helped to give the town a generally obedient and Sunnī character. Their incessant attacks on the Khawārij, Shī'ites, Qadariyya, and their general revulsion from those whom they stigmatized as "ahl al-Ahwā'", the misguided advocates of ultra religious doctrines incompatible with the traditional Sunnī approach, all tended to alleviate the impact of political and social tensions on the internal life of the town and to rally to them the sympathies of a large section of the population. This moderate attitude explains to a large extent the absence of any strong anti-Arab feeling, shu'ūbiyya, among the mawālī who devoted themselves to religious pursuits in comparison with the others engaged in other cultural fields.²

The interaction of cultures from various sources, Persian, Indian, Greek, and others to which the cosmopolitan society of Baṣra acted as a melting pot furnished the early political parties, whether they be Shī'ites, Khawārij,

1. Ibn-Sa'd, op.cit., 104.

2. cf. Ibn-Anb., Nuzha, 17, 84.

'Uthmāniyya, murji'a or others with complicated ideologies which steadily transformed their initial political nature into a more comprehensive philosophical systems taking major theological questions in their stride. Before the end of the Umayyad era the Mu'tazilī doctrine was in process of taking shape.¹ It is essential to note here that the relative indifference of the Umayyad regime to the spread and diffusion of ideas as long as they did not challenge their authority facilitated, on the whole, the free exchange of ideas especially on the religious level. Jewish and Christian influences left their mark on traditions, on Qur'ānic exegesis and on scholastic schools of thought. The ancient Persian religions were slowly emerging from their hideouts after the early shock they had suffered from the emergence of Islam had subsided. The scarcity of information about this source and its scope and influence is no indication of its magnitude. The lack of interest among the Umayyads to assume the role of protectors of the people's moral and religious life as the 'Abbāsīd caliphs later claimed to be, offered the fertile soil where all sorts of creeds and religions could grow and prosper. It was only with the accession of the 'Abbāsīds, whose policy had been, on the whole, to exploit religious feelings for political ends, that attention was focussed on such foreign breeds and the dimensions of their infiltration were then really assessed. By then the mild term of "ahl al-Ahwa'" which had been the

1. cf. Watt, "The Political Attitudes of the Mu'tazilah", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Parts 1-2, April, 1963, pp.38-57.

familiar appellation of all extreme religious views in the later Umayyad period changed to "az-Zanādiqa"; heretics, in the early 'Abbāsīd period, and effective measures were taken to stem their rising tide.

2. Philological and Linguistic Studies:

Although the religious studies were inextricably bound up with linguistic studies the real and effective contribution of Baṣra lay more in the philological and literary than in the religious field. The preponderance of non-Arabs in the town and their unflagging desire to learn the language of their new rulers eventually created a self-perpetuating movement. The early non-Arabs learned the rudiments of the language from the Arabs and they in turn attempted to simplify and systematize the linguistic rules for the benefit of their fellow compatriots. The process, however, proved more complicated, because many important things were at stake. For although the movement had been a voluntary one it was not without its serious consequences on society and religion. The learning of the language was a means to an end: the ability to communicate on the social and religious levels. However, it was the religious aspect of the problem that was of great moment and so it more readily attracted attention. The danger that the text of the Qur'ān might be corrupted through ignorance of Arabic on the part of the non-Arab converts was real and potent. The chaotic linguistic situation merited official intervention.

The initiative of Ziyād (45-53/665-672) in suggesting the adoption of a more systematic approach to the problem of learning the language was a response to a hard felt need.¹ The problem of the mawālī was accentuated by that of the illiterate Arabs who in increasing numbers had to learn to read their sacred Book. The deficiency of orthography, lack of diacritical and vowel points were making the task harder for everybody. The early and much disputed attempt of Abū-'l-Aswad ad-Du'alī (d.67/686-7) to facilitate this task by indicating the vowel points of the Qur'ān by means of dots,² or by laying the foundations of grammar proper,³ or by achieving both ends together,⁴ should be viewed within the context and in the light of the conditions prevailing at the time. The painstaking attempts to learn the language by the early mawālī who had first come in contact with the Arabs at the age when already adult resulted in widespread corruption of the language. But the succeeding generations of mawālī who were born within the miṣr stood a better chance of learning the language since they were nurtured in an Arabic atmosphere. The need had already been felt for systematic efforts to help them achieve mastery of language. Their amusing ways of handling the language which provoked laughter and sometimes derision on the part of the ordinary

1. cf. Ibn-an-Nadīm, Fihrist, 60; Nuzha, 3-4; the drawn out debate over the role of 'Alī is inconclusive.

2. Fihrist, ibid.; Suyūṭī, Bughya, 274; Muzhir, ii, 246-7; cf. Pellat, 128-135.

3. Fihrist, 61; Yāq., Irshād, v, 263; Nuzha, 5; ar-Rāzī, Zīna, i, 73.

4. Irshād, vi, 100, vii, 200; Haywood, Arabic Lexicography, 11-16.

Arabs were taken more seriously by others.¹ Abū-'l-Aswad is again mentioned in connection with the earliest systematic venture to teach the language.² His most illustrious disciples 'Anbasa ibn-Ma'dān and Maymūn al-Aqrān were Persians.³ To their efforts and those of their fellow learners Naṣr ibn-'Āṣim (d. 89/708) and Yaḥyā ibn-Ya'mar (d.129/747)⁴ is due the early foundations of grammatical science. The mawālī brought their cultural heritage and systematic methodical discipline to bear on this consuming activity. Grammar, as distinct from other literary pursuits, was increasingly subjected to rigid rules and was already emerging as a systematic branch of science under the second generation of philologists. Under 'Abdallāh ibn-Abī-Ishāq al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 117/735), 'Īsā ibn-'Umar ath-Thaqafī (d.149/766), both mawālī, and Abū-'Amr ibn-al-'Alā' (d.154/771) the science was put on its feet. Al-Ḥaḍramī employed analogy extensively⁵ in an attempt to regularize the rules and extend the scope of their application and thereby bring the system under control. He is also credited with going beyond that to investigate the philosophy of grammar ('ilal an-naḥw).⁶ 'Īsā ibn-'Umar was among the earliest scholars who committed their copious knowledge to writing. He is said to have written over 70 monographs the most important

1. cf. Fihrist, 60.

2. Muzhir, ii, 247.

3. Fihrist, 62.

4. cf. Muzhir, ii, 247, 249.

5. Sīrafī, Akhbār an-Naḥwiyyīn al-Baṣriyyīn, 25; Nuzha, 10.

6. Nuzha, 11; Bughya, 282.

among which were al-Jāmi', an exhaustive study of grammar, and al-Mukmil (or Ikmāl) its abridgement.¹

These early scholars devoted their energies wholly to the study of the Qur'ān and the Arabic language and were eventually recognized as authorities by the Arabs who took their language for granted. The fact that such a distinguished and eloquent orator as al-Ḥajjāj should find it necessary to ask Yaḥyā ibn-Ya'mar about the correctness of his utterances² indicates both the influence of these scholars and the widespread tendency of settled Arabs to lose their chasteness of speech, faṣāḥa. The town dwellers found themselves under constant pressure to shed a large part of the cumbersome vocabulary of the desert and adapt their language to the requirements of their urban environment. The tendency to preserve the purity of language by using quaint expressions and unfamiliar words, which in many cases culminated in invention and fabrication,³ soon became a sign of snobbishness and was eventually abandoned. The tedious practice was left to pedants like Yaḥyā ibn-Ya'mar and 'Īsā ibn-'Umar whose contrived practices often became a source of amusement and embarrassment.

The movement was making inroads in another direction. Some of the early scholars set the pace for subjecting the art of poetry, which had been the Arabs' most highly esteemed

1. Muzhir, op.cit., 248.

2. Irshād, vii, 296.

3. cf. Muzhir, op.cit., 246; Sirāfi, op.cit., 19.

4. cf. Irshād, vii, 296; Nuzha, 12; Bayān, ii, 173.

intellectual activity to systematic disciplines. The vehement lampoons of al-Farazdaq (d. 110/728) against 'Anbasa¹ and Abdallāh ibn-al-Ḥaḍramī² in which he attacked them on account of their status as mawālī, were a natural reaction against their interference in an art which the Arabs thought themselves the only people fit to judge.

3. Literary studies:

The cultural movement which had started with the tentative and sporadic attempts of the early pioneers to study the Qur'ān and the Arabic language was in full swing long before the close of the first century of Islam. While the major Arab poets were entertaining their audiences in al-Mirbad by reciting their compositions or vying with each other in praising their tribes and denouncing their adversaries and echoing thereby the rivalries and antagonisms between their respective parties, the famous mosque of Baṣra was steadily becoming the centre of learning and scholarship. The early modest circles of the Companions such as that of 'Imrān ibn-Ḥuṣayn³ multiplied and expanded. The widening scope of knowledge was increasingly forcing specialization on scholars, and by the time of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) the philologists (aṣḥāb al-'Arabiyya) became a distinct group and had their own circles besides those of the traditionists, reciters, quṣṣās and others.⁴ Furthermore

1. cf. Sīrāfī, 24; Nuzha, 7; Irshād, vi, 92; Bughya, 368.

2. Nuzha, 11; Bughya, 282; Chapter V, pp.296-297 below.

3. Ibn-Sa'd, vii, Part 1, 5-6.

4. cf. Irshād, iv, 135.

specialization in the study of the various literary genres had already been under way despite the encyclopaedic nature of learning at this formative stage. Certain social and cultural factors forced the pace of literary scholarship in many important respects.

This absorbing interest in language and poetry - its embodiment - was brought about by a combination of two important trends. The fervent desire of the Arab tribes to revive their past glories and create a more favourable image of themselves in relation to their political rivals, led to the extensive exploitation of poetry, pre-Islamic or otherwise, as a means of propaganda, a course of action which eventually culminated in the collection of pre-Islamic poetry, as we shall see presently.¹ At the same time the students of the Qur'^{ān} and the philologists in their endeavours to explain the words and usages of the sacred Book and to deduce the grammatical rules had to draw on almost the same source for testimonial evidence (shawāhid). The meticulous care and reverence with which the early scholars treated their pre-Islamic material was due in part to the high regard in which the Arab tribes held their poetic heritage since it reflected their treasured history and was still of immediate relevance to their lives early in the Umayyad era. On the other hand, the fact that poetry was used, in these early learned circles, on the whole as a linguistic tool, a means to an end, left its indelible mark on the study and

1. cf. Chs. II, VI and VII below.

appreciation of poetry itself for a long time.

The outstanding figure in the sphere of literary studies was Abū-'Amr ibn-al-'Alā', the contemporary of Ibn-al-Ḥaḍramī. Under him literary scholarship reached a high peak. In addition to his grammatical bent he excelled in Qur'ānic and poetic studies.¹ His field notes and written collections of poetry and language were said to "fill a house up to the ceiling"² but, seized by a pious fit, he burned them all. He upheld the superiority of ancient poetry above all contemporary production and was so consistent in his stand that, according to al-Aṣma'ī, for the full duration of ten years, presumably the period in which al-Aṣma'ī came in contact with him, he never gave any Islamic verse as evidence. But his insight into the significance of poetry, both pre-Islamic and Islamic and his appreciation of it paved the way for the more systematic study of poetry in the 'Abbāsīd period.

Social change was fashioning the cultural scene in another significant manner. The steady urbanization of the Arabs in the miṣr and their continual contact with non-Arabs tended, as already indicated, to strain and weaken their linguistic faculties and it eventually robbed most of them of their spontaneous handling of the language in comparison with their Bedouin counterparts.⁴ The scholars noticed the change

1. Muzhir, ii, 247; cf. Ch. VI below; cf. E.I.², s.v. article of Blachère.

2. Irshād, ibid., 216; Buḥya, 267; Bayān, 1, 256.

3. Bayān, 1, 256.

4. Zīna, 71.

very early and were quick to devise appropriate means by which their researches in language were safeguarded against infiltration by debased language. All town dwellers and Bedouins close to them were excluded as being heavily infested with foreign influence.¹ The search for authentic and genuine language was thus carried into the depths of the desert where the purity of language was thought to be preserved. The Bedouins, however, soon discovered that their manners of speech were in great demand and many of them invaded the miṣr to provide the philologists with what they were after. Al-Mirbad became a lucrative market for Bedouin verbiage and quaint expressions which the pedantic scholars hunted with consuming eagerness.

By the end of the Umayyad period when most of the tribal conflicts were steadily losing their heat and the poets who echoed them were a dying species, the interest in the old poetry and language remained alive in the hearts of philologists who painstakingly recorded and studied them. The poets who previously used to be the source of linguistic material upon which philologists drew, eventually came within the orbit of the latter, and looked to them for guidance and counsel. The scholastic schools which were beginning to utilize the vital knowledge derived from Greek, Persian and Indian sources, in addition to the major shift in the social and cultural scale in favour of the mawālī element, all precipitated a significant change in the cultural climate of Baṣra.

1. cf. Sīrāfī, 90; Cf. Ch. VI below.

CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF POETRY IN BASRĪ SOCIETY

1. The uniqueness of Basrī poetry:

A comparative look into the poetic records of the various Islamic amṣār reveals that the poetry of Baṣra is, on the whole, not merely different, but in certain respects, also unique. Although it is true that the literary history of any one miṣr is unique in the sense that it is a result of the interplay of distinct social, economic, political and other factors which the respective region experienced, it is more so in the case of Baṣra than in any other case. This uniqueness does not stop at the kind of poetry produced, but is reflected in the role that this poetry played in Basrī life. A bird's-eye view of the contemporary literary situation in the other amṣār may help to put that of Baṣra in its right perspective.

The social and political conditions of Ḥijāz fostered the development of love poetry. Poets, whether in towns or the countryside, excelled in perfecting their art in two distinct genres. The emergence of a rich and leisurely class of Qurashī youths in towns, deprived of political ambitions and deliberately encouraged by Umayyads to indulge in activities other than politics, helped to produce what is termed 'realistic' erotic poetry.¹ The relative poverty of the countryside worked upon by the complex social and

1. cf. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Ḥadīth al-Arbi'ā', II. ; Nicholson, Literary History, 236-238.

moral consequences of Islam and heightened by the earnest drive of Bedouins to join the conquering armies, gave rise to a 'romantic' ('udhrī) school of amatory poetry. Both groups contributed to the evolution of that species of poetry in which the individuality of the poet as well as the dominant mood, whether pleasure-seeking in towns or intense deprivation elsewhere, were very clearly marked. On the other hand, this preoccupation with love and pleasure restricted the scope of poetry and tended, in effect, to limit its impact on society as a whole.

In Kūfa, the sister town of Baṣra, the apparent preponderance of Southern Yemenī tribes over the northern tribes - conventionally known as Nizārīs¹ - helped to reduce tribal friction but not political strife and the kind of poetry this situation entailed merited a place of especial distinction on account of its being, by and large, the vehicle of the political beliefs of the different religious parties, especially the shī'īs and the Khārijīs.

The third haven of poetry, Syria, where the Umayyad court was stationed, echoed, on the whole, the voices of the other regions; it virtually lacked an indigenous voice of its own.²

It is, however, in Baṣra that we find the kinds of poetry that reflect in a more comprehensive manner the various phases of social development and are potent enough to leave

1. cf. Ch.I, 27 above.

2. cf. Nallino, La Litterature Arabe (translated by Pellat), Paris, 1950, pp.242-254.

their indelible marks on the other regions as well. In fact, the intimate relationship between poetry and the daily life of Baṣra had been such that the reports about it in literary chronicles sometimes gave the impression that poetry had been the sole preoccupation of the Baṣrīs. This exaggerated view, extreme as it is, does, however, reflect the seriousness of the role that poetry played in Baṣrī life. On balance, poetry when viewed against the intellectual background where other groups such as quṣṣāṣ (story-tellers) and wu'āz (preachers) had also been competing for people's attention, was a potent force indeed and impinged on Baṣrī life to a degree no other miṣr experienced.

In order to appreciate fully the significance of this poetic activity and the extent to which it was held in regard by the various groups it is important to sketch in broad outline the major factors underlying its elevated position in Baṣra.

2. Nizārī preponderance:

The special position of Baṣra as the home of the predominantly Nizārī tribes, especially those of the eastern flank and in particular the Tamīm, goes a long way to explain a number of trends peculiar to the Baṣrī scene. The preponderance of Tamīm in particular had far-reaching effects on both the social and literary planes. Foremost among these was the continuation, with a brief interruption immediately following the rise of Islam, of the pre-Islamic tradition of Arabic poetry. The tribe was renowned for the

richness of its literary heritage and was recognized as the custodian of Arabic poetry in Islam. Its members not only preserved a good deal of ancient poetry which was then transmitted verbally,¹ but they also produced the best poets of Islam. Abū-'Ubayda, the philologist and critic is reported to have said, "The poets in the pre-Islamic era appeared mainly among Qays, but none in Islam equals the share of Tamīm with respect to poetry".² As a matter of fact the various clans of the tribe represented in various ways the true tradition of the Bedouin Arabs in social as well as in literary matters, hence the insistence on preserving the Jāhili mode of poetic composition which set Baṣra apart in relation to the other regions. The proximity of the region to the Arabian desert reinforced this tendency, but the other modifying factors which progressively leavened the general pattern of its life³ exerted their influence in different ways and varying degrees on the production of poets. The agony of transition is evident in their attitudes and productions. What at times looked conflicting and irreconcilable in their works was perhaps a true representation of their times, which were often out of joint. The multitudinous problems attending the slow and often painful transformation of the Bedouins into a mature urban community coupled with the further complications of political conflicts - internal and external - decisively affected the course and

1. cf. Ch. VI, p.305 for the case of al-Farazdaq.

2. Agh., xix, 6; Yāq., Irshād, vii, 258.

3. cf. Ch.I, 26-35, 38-55 above.

nature of poetry evoked under the prevailing circumstances. The endemic tribal conflicts and the hordes of petty problems resulting from the sheer unruliness of Bedouins left their stamp on much of the poetry of the time. Poetry, more than any other medium, increasingly became the vehicle for expressing the dominant moods and attitudes.

The judicious verdict of Muḥammad ibn-Sallām regarding Arabic poetry holds good in the case of Baṣra. He said, "Poetry had been the Register of Arabs ... but with the emergence of Islam they were distracted from it by fighting against Persians and Byzantines and [the result was that] poetry and its transmission were neglected. With the conquests and their settlement in the amṣār, the Arabs revived [their interest in] transmission of poetry, but to their loss they could not find any written document and the discovery came at a time when a good number of Arabs had died or had been killed in battle ..."¹ The dearth of poetry in the early years of Islam is evident. Even the poets who had been renowned for their excellence in the pre-Islamic period and then migrated to Baṣra were unable to hold their own and were relegated to a decisively inferior position when they composed poetry in Islam. Celebrated poets like an-Namir ibn-Tawlab,² al-Mukhabbal as-Sa'dī,³ 'Amr ibn-al-Ahtam⁴ and a few others were often remembered

1. Ṭabaqāt, 22-3.

2. cf. Agh., xix, 157 ff; Mub., Kāmil, iii, 19-20.

3. Ibid., xii, 40-45.

4. cf. Mub., Kāmil, ii, 68; Ibn-Qut., Sh., **ii**, 614-615; Bayān, i, 53-54, 278; Mufaḍḍaliyyāt, 125, 409.

only for their pre-Islamic achievements. The emergence of Islam and the gradual decline of the society they had known had the natural effect of blunting their poetic edge.¹ The new conditions, whether in the bādiya or the town, demanded and in effect produced a new order of poets as varied as the range of situations that the tumultuous life of the miṣr at large could embrace.

3. Umayyads and poetry:

As the initial shock which Islam produced on Arab life subsided, and it became clear that the old system could - with minor modifications - be adapted to suit the new conditions, a kind of retrenchment set in. The concentrated energies of Arab tribes which had been effectively harnessed to establishing the supremacy of Islam within and without Arabia were eventually absorbed in the struggle to settle the problem of succession after the assassination of 'Uthmān. The ascendancy of the Umayyads with their avowed relish of Arab traditions set the stage for far-reaching changes in the attitude and approach of both subjects and rulers to the matter of poetry. It is not our concern here to prove or refute the assumption that the Umayyads ignored Islam in their dealings; but this much is certain: they encouraged in various ways the revival of traditional Arab culture with poetry at the top of their list. It might well be that the Umayyads in this respect were the symptoms of a general trend

1. For the general effect of Islam on poetry cf. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 265; Mar., Muwash., 62.

rather than its cause, that they were reactors rather than initiators. On the question of poetry they undoubtedly reversed the puritanic approach of their predecessors. 'Umar ibn-al-Khaṭṭāb is reported to have said, "Poetry had been the lore of a people who had no other more authoritative source",¹ implying that the Qur'ān replaced it in Islam, and he went further to stamp out all forms of poetry reminiscent of the Jāhiliyya, at times by imprisoning poets who infringed the ban,² and at others by reducing their pensions.³ 'Uthmān followed his example and imprisoned a Tamīmī brigand who lampooned the mother of his adversaries.⁴ 'Alī, although he was claimed to be a poet himself, was averse to the practice of poetry and is said to have advised the father of al-Farazdaq, who boasted of his son's poetic genius, to teach him the Qur'ān instead.⁵ Ibn-'Abbās, who was the deputy of 'Alī in Baṣra threatened Ibn-Faswa, imprisoned him for a day and then banished him from Baṣra.⁶ It is, perhaps, this aversion to poetry on the part of those early rulers that accounts partly for the almost complete absence of any

1. Ibn-Sall., Ṭabaqāt, 22.

2. For the imprisonment of Ḥuṭay'a, cf. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 287.

3. For the case of al-Aghlab al-'ijlī, whose pension was diminished by 500 dirhams, cf. Agh., xviii, 165.

4. Bal., Ansāb, v, 84-5; cf. Chapter V below.

5. Agh., xix, 6.

6. Ibid., xix, 144; cf. Ch. V, p.248 below.

serious poetry extolling their merits or celebrating their deeds whereas it was the usual practice of poets to praise leaders and princes before and shortly after them. On the other hand, the Umayyad attitude as exemplified by Mu'āwiyā ibn-Abī-Sufyān amounted almost to a complete reversal of policy. On examining the various branches of knowledge in which the young 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād excelled, he found him lacking in the knowledge of poetry. On being told by the young man that he "hated to bring together in his breast the words of God with those of Satan" and implying that he disdained wasting his time on this inferior knowledge, while the loftier knowledge of the Qur'an demanded his full attention, the caliph retorted sharply that the nobility of poetry was beyond question and sent him back to his father Ziyād in Baṣra with a letter demanding that he should teach his son poetry, which he did.¹ 'Abd-al-Malik was more forthright in encouraging poetry when he publicly degraded a dignitary in Kūfa and conferred his status upon an insignificant fellow-tribesman because the latter surpassed the former in his knowledge of the poetry of their tribal bard, Dhū-'l-Iṣba' al-'Adwānī. Such a spectacle was made of him that "the people henceforth cultivated a burning desire for literature".² Al-Ḥajjāj in his public speeches underlined this tendency by quoting Jāhili poetry far oftener

1. Suyūṭī, Muzhir, ii, 197; cf. 'Umda, i, 29.

2. 'Askarī, Maṣūn, 169-172; cf. Agh., iii, 3-4.

than Qur'an. Thus the general trend had been in favour of promoting the learning and production of poetry and the excesses of poets were tolerated as long as they refrained from criticising the regime itself.

4. Poetry and tribes:

The Umayyads affected the literary scene in another direction. Their policy of exploiting tribal conflicts to the advantage of the dynasty intensified the discord between the various groups and contributed to the production of different species of poetry aimed mainly at elevating the position of the group to which the poet belonged.¹ The consequence of this policy in the domain of poetry was the unprecedented flourishing of satire (hijā'), panegyric (madh) and boasting (fakhr). These genres were the stock-in-trade of most poets before Islam, but never before had they been cultivated in such profusion as in the Umayyad period and more especially in the region of Baṣra. The explanation of this phenomenon is not hard to find. Poetry came increasingly to be recognized as the most effective organ of political propaganda. The tribes which at times fought against each other to secure a place for themselves in the political arena found it useful to further their claims by inciting their poets to extol their glories and undermine their adversaries' position through lampooning. The result was that poetry became, more than at any time before or since, so closely enmeshed in the daily run of

1. This point is discussed in detail in Chapter III below.

Baṣrī life, that at times, as noted earlier, it appeared to be the major activity. An index of the importance of poetry as a means of inflating the tribal image, was the practice of many tribes who had found their records meagre to forge laudatory poetry and attribute it to their pre-Islamic poets.¹ Even the strong personal tone exhibited in many satirical compositions at the time was a corollary of the dominant currents of tribal rivalries. But despite this position a measure of caution should be exercised in dealing with the relationship of much of this poetry to the realities of life. For the fortunes of poetry oscillated - in the same manner as the fortunes of tribes - between two extremes. It has been noted earlier that the strength and weakness of tribal feeling reflected in a sense the strength and weakness of state control. When central control weakened or broke down tribal bickerings sometimes attained the proportions of physical warfare and poets, as the spokesmen of their respective parties, reflected in their poetry the reverberations of clashes. In times of peace, when the government imposed its will and restrained unruliness, the tribes, as parties, submitted to law and order, and poets usually settled down to the mundane business of either competing with each other to celebrate past tribal achievements, thus keeping alive in people's minds the major issues of tribal strife, or perpetuating that strife on a smaller scale which could sometimes be reduced to the utmost personal level possible as in the case of the classical

1. Ibn-Sall., op.cit., 39-40.

scolding-match between Jarīr and al-Farazdaq who were both Tamīmīs, but belonged to different clans. Their affair is a case in point illustrating in the domain of poetry the swing of the pendulum between the two extremes of the tragically serious and the comically trivial in tribal activities when practised under centralized authority. For although the feud between the two great poets assumed in some stages the proportions of an extremely personal vendetta, where obscenities were hurled and the women of either clan caluminated, the feud in essence reflected a deeper and a wider conception of clannish rivalry. Indeed the personal feuds between most other poets at the time were part and parcel of the general feuds between clans and only the prevailing circumstances determined the degree of involvement where the personal element merges with the communal. The old conception of the organic unity of the clan, although under continuous pressure in the urban settlement, died hard and persisted in the minds of the Arabs long after the actual tribes themselves had been absorbed in the urban structure of society. This conception does not draw a clear line between the individual and the group to which he belongs. Therefore to lampoon an individual can be viewed as another way of lampooning the group to which he belonged. On hearing the verse:

Had it not been for Jarīr Bajīla would certainly have
perished, how₂excellent is the youth, and how debased
the tribe[1],²

-
1. Jarīr ibn-'Abdallāh al-Bajalī, the Companion of Muḥammad.
 2. The serial number between brackets at the end of translations refers to their Arabic versions in the appendix, p.347 below.

al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī asked his audience whether the verse was meant to be praise or satire, and on being told that the poet praised the man and lampooned his people, he gave the reply, "No one is praised when his people are lampooned".¹ This explains the great pains taken by the two poets and all the other tribal poets, even in their most personal encounters to enumerate and extol the merits of their respective clans and to dwell at great length on recording their past glories as we shall see presently.

5. The poet between tribe and state:

The intimate relationship of this poetry with Baṣrī life sometimes gave rise to speculations about the seriousness of its role. Was it meant to entertain the leisurely people of Baṣra and break the monotony of their existence as has been suggested by some scholars?² Or was it on the other hand of any practical import as far as the realities of life were concerned? This in turn poses the general question of the relationship of the poet to his community. Thus in order to assess the real significance of poetry in the Baṣrī community it is essential to take stock of the poet himself and trace his fortunes in the community for which he produces his poetry. The position of the poet in society reflects very intimately the position of poetry in that society. Since the Baṣrī poet represents just another link in the evolutionary chain of Arabic poetry it is not amiss

1. Agh., xix, 14.

2. cf. Shawqī Dayf, At-Taṭawwur wa-'t-Tajdīd, 88, 120ff, 200ff.

to recall here the image and status of the pre-Islamic poet to whom the Baṣrī poet was in a sense a continuation. Abū-‘Amr ibn-al-‘Alā is reported to have said, "The poets had been placed by pre-Islamic Arabs in the status of prophets, but when they mixed with settled communities and used poetry as a means of gaining livelihood they declined in rank. When Islam came and the Qur’ān reviled poetry and regarded it as deceit they slipped a step down. Then they resorted to flattery and submissiveness suffering thereby a further reduction in stature and people tended to take them lightly".¹ Jāḥiẓ corroborates the view of ‘Abū-‘Amr by suggesting that the poet had been initially of a higher standing among early Arabs than the orator, but when the poets increased in number and production the orator was advanced in rank over the poet.² This decline in the poet's position as a spokesman of his tribe which was noticed by scholars as having started during the latter part of the Jāhiliyya would be expected to accelerate in Islam as the words of Abū-‘Amr suggested. With Islam the autonomy of the tribe gradually gave way to the hegemony of the state which demanded, at least in theory, the loyalty and obedience of all Arabs as citizens and not as tribesmen and throughout the entire period of the Umayyad and part of the ‘Abbāsīd reigns the tribal structure was actively trimmed and eroded to produce a more homogeneous urban community. Tribalism, even in Baṣra which was especially noted for its unruliness, increasingly became confined in the

1. Rāzī, Kitāb az-Zīna, i, 95.

2. Bayān, iii, 272.

rigid frame imposed by Islam and maintained by the caliphate to which, with very few exceptions, Arabs being Muslims, paid allegiance. At times, and as a consequence of Umayyad policy, tribalism played its role as part of the political machinery, but in all circumstances the cardinal fact of belonging to the larger community was never in question. The strife, even at its hottest, was mainly aimed at securing a greater share of power or prestige with the reigning caliph or his governors. This situation created a dilemma for a good number of poets who found themselves torn between their loyalties to tribes and their fear of administrators bent on reducing all vestiges of tribal independence. In the end the power of the state proved superior and the poets succumbed in varying degrees to the persuasion or coercion of the ruler. While some of them devoted themselves wholly to the service of the emir and almost attained in his court the status of a poet laureate as in the case of Yazīd ibn-Mufarrigh with ‘Abbād ibn-Ziyād, some, as in the case of Jarīr with al-Ḥajjāj combined both the position of a defender of tribal honour and that of a court poet. Furthermore poets with strong tribal feelings like al-Farazdaq who felt themselves called upon to defend their tribes at all costs, could ignore the domineering power of the state only at their own peril.¹

Nonetheless it is possible to discern a correspondence between the attitude of poets in general towards the state and the general pattern of development underlying the gradual submission of Bedouins to the authority of the state. A

1. This point is elaborated in Chapter IV below.

feeling of independence and sometimes of open defiance is discerned in some poets in the early period of the Umayyad era. The young poet al-Farazdaq addressed to Mu'āwiya a scathing poem¹ in which he scolded the caliph in brave and blunt terms for withholding the reward which he had given to the Tamīmī chief al-Ḥutāt al-Mujāshi'ī who died before receiving it. He addressed the caliph by his first name and after boasting of his superior origin indicated to him that had that act of injustice been committed in pre-Islamic times Mu'āwiya would have regretted it. Mu'āwiya gave in reluctantly and despatched the money to the heirs of the deceased.² His boasting of his noble lineage in the presence of Sulaymān ibn-'Abd-al-Malik which amounted to contempt infuriated the caliph who sent him away without any reward. The poet hit back at the caliph saying:-

We have come to you neither because we felt in any
need of you, nor on account of deficiency in
Mujāshi' [2]³

Another Tamīmī poet, Abū-Ḥuzāba who was urged by his people to seek the favours of the caliph Yazīd I discovered to his horror the ignominy a poet had to suffer before he was received in audience and returned in anger before seeing the caliph fuming:-

By the very name of God I shall never come to Yazīd even
though his hands contain all that lie between East
and West,
For Yazīd, may God reverse his state, is inclined to
evil, persistent in sin.[3]⁴

1. Far., i, 45.

2. cf. Tab., ii, 97; Agh., xix, 37; Naq., 609; Ibn-Sall.,
op.cit., 251; cf. E.I.², "Farazdaq" by Blachère.

3. 'Iqd., ii, 63-4.

4. Agh., xix, 154.

But such intransigence was allowed only as long as it did not arouse public feelings. Vigilant governors like Ziyād, Muṣ'ab and al-Ḥajjāj did not hesitate - as we shall see later - to imprison and sometimes to execute unruly poets.

The state came to play a more positive role in helping to weaken the dependence of the poet on his tribal group for gaining his bread by presenting a more lucrative alternative. The favours available to those who attached themselves to an emir and the prospect of acquiring wealth and fame influenced the course of poetry in many respects. The Umayyads as a matter of policy were exceptionally generous with poets who were prepared to exalt their merits. They were conscious of the hostility of a large number of people in Iraq and Ḥijāz to their rule and so they resorted to all forms of persuasion and intimidation to enlist support. The poets were the undisputed organs of propaganda and the discovery of a good poet who would serve their cause best was heartily welcomed. The courts of caliphs as well as those of their governors in the provinces provided tremendous opportunities for the resourceful versifier. The case of Jarīr is indicative of the importance they attached to the activities of poets. It is reported that Ayyūb ibn-al-Ḥakam, the deputy of al-Ḥajjāj in Baṣra, was so impressed by the poetic talent of Jarīr that he wrote to al-Ḥajjāj about him and described him as being 'a devil among devils', to which al-Ḥajjāj responded by demanding his immediate presence.¹ Jarīr eventually became his personal poet, but al-Ḥajjāj felt it

1. Agh., vii, 48.

necessary that Jarīr should also be presented before the caliph. Although 'Abd-al-Malik at first snubbed the poet on account of his laudatory poetry on al-Ḥajjāj and even addressed him as the 'poet of al-Ḥajjāj', he eventually listened to him and was so moved by what he had to say as to give him a hundred camels.¹ The contribution of such poets to the success of Umayyad policy in Iraq and elsewhere was enormous despite the rebellion or antagonism they sometimes displayed on certain occasions.² Other poets who were not usually inclined to tie themselves to a particular court or to propagate a consistent line of policy such as al-Farazdaq felt, more often than not, the need for the money and offered their services to the highest bidder.

The career of this latter category was facilitated by yet another development. The propaganda and counter-propaganda which Umayyad policy had engendered furnished a fertile soil for the extensive cultivation of satire and panegyric not only on the tribal level as has been indicated earlier but also on the other political and personal levels. The effects of panegyric and satire came increasingly to be seen in a new light since tribes, parties or ambitious individuals could reap the fruits in very tangible forms. Poets could build up the image of an aspirant emir who was prepared to pay generously and many of these emirs went out

1. Ibid., vii, 66-7; Ibn-Sall., op.cit., 357; Jāḥiẓ, Tāj, 132-4. Ḥajjāj also sent al-'Ajjāj and his son Ru'ba to al-Walīd ibn-'Abd-al-Malik (Agh., xxi, 88), while 'Abd-al-Malik invited Dhū-'r-Rumma to his court (Muwash., 239).

2. cf. Ch.IV below.

of their way to attract the prominent poets of their time, not only to satisfy a personal whim but because a good reputation and a bright image could pay dividends in the ruling circles, who themselves employed the same device to produce a similar effect on the minds of their subjects. A simple utilitarian view of this complex process is bluntly stated by the dignitary 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān ibn-al-Ḥakam who is reported to have told al-Farazdaq: "Spare me, O Abū-Firās, your poetry, the conclusion of which does not come before its beginning is forgotten; compose on me just two memorable verses and I will give you a reward that none before me has given you". The next morning the poet composed the two verses and earned 10,000 dirhams in return.¹ This concern for a good reputation and the fervent desire to free one's good name from reproach or unjust imputation sometimes led to excesses reminiscent of extreme Jāhili practices, and as we shall see later,² the state had, on occasions, to intervene to curb the excesses which were obviously against the spirit of Islam.

Satire was likewise employed by those in power to destroy the reputation of their opponents. The classical example is that of al-Ḥajjāj and al-Muhallab ibn-Abī-Ṣufra when the former instigated al-Farazdaq to lampoon the latter and his family.³ The same poet, however, was soon persuaded

1. 'Iqd, i, 242; 'Umda, ii, 128.

2. cf. Ch. V below.

3. cf. Hell, "al-Farazdaq's Lieder," ZDMG, lix, 589-624; lx, 1-48. Similar examples are furnished by Yazīd I when he incited al-Akḥṭal to lampoon the Anṣār (Ibn-Sall., op.cit., 397-8) and Yazīd II when he ordered poets to lampoon Yazīd the Muhallabī (ibid., 542-3).

by the Muhallabīs to mend his ways and praise them. The practice of such poets - by no means all - who had no qualms about rendering their services to both sides and who did not hesitate to lampoon the individual they had just praised,¹ frightened people and gave such poets enormous powers which they exploited to the full. Bashshār ibn-Burd who practised the lampoon extensively and ultimately suffered death for it was explicit about his motivation when he said, "I have found that scathing satire is more effective in elevating the fortunes of the poet than excellent panegyric; whatever poet desires to receive honour in the era of base men through composing eulogies let him be prepared for poverty; otherwise let him indulge in composing satire to frighten people thus forcing them to give liberally."²

This fear was no doubt genuine as is exemplified by the vast number of anecdotes involving tribes as well as individuals. A number of tribal groups had to disown some of their members in order to avert satire. Thus when al-'Abbās of Kinda exchanged satires with Jarīr his tribe did not hesitate to hurry to Jarīr, disown al-'Abbās, expose his defects and implore Jarīr to restrict his invective to the recalcitrant poet and refrain from implicating them.³ Another poet of 'Abd-al-Qays who had dared to lampoon the same poet is said to have been shackled by his tribal chief and sent to Jarīr who was asked to pass whatever judgement

1. Jarīr is credited with never having satirized anyone he had praised or vice versa (Naq., 1049).

2. Agh., iii, 53.

3. Ibn-Sall., op.cit., 380-3.

he saw fit on him.¹ In a similar manner the Banū-Ḥarām brought one of their poets who had attacked al-Farazdaq and asked his pardon. Al-Farazdaq told them:

Whoever is afraid of the injurious effects of my poetry,
[let him know that] the Banū-Ḥarām have certainly become
secure against satire,
They have led their foolish [one to me] and were
apprehensive of necklaces [of satirical poetry that fit
round one's neck] like the rings of doves-[4]²

The mother of Nāfi', a poet of Banū-Ja'far who had lampooned al-Farazdaq, had no alternative but to throw herself on the tomb of Ghālib, the father of al-Farazdaq in an appeal for the mercy of the latter.³ The Baṣrīs' dread of al-Farazdaq's satire was remarkably manifest when most of them refused to give any kind of help to an-Nawār when she decided to revoke the marriage imposed on her by the poet without her consent by raising the case to Ibn-az-Zubayr in Medina. Not only did they refuse to give her a mount to travel on, but even the witnesses who knew she was right in her claim refused to come forward with their testimony.⁴ This fear, however, was not confined to Baṣra but extended to Medina when the Anṣār found themselves in the awkward position of having to send their chiefs in a delegation to implore al-Farazdaq, who had been in the town at the time, not to satirize them on account of an encounter he had had with an Anṣārī youth who challenged his poetic status.⁵

1. Ibid., 383-5.

2. 'Umda, i, 66.

3. Naq., 525; Far., i, 367.

4. Agh., xix, 7.

5. Ibid., xix, 38-39; Naq., 547-548.

On the other hand, the fear induced by poets varied in degree according to the fame and prestige at stake. This is borne out by the anecdote of the humble Nabataean who met al-Farazdaq and subjected him to the following interrogation:

- Are you al-Farazdaq?

- Yes.

- Are you the one whose tongue is dreaded by people?

- Yes

- Are you the one whose lampoon when uttered will kill this horse of mine?

- No

- Will it kill my son?

- No

- Will it kill me?

On receiving the poet's negative reply to the last question he started to abuse the poet in a most abominable fashion¹ to which the poet made no reply. Jarīr underlined the same paradox when he was told by his son, "You have never lampooned any group without disgracing them except Taym", to which he replied, "I have found neither an edifice to undermine nor a glory to debase".² The same Jarīr, when assaulted by an insignificant poet called al-Bardakht - a Persian word meaning unemployed - retorted with a pun which can be translated as, "By God I shall not have him employed at my expense", and made his peace with him.³ This indicates that the same

1. 'Iqd, iv, 136; Agh., xix, 37.

2. Ibn-Sall., op.cit., 372.

3. 'Umda, i, 203.

process can sometimes operate in reverse. A famous poet could even by satire bring to light and sometimes to fame an insignificant individual or group. Al-Farazdaq made this clear when he said, in the course of an invective against Bahila:

How often have I elevated the name of a base man,
causing him to receive nourishment in my name, who
[otherwise] would be unable to succeed.[5]¹

Many poets used to incite Jarīr to lampoon them with a view to receiving public attention.² Bashshār in his youth had made such an attempt but Jarīr spurned him and the poet later on recalled the event saying, "Had he responded by satirizing me I would have been the best of poets."³ Al-La'īn al-Minqarī was driving at the same result when he intervened between Jarīr and al-Ba'īth but they ignored him.⁴

But the case is totally different with those whose prestige exposed them to the invective of covetous poets. Al-Muhallab ibn-Abī-Şufra had to cancel the conscription order of Jarīr on the intercession of al-Farazdaq and when people complained that this would open the way for all sorts of corrupt practices al-Muhallab had nothing to say but, "I have only purchased my honour from him i.e. al-Farazdaq".⁵ The same al-Muhallab when asked to pass a literary judgement on Jarīr and al-Farazdaq is reported to have said, "Would you expose me to be torn to pieces by these two dogs? I will

1. Far., ii, 246; cf. Mub., Kāmil, i, 167, 190.

2. Ibn-Sall. 380.

3. Agh., iii, 24.

4. Ibn-Sall., 343.

5. Agh., xix, 28.

not decide between them but I shall point out to you those who care nothing for either of them. Go to the Azāriqa..."¹

The Umayyads exploited poetry to further their policy in another direction. They were aware of the effectiveness of the dictum "divide and rule" and used poets to spread dissension and distract attention by keeping the various groups busy in their petty strife, especially in times of peace and stability. 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād deliberately instigated a protracted poetic feud between Ḥāritha ibn-Badr of Tamīm and Anas ibn-Zunaym of Layth, two of his closest Baṣrī courtiers.² Bishr ibn-Marwān was most notorious for fanning the flames of hostility between poets, which inevitably involved their tribes. He started the quarrel between Jarīr and Surāqa of Bāriq when he forced the latter to satirize the former who had been at Dahnā', and he sent the verses to him for a reply,³ which shows the contrived nature of the encounter. The same Bishr was instrumental in precipitating the classical duel between Jarīr and al-Akhṭal⁴ which brought in its wake great repercussions by polarizing, on the poetical plane, the political and tribal feuds which raged between Qays and Tamīm on the one hand and between Qays and Taghlib on the other. It was the practice of some caliphs and their emirs - notably Sulaymān ibn-'Abd-al-Malik⁵ and Bishr ibn-Marwān⁶ - to invite

1. Ibid., vii, 55.

2. Ibid., xxi, 23-25.

3. Ibn-Sall., 377; Bal., Ansāb, v, 169-170, 174-175.

4. Bal., op.cit., v, 169; Ibn-Sall., 442-443.

5. Agh., xix, 23.

6. Ibid., vii, 52.

the contending poets in their courts and ask them to vie in glory and boast of their lineage. The extent to which this rivalry could be carried is demonstrated by the attitude of Jarīr when he planted himself in the middle of the assembly and asked the caliph al-Walīd I to allow him to satirize 'Adī ibn-ar-Riqā' his poet laureate, who was a Yemenī; the Caliph said, "By God I would have desired you to carry him on your back in front of all people". Jarīr was not put off by this public rebuff and said:

If you forbid me [to satirize] him, then I hear and obey, otherwise I am by myself open to vituperation, [6]¹ and managed, by a witty remark, to extract a smile from the caliph "who was impressed by Jarīr's courage".² A serious ruler like al-Ḥajjāj did not find it trivial to ask the two poets Jarīr and al-Farazdaq to come to his court dressed in the garb which their ancestors used to put on in the Jāhiliyya.³ The two poets were quick to grasp the hint and after leaving the princely court started hurling abuse at each other. It was reported that al-Farazdaq, dressed in silk and well groomed stood on the cemetery of Banū-Ḥiṣn while Jarīr, armed, stationed himself in al-Mirbad with crowds milling around them while some of their audience hurried to and fro carrying to each what his adversary had said.⁴

With the exception of Ziyād who dogged al-Farazdaq and chased him out of Baṣra⁵ and al-Walīd ibn-'Abd-al-Malik who

1. Ibid.

2. Agh., vii, 72.

3. Ibid., vii, 71; Ibn-Sall., 346, 368.

4. Ibid.

5. cf. Chapter III below.

ordered Jarīr and Ibn-Laja' to be tortured for their transgression¹ the general trend was to encourage such activities. There were occasions, however, when, under the pretext of safeguarding general security or protecting public decency, the freedom of some poets who opposed those in power was restricted in various ways. Thus al-Farazdaq suffered imprisonment under the Yemenī Khālīd al-Qasrī² and the Qaysī 'Umar ibn-Hubayra³ for his staunch Tamīmī leanings. Later on and before the final collapse of the Umayyad rule the Mu'tazila roused public feelings against Bashshār who satirized their leader al-Ghazzāl; they levelled at him the charge of debasing public morality by corrupting youths through his obscene and pornographic poetry and had him banished from Baṣra for some time.⁴

6. Popular appeal:

All these factors tended to heighten the importance of poetry in Baṣra and poets were hard put to it to provide poetry that would satisfy the different levels of Baṣrī community. They had to appease and in many cases to praise the rulers to ensure a consistent supply of funds. This explains the profusion of panegyric in the works of most poets as early as Abū-'l-Aswad ad-Du'alī not excepting some Khārijīs such as 'Imrān ibn-Ḥiṭṭān. Furthermore they had to defend their tribes or clans and attack their rivals, as we shall see presently.

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1. Agh., vii, 69, 73-4 (where 'Umar II is mentioned); Ibn-Sall., 369.
 2. Ibn-Sall., 269; Agh., xix, 24; cf. Ch.IV below.
 3. Agh., xviii, 141.
 4. Bayan, i, 36.

The poets, however, were also conscious of another remarkable development in their community which influenced in many ways and at times prompted their approach to poetry. The camel market-place of Baṣra, al-Mirbad, was rapidly acquiring the status that 'Ukāḡ had previously held in pre-Islamic Arabia. It provided a convenient forum for exchanging merchandise and poetry and major poets from all over Iraq and other regions frequented it. The major Baṣrī poets especially Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, ar-Rā'ī an-Numayrī and sometimes Dhū-'r-Rumma had recognized circles in which they used to address their audience.¹ The importance of this activity was indicated by Jarīr when he told ar-Rā'ī, "My people led me and my camel until they set us on the highway of al-Mirbad ... and for seven years my only concern has been not to earn them [the pleasures of] this world or the next, but to reproach the one who reproaches them."² In point of fact al-Mirbad was the focal point of all intellectual and literary activities throughout the active epoch of Baṣrī history. In addition most affairs of public concern were settled there. Al-Jarūd ibn-Sabra summed up its importance when he advised his friends to "frequent al-Mirbad because it dispels [bad] thoughts, sharpens the vision, brings all sorts of news and gathers together Rabī'a and Muḡar".³

The audiences were huge and drawn from all quarters and the repercussions of any major achievement by a poet would

1. Agh., xx, 169.

2. Naq., 428, 431.

3. Bayān, i, 272.

therefore resound throughout the Islamic empire, as the vanquished poet ar-Rā'ī discovered in his encounter with Jarīr, when the news of his ignominy had reached his people in the heart of the Baṣrī desert before his speedy arrival.¹ Poets were therefore conscious of their receptive audience and did their utmost to impress them. On being told that the poetry of al-Farazdaq was appreciated only by learned men while his own was appreciated by the general public, Jarīr jubilantly remarked, "I am certainly Abū-Ḥazra, I have vanquished him by the Lord of Ka'ba, for you can scarcely find a single learned man among a hundred men!"² Al-Farazdaq and al-Akhṭal were reported to have agreed that despite their superiority over Jarīr in the quality of poetry, he surpassed them in popularity.³ The endeavour to appeal to the sentiments and susceptibilities of the populace was evidently at the core of the marked tendency on the part of the major poets to indulge in obscenities. The calumination of chaste women and the employment of vulgar sexual terms which baffles the modern reader of their poetry⁴ seemed to have amused their public immensely, although a section of the community would naturally be averse to it and would view it with disgust as being against the spirit of Islam.⁵ The general mood of this group is indicated by the anecdote of Ibn-Sīrīn, the famous Baṣrī Traditionist when he was asked by a man whether it was necessary to perform ablutions after reciting

1. cf. Agh., xx, .169-170; vii, 50.

2. Agh., vii, 72.

3. Muwash., 140-1.

4. The latest editions (1960) of the Dīwāns of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq printed in Beirut are expurgated.

5. cf. Ibn-Qut., 'Uyūn, i, 8.

poetry. The learned man was on the point of performing his prayer when he turned his face to the enquirer and recited the verse:-

Certainly the spouse of al-Farazdaq has become refractory; had she been satisfied with the thrust of his penis she would have settled down, [7]

and he then continued with his prayer.¹ Sa'īd ibn-al-Musayyab on being told that some people rejected poetry, said, 'They have adopted a foreign (a'jami) mode of worship.'²

It was obvious, as we shall see later on, that most poets were not always serious in the charges against the women they slandered. The famous 'mukhaḍram' poet al-Mukhabbal as-Sa'dī regretted the false charges he had levelled at Khulayda when he had lampooned her brother az-Zibriqān ibn-Badr of Tamīm³ and had to make his confession publicly when he said:-

My judgment failed me over Khulayda, a failure for which I shall reproach my people and myself repent, I bear witness - and of God ask forgiveness - that I lied about her - and satire abounds with lies [8]⁴

Jarīr underlined the effectiveness of the comic in satire when he said, "When you compose satire make people laugh" and drove his point home by reciting a comically obscene verse he had composed on a Numayrī girl.⁵ It seems that the profusion and currency of such obscene poetry was in response to a general public demand and the impression is that it was regarded as an effective means of entertainment not

1. Agh., xix, 15.

2. Bayān, i, 174.

3. Agh., xii, 42.

4. Ibid., xii, 43-4; Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 383.

5. 'Iqd., vi, 151.

only in Baṣra but throughout the Islamic empire. Later on and following the lead of his predecessors, Bashshār supplied the various levels of Baṣrī community with a more subtle brand of pornographic poetry which appealed to the tastes of the lower as well as the upper classes. His success in dominating the scene is borne out by the report that "there was no courting man or woman who did not recite his poetry, no [professional] mourner or songster who did not make money out of it, and no man of honour who has not feared him and dreaded the damaging effect of his tongue".¹ Unlike his predecessors he adopted two distinct styles to suit the audience he was addressing. In the case of dignitaries and rulers he preserved his classical style in its most meticulous form, but **in composing** his love and other lighter poems which were meant to entertain the general public he followed a very easy and immediate style that the ordinary man in the street could understand. It was therefore fashionable in Baṣra, especially with the young generation, to learn and recite his poetry, as was stated by the Mu'tazila and other opponents in their vehement campaign against the poet.²

7. Currency and transmission of poetry:

The earnestness with which people received this poetry extended beyond the limits of Baṣra. People as far afield as Medina followed the latest reports with enthusiasm and

1. Agh., iii, 26.

2. Ibid., iii, 41; cf. Chapter VII, p.345.

interest. Sa'īd ibn-al-Musayyab, the Madanī faqīh was about to perform his prayer when 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān ibn-Ḥarmala brought him the latest interchanges between Jarīr and Ibn-Laja'. He listened silently to the verses of Ibn-Laja' but when those of Jarīr were recited he started to shout, "He devoured him! He devoured him!".¹ Another Madanī shaykh used to assert, "I never liked to join an assembly unless there was somebody who related anecdotes about al-Ḥasan [al-Baṣrī] or recited al-Farazdaq's poetry".² The absorbing interest which ordinary people all over the Islamic empire showed in learning this poetry is indicated by the story of the young girl in Yamāma who was claimed to have memorized almost the entire works of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq,³ and the 'Udhri Bedouin who showed remarkable knowledge of Jarīr's poetry in the presence of the caliph 'Abd-al-Malik.⁴

Inside the town itself the enthusiasm sometimes amounted almost to the level of frenzy experienced nowadays with respect to football teams or favourite racing horses. Crowds used to pester al-Farazdaq and cluster at his doorstep awaiting his departure in order to hear his verses.⁵ Even the exigencies of war did not dissipate their interest in poetry as the episode of al-Muhallab and a certain group of his soldiers during their struggle against the Azāriqa

1. Ibn-Sall., 371.

2. Bayān, iii, 142-3.

3. Agh., vii, 56.

4. Ibid., vii, 54.

5. Agh., xix, 36.

testified.¹ 'Ubayd ibn-Hilāl the Khārijī who was recommended by al-Muhallab as the best man qualified to pass a judgement on Jarīr and al-Farazdaq² was in the habit of inviting some of his adversaries at the end of the day when hostilities had ceased and he would then say, "Which would you like better: that I recite you Qur'ān or poetry?" They would say, "As for the Qur'ān our knowledge of it is as good as yours, but recite us some poetry", and he would tell them jokingly that he had known beforehand that they would prefer poetry to the Qur'ān and he would then go on to recite poetry and listen to their recitation until they got tired and dispersed.³

The poets themselves, especially Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, were not disinterested craftsmen who allowed their production to trickle through to the public unaided. Sometimes they went out of their way to ensure that people did hear them. Al-Farazdaq once visited the Banū-Hujaym in their mosque and recited them his poetry, but when Jarīr got wind of it and paid them a visit the following day to recite his own poetry one of their shaykhs exhorted him to fear God and to remember that the mosque had been erected for the sole purpose of remembering God and performing prayer. Jarīr countered their rebuff with a cynical piece of satire.⁴ Khālid ibn-Kulthūm al-Kalbī who used to record the poetry of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq for his own use, narrowly escaped a similar fate at the hands of al-Farazdaq. The latter asked him to

1. cf. P.91 above.

2. Agh., vii, 55.

3. Ibid., vi, 7.

4. Jar., 479.

recite a certain number of Jarīr's poems which he did without hesitation, but when he was asked to recite al-Farazdaq's replies to them he fumbled and proved ignorant of them. Al-Farazdaq became infuriated and retorted, "Would you memorize what he had composed on me and fail to learn my replies to him? By God I will satirize Kalb and disgrace them for all times if you delay in recording my naqā'id or fail to learn and recite them to me". The old man had to stay with the poet for a complete month before he could learn and recite the poems satisfactorily.¹

There is, moreover, sufficient evidence to show **that** most of this poetry had been committed to writing by poets or their scribes and also by transmitters. Sources abound in references to scribes - or rāwīs as they were more usually entitled - who used to accompany poets and act in a sense as their private secretaries. Thus Jarīr dictated his famous satire on ar-Rā'ī to a mawlā of Banū-Yarbū' in Baṣra who was fond of Jarīr's poetry,² and when he stood in al-Mirbad the following morning he shouted, "O Banū-Tamīm! Write down! Write down! (caiiyydū)"³ Al-Farazdaq had several rāwīs among whom 'Ubayd⁴ and Abū-Shafqal⁵ were mentioned by name. It seems that 'Ubayd in his capacity as a scribe used to accompany the poet judging from the episode concerning Dhū-r-Rumma when al-Farazdaq asked 'Ubayd to add the verses of

1. Agh., xix, 11-12.

2. Ibid., vii, 50; his rāwiya was named Ḥusayn, Naq., 430.

3. Ibn-Sall., 374.

4. Naq., 1049.

5. Agh., xix, 36.

this poet to his own collection against the will of their rightful owner.¹ Even in al-Mirbad where poets used to address their audience in person it seemed that the practice had been to have their rāwīs with them; al-Farazdaq certainly had when Jarīr lampooned ar-Rā'ī.²

The case for committing poetry to writing was made by Dhū-'r-Rumma who, paradoxically, used to deny his literacy on the understanding that it was regarded as a defect,³ for reasons which we shall consider later on.⁴ On one occasion he told the Baṣrī philologist 'īsā ibn-'Umar,⁵ "Commit my poetry to writing, for recording is nearer to my heart than memorizing, since the Bedouin (a'rābī) may forget a word and spend the whole night in an attempt to remember it and failing in that he may easily substitute for it another word of the same measure and recite it to people, while the note-book does not forget or substitute any word for another."⁶ On another occasion he showed his appreciation to the same philologist by telling him, "You write down and transmit what you hear, whereas those (i.e. who transmit verbally) have no compunction about altering what I have hewn out of rock".⁷ This meticulous care for sound transmission must have guided him in his choice for his rāwiya of Ṣāliḥ ibn-Sulaymān who was reported to have delivered one of his poems

1. Ibid., xix, 22-3; Muwash., 107; Ibn-Sall., 470-1; 'Umda, ii, 285.

2. Agh., vii, 51.

3. Ibn-Qut., Sh., 507; Agh., xvi, 121; 'Askarī, Dīwān al-Ma'āni, ii, 120.

4. cf. Chapter VI, P.315 below.

5. cf. Chapter I, p.64, above; Chapter VI below, p. 314.

6. Jāḥiẓ, Ḥayawān, i, 21.

7. Muwash., 178.

so perfectly that a Bedouin who had been listening could not help saying, "I bear witness that you are a faqīh who excels in recitation", thinking him to be reciting Qur'ān.¹ But even committing to writing was not always of much help to the rāwī when the poet himself puzzled him by frequent changes as in the case of the same Dhū-'r-Rumma who was constantly revising his poetry so that one of his rāwīs complained that he had spoiled his poetry through this process of revision.²

Some poets acted as rāwīs of other contemporary poets as in the case of Dhū-'r-Rumma who was the rāwī of ar-Rā'ī³ and that of Salm al-Khāsir who was the disciple and transmitter of Bashshār.⁴ On another plane, transmission of poetry was rapidly becoming a lucrative profession in the courts of caliphs and emirs as the careers of Ḥammād ar-Rāwīya, Qatāda, Khalaf al-Aḥmar and many others testify.⁵

This elaborate machinery for propagating poetry was a conscious activity in which poets, their rāwīs and a variety of other interested parties played their parts. But the poets were also conscious of the immediate impact of their poetry on their audience. They did realise - as certainly did al-Farazdaq⁶ - that only a fraction of their elaborate compositions would actually stick in the memory of the

1. Agh., xvi, 112.

2. Muwash., 184, also cf. 180-1.

3. Ibid., 170, 183.

4. Agh., xxi, 110.

5. cf. Chapter VI below.

6. cf. P.87 above.

average listener, and so a conscious effort was made to concentrate on a limited number of lines in the qaṣīda and charge them with powerful emotional content to ensure the widest possible circulation. Thus Jarīr was not satisfied with 80 lines which he had composed on ar-Rā'ī until he made the celebrated verse:-

Lower your eyes! for you are of Numayr, thus
approaching neither Ka'b nor Kilāb [9],

when he ordered his scribe to rest for the night saying, "I have attained my ultimate desire."¹ Al-Farazdaq when asked why he preferred his shorter poems said, "Because I found them more firmly established in memories and more rapid in spreading in assemblies."² It was, perhaps, for this reason that the same poet was deemed the possessor of the largest number of quotable verses (muqallads).³ His esteem for this brand of poetry drove him sometimes to bullying other poets into relinquishing their memorable verses which he would then proceed to include in his own poems. He did this with Dhū-'r-Rumma,⁴ ash-Shamardal,⁵ Jamīl,⁶ Ibn-Mayyāda⁷ and many others,⁸ and used to say, "The straying verses of

1. Naq., 432, cf. 429.

2. Agh., xix, 33.

3. Ibn-Sall., 259, where he defines the muqallad as "the independent and famous verse which is quoted as a proverb."

4. Muwash., 107; Ibn-Sallām, 470-1.

5. Ibid., 108; 'Umda, ii, 285; Naq., 375.

6. Muwash., 109.

7. Agh., xix, 7; Khiz., i, 153; Muwash., 108.

8. He plagiarized two verses of ar-Rā'ī (Muwash., 108-9) and was accused of including in his poetry enormous amounts of Jahilī poetry (ibid., 110-111) a charge which impelled al-Aṣma'ī to judge that nine tenths of his poetry were plagiarized which Marzubānī rightly considers as unfair. (Muwash., 105-6).

poetry are nearer to my heart than straying camels."¹

Bashshār underlined the same tendency when he boasted of the profusion of his poetry by pointing to the enormous number of "rare" (nādir) verses which his poems embodied.² Similarly he fell out with his disciple Salm al-Khāsir because the latter tampered with one of his master's coveted verses and rendered it more popular which resulted in people forgetting Bashshār's and remembering only Salm's.³

Thus poets were all the time aware of their audience and conscious of the extent to which their verses would travel and on many occasions made no secret of their knowledge as their works abound in references to the fact. Al-Farazdaq called his poems "runaway rhymes" (sing. qāfiya sharūd)⁴ and indicated the extent of their circulation in a variety of ways. Thus he says of them in one of his poems:

They approach the sun whether it rises in the East or
sets in the West,
Their withers⁵ proclaiming their noble lineage in
every mountain-path and frontier, [10]⁶

and tells Jarīr:

You trouble yourself, O Jarīr, for nothing, whereas the
qaṣīdas have gone out to transmitters,
How can you bring back those of them that have become
well known in 'Uman and the mountains of Egypt? [11]⁷

1. Muwash., 106; cf. also Agh., xix, 22.

2. cf. Dīwān, i, Introduction, p.84.

3. Agh., iii, 49.

4. Naq., 125.

5. He likens his poems to she-camels.

6. Naq., 477.

7. Ibid., 774; cf. Far., ii, 142, 202, 216, 246, 346.

Jarīr makes similar claims when he says:-

I fitted out [and dispatched] abroad qaṣīdas, each of
them swift to travel and reach its destination,
vying with every party of riders,
They overtake those who are before them and appear in
Najd, cleaving the earth.[12]¹

So also when he boasts:-

Certainly I am the composer of poems, each wonderful,
that alights wherever the night traveller chants,
It comes forth of transmitters' mouths as though it is
the blade of a sword which gains strength when it
is shaken.[13]²

8. Relations between poets:

The activities of poets, though not altogether divorced from the general pattern of development embracing the other intellectual activities especially those concerned with language and literature, had been greatly influenced by social considerations as a result of the general involvement in some form or other of the vast majority of poets in the affairs of their community. The frequent practice of linking poetry with sharaf (nobility) in judging the excellence of poets indicates the powerful influence of social norms on poetry. On siding with Banū-Salīṭ against Jarīr, al-Ba'īth passed the judgement, "We have found poetry and nobility (sharaf) among the offspring of an-Nawār".³ The same idea occurred in the poetry of aṣ-Ṣalatān al-'Abdī when he judged between Jarīr and al-Farazdaq saying:-

Certainly Kulayb should be pleased with their poetry,
while Darim and Aqari' should be pleased with
their glory.[14]⁴

1. Naq., 688.

2. Jar., 446; cf. also 417; Naq., 296, 341, 342.

3. cf. Chapter III, p.125 below, and Chapter VI.

4. Ibn-Qut, Sh., i, 477.

It is reported that al-Farazdaq was content that the poet had recognized the nobility of his folk and added the comment, "Poetry is but the nobility (murū'a) of the ignoble whereas it comes at the bottom of a noble (sharīf) man's qualifications", while Jarīr was dissatisfied and satirized aṣ-Ṣalatān.¹

This close relationship between social and literary criteria is manifest in various ways especially in relations between poets. The preceding episode involving aṣ-Ṣalatān is only one of a number of encounters in which the literary element is embedded in the major considerations of society. Poets who opposed Jarīr like al-Ba'īth,² ar-Rā'ī,³ al-Akhṭal,⁴ Khulayd 'Aynayn,⁵ Dhū-r-Rumma,⁶ Ibn-Laja',⁷ Aḥmar ibn-Ghudāna,⁸ Surāqa al-Bāriqī⁹ and many others;¹⁰ or those who opposed al-Farazdaq as Nufay' Dhū-l-Ahdām,¹¹ Mukharriq ibn-Shurayk,¹² Ash'hab ibn-Rumayla¹³ and others,¹⁴ although

1. Ibid., 478, note 1.

2. cf. Chapter III, p. 125 below.

3. Naq., 427-432; Agh., xx, 169-171; Ibn-Sall., 373.

4. cf. Naq. Jarīr wa-'l-Akhṭal, ed. Ṣalḥānī; cf. Naq., 494-9.

5. Ibn-Sall., 345, 385.

6. Ibid., 469; Agh., vii, 61.

7. Naq., 487-491; Ibn-Sall., 363-4; 'Iqd, vi, 211; Agh., vii, 68.

8. Naq., 383-385; Ibn-Sall., 386.

9. Ibn-Sall., 377; Ansāb, v, 169-170, 174-175.

10. cf. Agh., vii, 43-49 where Jarīr tells al-Ḥajjāj of his encounters with 19 poets.

11. Ibn-Sall., 263; Naq., 907.

12. Dīwān of Farazdaq, i, 370; Naq., 846.

13. Agh., viii, 159-161; Ibn-Sall., 251.

14. cf. 'Umda, i, 65 for an encounter with Ziyād al-'A'jam.

prompted in their attitudes largely by social or political considerations, yet expressed their leanings towards the poet of their choice by means of praising his poetry, because the success of a poet as a poet implies also his success in defending the honour of his tribe. This understanding had been at the centre of the repeated endeavours of a dignitary such as Muḥammad ibn-‘Umayr ibn-‘Uṭārid¹ who used to bribe poets to proclaim the superiority of the Mujāshi‘ī poet al-Farazdaq. He is reported to have offered a prize of 4,000 dirhams to any poet who composed a poem declaring the superiority of the latter over Jarīr. Only Surāqa al-Bāriqī accepted the offer.² Ibn-‘Uṭārid is further reported to have despatched a 1,000 dirhams, a mule, clothes and wine to al-Akhṭal when he visited Bishr ibn-Marwān, the governor of Iraq, saying, "Do not give succour against our poet, i.e. Farazdaq, and satirize this dog who lampoons the Banū-Dārim".³

The foregoing lists of poets mentioned in connection with the two poets Jarīr and al-Farazdaq underline the powerful influence these two giants had on the literary scene. Until their death in 110/728 they were the central figures round which the majority of their contemporaries revolved. Being the most powerful exponents of tribal rivalry they deliberately imposed, on the vast majority of their contemporaries, both inside and outside Baṣra, the thankless task of having to array themselves on this side of the fence

1. cf. Mub., Kāmil, iii, 179-180 for his eminence.

2. Agh., vii, 67.

3. Naq., 494.

or the other. These poetic alliances were, on the literary plane, a microcosm of the social environment.¹ Poetic interchanges came to be represented as wars as in the line of Jarīr:

You have tasted from me the tang of a bitter war, and
certainly you will be unsafe if you compete with
Qays, [15]²

or in that of al-Farazdaq:-

I have inclined the war towards you, certainly I am the
one who charges the adversary and leans towards him
when the accomplished warrior flinches, [16]³

while poems themselves were sometimes represented as weapons or thunderbolts as in the following line of Jarīr:-

God has prepared for poets on account of me thunderbolts
to which they bend the [ir] necks. [17]⁴

Jarīr was notorious for his satires against other poets⁵ although he claimed that he had never initiated any feud but always acted in self-defence.⁶ It is asserted that poets used to expose themselves to his satire⁷ and no less than 80 of them were vanquished as a result. The claim was made that of all the poets who had joined battle with him only al-Farazdaq and al-Akhṭal could survive the ferocity of his attacks.⁸ Thus ar-Rā'ī - who was stated to have been

1. cf. Chapter III, p. 132 below.

2. Nag., 427.

3. Ibid., 575.

4. Ibid., 443.

5. cf. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 437.

6. Agh., vii, 56; Sh., 438.

7. Ibn-Sall., 380.

8. Agh., vii, 40; cf. 59.

the faḥl of Muḍar until Jarīr disgraced him¹ - used to tell people, "Why do people blame me for being defeated by such an [invincible] poet?"² Surāqa al-Bāriqī introduced himself to Jarīr as "one of those whom God has disgraced at your hands".³

This fear of Jarīr was shared by most of his contemporaries. It is reported that al-Farazdaq used to panic whenever the news reached him that Jarīr had composed a poem until he made sure that it was not about him.⁴ Jarīr's assumption of superiority, if not al-Farazdaq's acknowledgement of it is illustrated by the story that on meeting al-Farazdaq once in Syria his rival exclaimed, "I never expected you to visit a place in which I am staying", to which al-Farazdaq snapped, "How often have I shattered the expectations of weaklings".⁵ 'Adī ibn-ar-Riqā' al-'Āmilī the poet laureate of Walīd I had to seek refuge with the caliph from him.⁶ Al-'Ajjāj intimated to his son Ru'ba when the latter discovered the terror his father experienced when Jarīr threatened him, "By God had I known that the only means to deliver me from him lay in urinating I would have done it."⁷ The public court of a distinguished Baṣrī emir witnessed the humiliation of Dhū-'r-Rumma as a result of a contest with Jarīr.⁸

1. Ibn-Sall., 435.

2. Naq., 430.

3. Ansāb, v, 175.

4. Ibn-Sall., 317-8; cf. Agh., xix, 34 for another episode.

5. Agh., xix, 34; cf. ibid., 29 for another anecdote.

6. Ibn-Sall., 324; cf. p.93 above.

7. Agh., xxi, 88.

8. Ibid., vii, 60.

Despite the antagonistic attitude of many poets towards their fellow poets as a consequence of the endemic rivalries that beset Baṣra, poets in general were aware of the community of interests that bound them to each other as a distinct class. Judging by their own admissions¹ and by their pronouncements on fellow poets,² they were conscious of themselves as poets. Their efforts to excel one another,³ and the usual practice of murāfada (aiding another poet against his adversary by allowing the former the liberty to use some of the poet's verses) in which a number of poets were usually involved⁴ all pointed to a growing consciousness of literary affinity. They were furthermore aware of the distinctiveness of poets who followed a completely different course than the vast majority. The growth of a formidable school of rujjāz with its centre in Baṣra, was, among other things as we shall see later on, a response to a literary and philological challenge that the poetic atmosphere in Baṣra had engendered. Ideological differences although they produced a different kind of poetry, did not inhibit reciprocal appreciation. When the names of as-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī (a Shī'ī) and 'Imrān ibn-Ḥiṭṭān (a Khārijī) were mentioned in the presence of al-Farazdaq he promptly said, "If they had concerned themselves with the theme other people followed (i.e. poetic feuds or panegyricism) we could have been nothing in their company, but

1. cf. Jarīr, Dīwān, 417, 446; Farazdaq, Dīwān, ii, 159.

2. cf. Muwash., 172; Khiz., i, 107; Agh., i, 65; iv, 138; Iqd., vi, 236.

3. e.g. cf. 'Umda, i, 209; Agh., xix, 32, between Jarīr and Farazdaq.

4. e.g. cf. Ibn-Sall., 473-5; Agh., vii, 61-3; xvi, 116-8; 'Umda, ii, 286.

God has caused them to busy themselves with composing poetry regarding their respective ideologies (madh'hab)."¹ 'Āṣim ibn-al-Ḥadathān, the leader of Khawārij in Baṣra told al-Farazdaq once, "My son is the poet of believers (mu'minūn) while you are the poet of unbelievers (Kāfirūn)."²

The preceding remark of al-Farazdaq bracketing the majority of poets as being inspired by rivalries, tribal and literary, overlooked the scores of poets who, though not altogether divorced from tribal life, were expressing other developments which had at the same time been transforming the Baṣrī scene.³ The growing influence of the state which occupied in a sense the energies of a poet like Ibn-Mufarrigh who devoted almost all his poetry to satirizing the sons of Ziyād,⁴ also influenced the career of a tribal chief like Ḥāritha ibn-Badr who was described as 'the poet of Tamīm and its hero'.⁵ Although he used to engage in traditional poetic feuds⁶ his encounters with Anas ibn-Zunaym⁷ represented a different trend exhibiting the ascendancy of both official power and individual consciousness in the urban settlement. The growing tendency of individuals to behave as individuals or citizens and not as tribesmen loomed large in their verses as well as in those of Abū-'l-Aswad ad-Du'alī. Politico-

1. Agh., vii, 3.

2. 'Iqd, i, 84.

3. cf. Chapter 1, p.55.

4. cf. Agh., xvii, 52-67; Yāq., Irshād, vii, 192-8; Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 319-23; cf. Chapter V, pp.288-289 below.

5. Ṣiffīn, 29.

6. Agh., xxi, 21-2.

7. Ibid., 22-3, 32-3.

religious movements inspired poets like 'Imrān ibn-Ḥiṭṭān, as-Sayyid al-Ḥimyārī and others who represented another streak in Baṣrī poetry, reflecting yet another facet of Baṣrī life.

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CHAPTER III

POETRY AND TRIBAL RELATIONS

1. A Baṣrī genre:

The resurgence of tribalism contributed in a large measure to the excessive cultivation of that genre of satirical poetry which came to be known as the naqā'id and which involved a vast number of Umayyad poets, both from Baṣra and from elsewhere. But the vast majority of those poets were Baṣrīs and for that matter Tamīmīs. Except for the intrusion of the famous Taghlibī poet, al-Akhṭal - which came about at the instigation of the Umayyad ruler of Iraq, Bishr ibn-Marwān - this literary form developed as an indigenous product of Baṣra. Although it was known in very rudimentary forms in the Jāhiliyya¹ and the early period of Islam² it nowhere grew and expanded in the fashion attained in the region of Baṣra. This development was closely linked with tribal consciousness and rivalry which were nowhere as pronounced as they were in Baṣra and its bādiya. Although the initial phases of these poetic feuds had been a reflection of localised petty incidents, they soon inflated and assumed such dimensions as to engulf not only minor families in the heart of the Baṣrī desert, which was the original case, but the whole tribal and for that matter political structure in the entire region of Baṣra, and they

1. cf. Agh., x, 20; xvi, 53; A'shā, Dīwān, 74-82; Ibn-Ath., Kāmil, i, 495-505.

2. cf. Ibn-Hishām, Sīra (Ḥalabī ed.) iii, 64, 199, 209-211, 220, 224-66; cf. A. Shāyib, Tarīkh an-Naqā'id, pp.35-176.

sometimes overflowed to other parts of the empire as well. The evolution of this genre of Baṣrī poetry can, in effect, legitimately be viewed as a fairly accurate index of the social and political evolution of Baṣra itself.

The intimate relationship that developed between the bādiya and the town and the subsequent influence of each on the other paved the way for the rapid transformation of that genre of tribal poetry that had been initially provoked by the challenges, generally limited in scope, that desert life usually imposed on Bedouins. The relapse in times of crisis and political unrest into pre-Islamic blood-feuds and similar practices - which we shall consider later¹ - played a vital role in stimulating a substantial part of this poetry. But more often than not the petty disputes over watering-places, plots of grazing ground, personal animosities and the like - potential causes of wars previously - would generate feuds in which poetry would take the place of weapons. The prospects and scope of physical warfare between tribes had been largely restricted and poetry, subsequently, served as a convenient means of expressing the suppressed passions. With the passage of time the rudimentary beginnings of these poetic feuds, mostly the results of localized disputes, progressively extended in dimension in response to the accelerating tempo of social and political development in Baṣra and the empire in general and in time came to express the manifold relationships, political,

1. cf. Chapter V below.

tribal, social, that had existed in Baṣra and elsewhere. The dynamism of this tribal poetry was such that it continued to take pride of place not only in the Baṣrī community of the time but also in subsequent epochs. It is worthwhile to unravel the voluminous mass of this poetry and separate the individual threads with a view to indicating how far they reflected the prevailing conditions.

2. Petty disputes provoke poetic feuds:

The new generation of Baṣrī poets on whose shoulders fell the responsibility of expressing the strains and stresses of their developing community had been brought up mostly on the outskirts of the town or in its bādiya proper. Although most of them were born in Islamic times they were nevertheless nurtured in an environment controlled more strongly by Jāhili rather than Islamic norms. Their relative remoteness from the miṣr where the restrictive power of the state was more directly felt allowed them a corresponding measure of freedom to exploit tribal differences in a manner if not always in harmony with the general drive towards eliminating tribal rivalry - yet compatible with the general trend to carry this rivalry to all dimensions short of actual war, as long as the power of the state safeguarded the rights of all concerned. To give vent to this tendency the usual practice of poets was to seize upon petty incidents and use them as a means of expressing the general restiveness and unruliness of Bedouins.

Foremost among this group of poets was al-Farazdaq who is reported to have already been an accomplished poet by 36 A.H.¹ During the caliphate of 'Uthmān while he was still a youth he had exchanged lampoons with other poets who used to dread the severity of his satire.² His father introduced him to the caliph 'Alī as "one of the poets of Muḍar".³ His career as a poet illustrates most vividly the tribal element in Baṣrī life in all its ramifications. Thus his early encounters with al-Ash'hab ibn-Rumayla helps to elucidate the state of affairs at an earlier stage when tribal feelings reasserted themselves immediately after the death of 'Uthmān and continued to ride high until the appointment of Ziyād in 45/665. The episode demonstrates as well the usual pattern of involvement whereby a petty incident would produce a chain reaction with far-reaching consequences that necessitated official intervention. It is related that al-Farazdaq, for a reason unknown to us, satirized the Banū-Fuqaym of Tamīm when they had reached an amicable settlement with the Banū-al-'Anbar of Tamīm with regard to the ownership of a well.⁴ He reproached the former saying:-

The delegation of Banū-Fuqaym returned with the meanest [articles] that delegations could ever bring home,

They came back to us with cauldrons balancing [on camel backs] while the opportune luck secured [for the fortunate ones] the abundant well [18]⁵

1. Agh., xix, 6; Mar., Mu'j., 266.

2. Ibid.; cf. Agh., xix, 48.

3. Ibid., 6.

4. Naq., 215; Far., i, 139; cf. Ibn-Sall., 272 where he indicates that the Banu-Fuqaym went after blood-revenge but settled for blood-money.

5. Ibid.

when the satire reached the Banū-Fuqaym they were infuriated and complained to the poet's father who summoned him but the poet dismissed the charge as a lie and to prove his innocence composed another piece in which he said:-

O people I have not intended to slander you, and the
one accused is entitled to excuse oneself,
Do desist, for had I wanted to satirize you, my satire
would have emerged - as is well known - bright and
renowned,
Whenever an erring one of Ma'add composes a scabby poem
it is attributed to me in its entirety,
Should someone else utter it and I receive the blame?
This is certainly a verdict that ought to be
changed. [19]¹

But on hearing his second composition his father could detect the similarity with the earlier piece and handed him over to the Banū-Fuqaym, who were after all their close relatives.² Although they did not exact retribution at the time they never forgave him for it, and the incident continued to poison the relations between their respective clans for a long time. Shortly afterwards a group of Banū-Fuqaym and their related branch of Banū-Nahshal trespassed upon his father's watering-place and he had to repel them, injuring some of them³ and composed a few lines defying both.⁴ Although the Banū-Fuqaym later on retaliated by hamstringing the camel of Ghālib, the poet's father, and thereby ultimately causing his death according to one report,⁵ their immediate major concern had been the poetic feud in which they found themselves involved. It seemed that they had no poet of their own and

1. Naq., 215.

2. Ibn-Sall., 272; Naq., 215.

3. Far., i, 204; Naq., 216.

4. Far., ibid.,

5. Naq., 217.

so were hard put to it to find one. They seized the opportunity when al-Ash'hab ibn-Rumayla, the poet of Banū-Nahshal, proposed to one of their maidens; they made it a condition that the consummation of his marriage depended on his satirizing al-Farazdaq.¹ The feud between the two poets intensified and assumed such dangerous proportions that the Banū-Fuqaym and Banū-Nahshal had to appeal to Ziyād against al-Farazdaq.² Already his wayward conduct with another girl of Banū-Minqar of Tamīm whom he had saved from a serpent and attempted to take advantage of her on that score³ brought upon him the hostility of yet another Tamīmī clan: the Banū-Minqar. Although the latter managed to take their revenge through blemishing the good name of his sister Ji'thin by accusing her of an affair with one of their youths,⁴ it is evident that such incidents were taken as pretext for practising their cherished sport of mud-slinging. The petty personal calumnies were only the additional fuel that intensified the already kindled fire of tribal rivalry. This is substantiated by the fact that most of the original issues were quickly forgotten and the major theme of tribal glory gradually took pride of place. Thus al-Farazdaq used

1. Agh., xix, 43.

2. Ṭab., ii, 94, 95; Agh., xix, 30, 43; 'Iqd, v, 169; Naq., 609; Ibn-Sall., 251; for his satires on Fuqaym cf. Far., i, 135, 139, 309; ii, 152, 220; On Nahshal, cf. Far., i, 36, 52, 151, 204, 352, 377-381, 385, 426; ii, 91, 96, 207-9; cf. Agh., viii, 159-161.

3. Ibn-Qut., Sh., 444.

4. Ibn-Qut., op.cit., 444.

to link the Banū-Fuqaym with baseness in most of his satires, as in his verse:-

Baseness alights wherever the Fuqaym alight, and it
marches [with them] even if they march in the
remotest part of the world [20]¹

He used similar language with the Banū-Nahshal when he told them:

I swear by my life, O Banū-Nahshal, that though
numbers [of followers] are small in your abodes,
yet your baseness is not small [21]²

After asking God to widen the gulf of hostility between them and his people, he told them bluntly in another piece:-

You have become angry against us because Mujāshi³ have
overtopped you, and because the one who defends your
honour⁴ is a slave [22]⁵

Although the sources preserved for us only fragmentary pieces of poetry in connection with these early poetic feuds, they abound in references to their social implications. Despite their limited scope they were the portents of future large-scale confrontations. They were actually only one aspect of a general resurgence of tribal spirit following the murder of 'Uthmān. The early years of the Umayyad regime until 45/665 witnessed the mild governorship of 'Abdallāh ibn-'Āmir whose leniency at a time of anarchy and unrest following the tumultuous years of the first civil war only intensified the unruliness of Baṣrī tribes. When it had

1. *Far.*, i, 309; cf. also, i, 135, 151.

2. *Ibid.*, ii, 91.

3. i.e. the poet's clan.

4. i.e. al-Ash'hab ibn-Rumayla.

5. *Far.*, i, 151; cf. also 377-381; For a similar invective against Minqar cf. *ibid.*, ii, 35.

been urged upon him to take some stern measures against them he was reported to have said, "I hate to reform them by corrupting myself."¹ Mu'āwīya had to remove him in favour of Ziyād who was intent on stamping out all forms of rebellion. He was aware of the adverse effects the defiant activities of such individuals as al-Farazdaq would have on the miṣr. In fact al-Farazdaq attracted the attention of Ziyād more than once. On one occasion he stood up in the public place in al-Mirbad and in a Jāhili fashion invited those around him to plunder his belongings.² As his father had already fallen foul of the authorities for doing the same thing³ Ziyād regarded it as a vicious example instigating other people to follow his suit,⁴ and sent cavalry after him. The poet escaped and took refuge in the desert. The rude manner in which he addressed Mu'āwīya concerning the award of al-Ḥutāt⁵ infuriated him all the more.⁶ But Ziyād seemed at first to have satisfied himself with keeping him away from the miṣr. It is reported that the governor used to spend six months in Kūfa and the other six months in Baṣra and the poet managed to avoid meeting him by reversing the sequence, living in Baṣra while Ziyād was in Kūfa and the reverse.⁷ When the Banū-Fuqaym and the Banū-Nahshal approached Ziyād

1. Ibn-Ath., Kāmil, iii, 368.

2. Ṭab., ii, 95.

3. cf. Chapter V, p.239 below.

4. Ibn-Ath., op.cit., iii, 388.

5. cf. P.34 above.

6. Naq., 608; cf. Chapter II, p. 84 above.

7. Ṭab., ii, 101.

concerning the poet in 50/669¹ his fury was intense and he ordered an extensive campaign to arrest him. No one in Iraq could possibly protect him against Ziyād² and he had no alternative but to seek refuge outside the jurisdiction of the governor in Ḥijāz with its Umayyad ruler Sa'īd ibn-al-'Āṣ.³ He had to remain in exile until the death of Ziyād in 53/672 when he returned to his native town.⁴

The stringent measures of Ziyād⁵ which also helped to bolster up the governorship of his son and successor 'Ubaydallāh, acted as a brake on the excesses of the preceding period. The consequence, in Baṣra and its bādiya, was a relative calm as far as tribal relations were concerned. Yet Ziyād and especially his son 'Ubaydallāh contributed in their own way to the general flare up of tribal animosity as had their predecessor 'Abdallāh ibn-'Āmir.⁶ 'Ubaydallāh was credited with being the pioneer in seeking in a systematic manner statements disparaging Arab tribes (known as mathālib) and is reported to have taken a special interest in collecting them to counter the charges against him.⁷ He was also renowned, as has already been noted,⁸ for kindling rivalry between poets to distract attention. But otherwise, both of them were alive to the explosive nature of poetic

1. Ṭab., ii, 94.

2. Ibid., ii, 99; Agh., xix, 31; Ibn-Sall., 251.

3. Ṭab., ii, 108.

4. Ibid.

5. cf. Chapter I, 17-18.

6. cf. Bayān, i, 254.

7. Bal., Ansāb, ivB, 81.

8. cf. P.92 above.

activities run riot. The preceding experience of Ziyād with al-Farazdaq, and that of 'Ubaydallāh with Ibn-Mufarrigh, which we shall consider later on, indicated that direct intervention by the emir was sometimes the only means to bring recalcitrant poets to heel.

3. The miṣr becomes the forum of poetic feuds:

Meanwhile the growing importance of the miṣr and the role it increasingly came to play in the lives of tribes whether in Baṣra itself or its bādiya is reflected in the tendency of the Bedouins to carry **into the town** the poetic feuds that had initially been the natural products of their desert environment. The exchanges that had reflected at an earlier stage petty family disputes in the bādiya now served, in addition, to express the wider issues of tribal and political rivalries in the miṣr. The stern reaction of Ziyād to the activities of al-Farazdaq reflected his realisation of this tendency which gathered momentum after him. The tortuous development of this tendency with its various ramifications are best demonstrated by the celebrated case of Banū-Salīṭ with Banū-'l-Khaṭafā of Kulayb the clan of Jarīr, both of whom belonged to the Tamīmī sub-tribe of Yarbū'. The two family groups quarrelled over the ownership of a watering-place and thereupon the Banū-'l-Khaṭafā, a family reputed for poetic excellence, started satirizing the Salīṭ. The latter, finding themselves at a loss since none amongst them was a poet, had recourse to one of their cousins, Ghassān ibn-Duhayl and contracted his assistance

against their adversaries. The young Jarīr defended the honour of his family against Ghassān and several others.¹

Judging by what Abū-'Ubayda reported of the sequence of these exchanges,² it is evident that the poetic exchanges turned out to be of far greater significance to the people involved than the original incident which provoked them. As in an earlier case³ the poetic feud continued to rage long after the initial incidents had been forgotten. Judging by the ceremonial manner in which the poet, true to form as his Jāhili counterpart, addressed the tribal gathering,⁴ it looked as though poetry as such satisfied a public need which the contending parties deeply felt. The spontaneity of the initial interchanges is manifest in their form and content. Most of them⁵ were brief and composed in the rajaz metre, which originally, it seems, served the purpose of improvisation. The intensely personal tint reflected in the vulgar abuse which the two poets hurled at each other's person and kinsmen captured the original spirit of the feud. Thus Jarīr dwelt on depicting the sexual virility of a group of asses which he would like to give as a special present to his adversaries.⁶ But this obscene element, in which both poets indulged, gradually gave place to a more thoughtful kind of poetry in which the poet was more intent on presenting the merits of

1. cf. Naq., 5-6.

2. Ibid., 6 sqq.

3. cf. p.117 above.

4. cf. Naq., 2.

5. Ibid., 3-36.

6. Ibid., 3.

his people in a more favourable light especially when the feud was joined later by the other Tamīmī poet al-Ba'īth who belonged to the Banū-Mujāshi', the traditional rivals of Yarbū'. This development was natural since the scope of Jarīr and Ghassān who both belonged to the same sub-tribe was thus restricted, and bound to result in interchanges that were, on the whole, more personal than communal. But through the intervention of al-Ba'īth the range of the localised feud was greatly extended to bring into play the more enduring differences that had existed between the two major Tamīmī groups of Yarbū' and Mujāshi' since the Jāhiliyya. Moreover the involvement of al-Ba'īth in the feud as such is indicative of the process by which a minor dispute could develop into a multilateral conflict. The ease with which a remark could set a chain reaction in motion readily demonstrates that the general atmosphere was propitious for such encounters.

Al-Ba'īth was remotely related to Banū-Salīṭ through his ancestral grandmother, an-Nawār.¹ Seizing the occasion of having his stolen camels retrieved by a group of them, he was quick to show his gratitude by expressing his solidarity with them in their feud and by throwing his weight wholeheartedly on their side against their adversaries. He is reported to have said, "We have found poetry and nobility among the offspring of an-Nawār."² The Banū-Kulayb were annoyed and found it difficult to understand why a Mujāshi'ī

1. Nad., 38.

2. Ibid.

should interfere in a matter that concerned two related clans of Yarbū' only, as was expressed by the Yarbū'ī dignitary, 'Aṭīyya ibn-Ji'āl.¹ It is, however, more likely that the Salīṭ who had been known for their ineptitude in versification, had invited al-Ba'īth, as they had already done with other poets, to come to their aid against Jarīr who was obviously getting the better of their poet, Ghassān.² Thus al-Ba'īth inadvertently dragged his own clan, the Banū-Mujāshi', into the arena and exposed them to the bitter sarcasm of Jarīr. By this time, the two poets were already caught up in the tribal frenzy which had been brewing in Baṣra and its bādiya and found themselves, more than at any time before, hard put to it to whitewash the records of their respective clans and to undermine the prestige of their opponents. Al-Ba'īth was no mean poet³ and some of his tirades against Kulayb were regarded by them as the most effective lampoon levelled at them, especially the following lines which they continued to remember with bitterness:-⁴

Are you not a Kulaybī who, when a decision is imposed
upon him, submits as a wife to her husband succumbs,
Every Kulaybī's countenance is more subservient to
men's feet than shoes,
Every Kulaybī who drives his she-ass, has a purpose
whereby she is cruppered.[23]⁵

Yet he was no real match for Jarīr. The injury that Jarīr had inflicted on the honour of Mujāshi' and their womenfolk

1. Ibid.

2. Ibn-Sall., 326.

3. He was listed at the top of the second class of Islamic poets by Ibn-Sallām, 451.

4. Ibn-Qut., Sh., 472.

5. Ibid.; Naq., 157.

was by far more enduring, and al-Ba'īth himself indicated his inability to withstand his assaults when he hinted that al-Farazdaq, who was a Mujāshi'ī like himself, ought to come to his rescue:-

I swear by my life if al-Farazdaq has been distracted by his shackles and the case of Nawar with its ointments and perfumes,
Then certainly the enemies of Mujāshi' would stir up within me the spiritedness of one who is neither inferior nor debased.[24]¹

His allusion to al-Farazdaq's fetter refers, on the one hand, to the eccentricity of this latter poet and his ambivalent attitude to the challenges of his time, and on the other hand, to those challenges that caused him to shackle himself and announce that he was under a solemn vow to compose no more satires until he had learnt the Qur'an by heart.² His poetry gave the impression that he had undergone a temporary transformation when he said:-

For thirty years never have I seen an error that flashed without setting off towards it.[25]³

It is, however, easy to demonstrate that the period of relative restraint which culminated in the pious act of shackling himself with a view to learning the Qur'an really corresponded with the governorship of 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād who was able to distract for a while the attention of the various Baṣrī groups by his mild but effective conciliatory measures. It is reported that the poet went to Mecca on pilgrimage and made his vow there:

1. Ibn-Sall., 327.

2. Ibid.; cf. Mub., Kāmil, i, 114-116; cf. Chapter V, pp.250-1 below.

3. Far., ii, 153.

Don't you see that I made a pledge with my Lord while
standing between the gate and the shrine,
And swore never to slander a Muslim or allow offensive
words to issue from my mouth?
Don't you see that inviolable barriers on account of
Islam have stood between me and poetry?[26]¹

The fact that his repentance was terminated as soon as tribal animosities flared up after the death of Yazīd I underlines the turn of the tide which poets like himself could not easily resist. It is reported that the women of Mujāshī' became infuriated when they heard of Jarīr's calumnies against them and approached al-Farazdaq saying, "May God render your shackle hideous! Jarīr has violated the honour of your women, may you be cursed as a people's poet."² Thus public opinion obliged him to intervene in defence of his tribal honour. He exposed his sentiments very powerfully when he broke loose from his fetters and announced:-

Hunayda scoffed at me when she saw [me] a prisoner with
his steps shortened by the links of his shackle,
Had she known that the strongest bond is [that] which
leads to hell, she would have addressed me more wisely,
I swear by my life, having now shackled myself, how long
have I run and given free rein to ignorance,
For thirty years never have I seen an error that flashed
without setting off towards it,
Yet although my shackle has been the result of a vow I
have made, no consideration whatsoever would stand
between me and the defence of my people's honour,
I am their guarantor, the patron over them, and it is
only me or somebody like me who would defend the
like of them.[27]³

Although at the time he carefully abstained from mentioning Jarīr by name and from insulting his kinsmen, Kulayb, and

1. Naq., 126.

2. Far., ii, 152.

3. Far., ii, 152-3.

restricted himself to vindicating the honour of Mujāshī', and even assailed al-Ba'īth, as we shall see presently, Jarīr's attitude made it impossible for him to maintain a purely defensive stand, and in the controversy which ensued each of the two poets strove to outdo the other in virulence.¹

Thus the two major Tamīmī poets were brought into the arena at a time when the internal situation in Baṣra was at its worst as far as tribal relations were concerned. If the assertion of Ibn-Sallām² that their feud persisted for about 40 years is accepted as a rough estimate, and since they both died some time in 110/728 it can be assumed that their encounters started sometime prior to the death of Yazīd I in 64/683. There is sufficient evidence to indicate that the poetic feud which had been raging earlier in the desert had shifted to the town proper, especially through the implication of al-Farazdaq who was resident at the time in Baṣra. It is reported that the Banū-Yarbū' of Baṣra sent word to Jarīr complaining, "You are resident in al-Marrūt (in the bādiya) and you have no one to transmit your poetry while al-Farazdaq has filled the whole of Iraq with poetry against you for over seven years," so he came down and settled in Baṣra.³

Thus the two poets made Baṣra the stage of their activities which assumed such proportions during the governorship of al-Qubā' (65-7/684-686) that he had to order their

1. cf. Naq., Bevan's Introduction, p.xviii.

2. Ṭabaqāt, 329.

3. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 349.

houses to be dismantled and them to be expelled from Baṣra.¹ This drastic measure by al-Qubā', who was otherwise reputed for leniency and indecision² must have been prompted by the ill effects which their activities were beginning to have on the internal situation, involving even those responsible for security. It is asserted that 'Abbād ibn-al-Ḥuṣayn al-Ḥabaṭī of Tamīm who was the security officer of al-Qubā' sided with Jarīr against al-Farazdaq by lending the former a horse and a coat of arms in a famous poetic encounter between the two poets in al-Mirbad.³ The incident is related by al-Farazdaq when he said:-

Do you think my heart will leap out of place when the
bells of 'Abbād's tambourine sound?
Is it on account of a lousy creature of Kulayb whom I
lampooned, that Abu-Jahdam (i.e. 'Abbād) is boiling
against me?
O Ḥarith (i.e. al-Qubā')! You have dismantled my
residence twice, and you used to be a cousin who
was not feared for mischief.[28]⁴

The grievance of 'Abbād against al-Farazdaq went back to an earlier date when al-Farazdaq was reported to have said:-

The Banū-Dārim have their equals among the family of
Misma',⁵ while the Ḥabaṭat⁶ should seek marriage
among those who befit them,[29]⁷

indicating thereby that the Ḥabaṭat to whom 'Abbād belonged were of an inferior social status compared with the Banū-Dārim

1. Ansāb, v, 278.

2. Naq., 683.

3. Naq., 684.

4. Ibid., 606-8; Far., ii, 172.

5. They were the leading family of Bakr ibn-Wā'il, Mub.,
Kāmil, i, 213.

6. They were a branch of Tamīm.

7. Far., i, 107; cf. Mub., Kāmil, i, 213-4.

of Tamīm, the people of al-Farazdaq and were therefore also inferior to the Mīsmā' family. Thus 'Abbād naturally favoured Jarīr, although he was later forced by the governor to sack the houses of both poets. Jarīr was more blunt when he told al-Ḥārith [al-Qubā'] on the occasion:-

O Ḥārith, choose whom you like of their men and of ours' and allow us to vie in glory the merits of which are reckoned,
There is nothing in the Book of God to allow the dismantling of our residence in retaliation for dismantling a brothel,¹ evil of entrance.[30]²

Poetic interchanges sometimes led to violence and bloodshed. Abū-'Ubayda related that "when the two poets met in Mirbad to exchange lampoons the Banū-Yarbū' and the Banū-Mujāshi' came to blows, and the Banū-'l-'Amm of Tamīm reinforced Mujāshi' and rushed to their help carrying staves of wood and succeeded in driving the Yarbū'īs away, which prompted Jarīr to say:-

Al-Farazdaq has no defence to turn to except the Banū-'l-'Amm with wooden staves in their hands,
O Banū-'l-'Amm march away, for al-Ahwaz is your abode together with the river Tīra, and you are unknown to the Arabs.[31]³

The upshot of the episode was that al-Farazdaq managed to escape while Jarīr and an-Nawār, al-Farazdaq's wife were taken prisoners.⁴ Looking back on his rebellious past al-Farazdaq told al-Qubā' defiantly:-

Before you had I exhausted Ziyād, the one who contracted his eye, so that his traps failed to catch me,
And I have sworn not to go back to him for seventy years, even though the eye and back of al-Qubā' were stricken with disease.[32]⁵

1. Meaning the residence of his adversary.

2. Naq., 683.

3. Agh., iii, 76.

4. Naq., 166.

5. Ibid., 607-8; Far., ii, 172.

4. The age of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq:

The clash between Jarīr and al-Farazdaq was the climax of a process which had been gaining momentum for some time and involving an increasing number of poets. But out of hundreds of their contemporaries the two contending poets emerged as the undisputed giants who continued to dominate the scene until their death and after. Their poetry reflected in many ways the formative tendencies of their time. They represented between them the whole breadth of the Baṣrī scene in all its complexity for more than half a century.

Their relation to each other and to other poets and groups may be taken as a fairly true reflection of the dominant currents of Baṣrī society at the time. In the first place they reflected tribal rivalry in almost all its manifestations, the local as well as the general. Belonging to two different clans of Tamīm their poetry depicted in no equivocal terms the intense rivalry that often existed between the minor tribal divisions which, on certain occasions and especially at times of crisis, found it more convenient to array themselves under the banner of a larger tribal grouping. Thus while the two poets, typifying scores of their contemporaries, were at each other's throat in defending their respective clans, they both and at the same time concurred in defending the larger group of Tamīm and each of them boasted of being its accredited mouthpiece. Furthermore, when political considerations called for further

agglomeration which resulted in the dichotomies of Khindif (mainly Tamīm) versus Qays, and then of a combination of both (under the name of Muḍar) versus Rabī'a, and then of the combination of the three (under the name of Nizārīs or 'Adnānīs) versus the Yemen,¹ they reflected the shifting pattern of these alliances. In addition to indicating the formal side of tribal activity whether in the relations of tribes to each other or to the Umayyad government, they also reflected very strongly the ordinary personal relations that had existed between individual tribesmen in their community.²

To indicate in broad outline the major features of this tribal poetry which attained its peak in the works of the two Tamīmī poets and their contemporaries, it is possible to divide it into manageable categories and accordingly treat it under two headings of rivalry within the same tribe, and the tribe against other tribes and larger tribal groupings.

5. Rivalry within the same tribe:

Reference has already been made to various encounters between some of the Tamīmī poets which echoed in various ways the differences existing for some reason or other between the various branches of Tamīm. There is no reason to doubt that the majority of other tribes were in a similar position. The records of Tamīm, however, as preserved by the works of their various poets and other literary works especially the "Naqā'id of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq" of Abū-'Ubayda are more

1. cf. Chapter 1, Pattern of tribal alliance, p.11, 21.

2. cf. Pellat, Milieu, 156-158; E.I.², "Djarīr", "al-Farazdaq".

comprehensive than those of any other tribe. The larger number of their poets and the excellence of their verse helped more than any other consideration to perpetuate their memory in literary annals. The tribe provides a good example of how extensive the dimensions of tribal rivalry could be. 'Aṣabiyya sometimes narrowed until it flared up within the same clan or family group as in the case of al-Ubayrid and his cousin al-Aḥwaṣ who assailed Suḥaym ibn-Wathīl who belonged, like themselves to Banū-Riyāḥ of Tamīm.¹ The poetic feud between Ḥāritha ibn-Badr and the Banū-Salīṭ, who all belonged to Banū-Yarbū' of Tamīm² gives another example. The encounter between al-Farazdaq and al-Ba'īth, alluded to earlier is a case in point. While both of them defended the common clan of Mujāshi' to which they belonged against Kulayb each satirized the inner family group of the other. Thus in coming to the help of al-Ba'īth against Jarīr, al-Farazdaq satirized both in his words:-

Certainly the Jarīr of baseness wished that he had been
a captive and had never come nearer to the roaring
of ferocious lions,
The son of the red-bottomed³ slave-girl would never get
away from me since he has failed to chide away the
birds of bad omen,
Surely both of you have incited me against yourselves,
so do not panic and lend your ears to foul speech.[33]⁴

Throughout al-Farazdaq's early satires against Jarīr, al-Ba'īth received his quota of abuse as well.

1. cf. Mub., Kāmil (ed. Marṣafī), iii, 36; Agh., xii, 14.

2. cf. Agh., xxi, 22.

3. Ḥamrā' al-'Ijān (i.e. the one with red perinoeum) indicated either her Persian origin or her menial occupation. "Ibn Ḥamrā' al-'Ijān" continued to be the nickname of Ba'īth.

4. Ibn-Sall., 328; cf. Far., ii, 318.

This latter episode indicates the dilemma that sometimes faced some poets who found themselves in the intricate situation of having to lampoon another poet or individual who was closely related to them by blood. Al-Farazdaq, when the short-lived encounter between him and the poet Miskīn ad-Dārimī arising from the latter's elegy on Ziyād ibn-Abīhi had come to an end, heaved a deep sigh of relief and said, "I narrowly escaped being satirized by Miskīn, for if I answered him I would do away with half my glory, or else if I held back it would be a blemish on me for all time."¹ To avoid implicating the whole group the poet usually reacted by singling out the person in question and by representing him as being of an alien origin which had nothing in common with the tribal group. This tendency is reflected most strongly among the poets of Tamīm. Thus al-Farazdaq grounded his main charges against al-Ba'īth in his base descent since his mother was claimed to have been a Sijistānī slave-girl.² He called him in addition to "ibn ḥamrā' al-'ijān" noted earlier, "ibn al-khabītha"³ (son of mischievous woman). He even denied him the honour of being a member of Tamīm when he told him:-

You are not from us but, you claim a genealogy in the family of Qurṭ,⁴ having been a captive.[34]⁵

Al-Ba'īth in turn had to rebutt the slanders of his adversary and attack him and his family by exposing their past belmishes

1. Agh., xix, 32.

2. Ibn-Sall., 326.

3. Naq., 125; cf. 169, 170; Far., ii, 152-3; 268.

4. Qurṭ ibn-Sufyān ibn-Mujāshi', an ancestor of Ba'īth, cf. Naq., 453.

5. Naq., 623.

and mean origin. He denied them, as did Jarīr after him, any relation to pure Tamīmī origin and capitalized on the claim that they were the offspring of a Yemenī slave:-

You feigned sleeping when A'yan¹ called on you O sons of female slaves from the Yemenī slave.[35]²

Jarīr in addition to dwelling on the same idea of "quyūn" (slaves) in his references to al-Farazdaq and his group described their ancestor as "ilj" (foreigner) when he said,

al-Farazdaq and all the ṣa'āsi' whose faces are like frying-pans [in blackness] are the progeny of a foreigner.[36]³

He represented, as indicated earlier, the Banū-'l-'Amm of Tamīm as being of an alien origin unknown to the Arabs and in a like manner disclaimed the relationship of their sub-tribe of 'Arīn when one of their members threatened to kill him for satirizing ṣalit and told them:-

'Arīn are from 'Urayna,⁴ they are not from us; I free myself to 'Urayna from 'Arīn, They are born slaves of 'Abd-al-Qays, [offspring] of newly acquired and resident slaves, We recognize Ja'far and the Banu-'Ubayd, but we disown other promiscuous parties.[37]⁵

Likewise al-Farazdaq called Jarīr and his family "abīd" (slaves) when he addressed his adversary:-

The son of the she-ass⁶ claims his genealogy in Dārim, but then the slave can easily claim someone else for his father, Noble men will never allow you to claim their father until you are drawn forcibly and returned to 'Atiyya [38]⁷

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1. A'yan ibn-Ḍubay'a of Mujāshi', father of an-Nawār the wife of Farazdaq, slain at Baṣra soon after the Battle of the Camel, cf. Ṭab., i, 3200.
 2. Naq., 125.
 3. Naq., 322.
 4. A Yemenī tribe.
 5. Naq., 31.
 6. cf. P.139 below.
 7. Naq., 202.

But despite this loophole poets were always wary of assailing their own 'ashīra as indicated by even al-Farazdaq when he said concerning Banū-Jārim of Ḍabba, his maternal uncles:-

Had it not been for the Banū-Sa'd of Ḍabba, the Banū-Jarim would have been placed through me on the back of a scabby camel,
I have always refrained from slandering the 'ashīra, but if people invite evil in a hurry it hastens [to them][39]¹

Despite the profusion of these feuds² none had been more ferocious than the encounter between Jarīr and al-Farazdaq. It has already been mentioned³ that with the implication of the latter poet in the feud that had been raging between the former and al-Ba'īth the nature and scope of the feud attained new dimensions. In addition to the usual abuse a more sober note of glorifying the poet's group steadily increased. This process reached its highest peak shortly before the outbreak of hostilities following the death of Yazīd I so that the rivalry between the two poets not only reflected the attitudes of their respective clans but also embraced a good deal more as we shall see presently. We shall confine ourselves here, for the time being, to the one aspect of their rivalry dealing with their sub-clans of Mujāshi' and Kulayb.

After giving due consideration to personal elements which confound relations in any human society, it must be emphasized that the underlying motive for this feud, as well

1. Far., ii, 114.

2. In addition to the encounters of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq with other poets mentioned earlier, cf. Ibn-Qut., Sh., ii, 667; Naq., 124 for the encounter of Farazdaq with Murra ibn-Maḥkan.

3. cf. P.129 above.

as for most of the others, was the consciousness of those involved that they stood to gain by such activities.¹ The fact that in most of their not very distant past most of these clans acted independently and at times against their own related groups² in order to further their own ends - a course which could be profitably repeated in the new circumstances with similar results - is attested by the indulgence of poets in recounting the victories of their respective clans against the others in the Jāhiliyya and in Islam. The diligence with which these 'days' of the Arabs were recorded in their poetry furnished historians with copious, if not always accurate, material for their study of pre-Islamic Arabia.³ This material which subsequent generations regarded as merely of historical interest had been a lively issue in the engagements between the parties concerned. The emphasis on glory and freedom from blemish led as pointed out earlier to invention and other petty practices. The vices and faults of opponents were traced and projected in the most grotesque fashion, so that 'Abū-'Ubayda could say of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, "How evil were the two shaykhs! Actually God has never created more inauspicious creatures for their people than them; they exposed the vices and pitfalls of Tamīm and they were at the same time most knowledgeable of other people's defects."⁴ The obscene framework

1. cf. p. 78 above.

2. e.g. the Banū-Yarbū' received a bribe from Banū-Shaybān of Bakr and allowed them to attack the Banū-Sa'd of Tamīm, Naq., 144-5, 326.

3. cf. 'Umda, ii, 198-225; 'Iqd, vi, 3-111.

4. Naq., 1049.

in which a considerable proportion of this material was couched rendered the compositions more endearing to the listening crowds,¹ for most of this poetry had been made with the audience in mind. Thus Jarīr relished levelling charges at the womenfolk of Mujāshi,² and especially the household of al-Farazdaq. The affair of Ji'thin, al-Farazdaq's sister, and the extent to which he exploited it may be appreciated by a glance at the index of the Naqā'id.³ He reviled Farazdaq's wife an-Nawār⁴ and even claimed that she had an affair with him when they had been both imprisoned by al-Qubā'.⁵ He accused his adversary's grandmother Laylā of having been impregnated by Jubayr, a slave black-smith⁶ and hence the insistence on calling them quyūn as noted earlier.

Similarly al-Farazdaq attacked Umm-Ghaylān, Jarīr's daughter,⁷ and his mother whom he called al-marāgha (she-ass), an epithet used earlier by Ghassān⁸ and accused her of adultery.⁹ He accused his adversary of incest¹⁰ and

1. cf. p. 96 above.

2. cf. Naq., 82-3, 226, 230-1, 274, 321, 322, 340-1, 439-441, 857-8, 863-4 etc.

3. e.g. 222, 251, 398, 440, 482-3, 592-3, 682, 709, 778, 800, 845, 855-6, 978-980, 1001.

4. cf. ibid., 341;

5. cf. P. 131 above.

6. Naq., 78, 389, 593, 683, 799-800, 1001, 1026.

7. Ibid., 841-3.

8. Ibid., 17.

9. Ibid., 205.

10. Ibid., 210.

drenched the Kulaybī women with abuse.¹ In addition he attacked the obvious poverty of Kulayb and represented their women as slaves and herdswomen,² a great humiliation among Arabs for tending camels was usually a man's job.³ He further underlined their inferior status by describing them as owners of sheep and asses⁴ who paid the dowry of their women in rams (instead of camels) and performed their racing competitions on asses (instead of horses).⁵ He further accused them of having illicit relations with their she-asses and of taking them as wives,⁶ a charge which so infuriated some of the Kulaybīs that they would have forced the poet once, when passing through their quarter, to copulate with a she-ass, and only his sharp wit spared him the debasing experience.⁷

It suffices to mention here that the two poets used all the means at their disposal to achieve their ends. No effort was spared to enumerate the merits of one's people and the defects of the other party and to invoke all the forces they could muster. Thus in addition to boasting of Tamīm as a whole, a subject to which we shall turn presently, the poets increasingly and especially after the Zubayrī

1. Ibid., 232-3, 279, 476, 492, 513, 704-5, 773, 878.

2. Ibid., 332, etc.

3. Ibid., 332

4. Ibid., 393-4, 491, 572, 604, 623, 792.

5. Ibid., 280.

6. Ibid., 573-4, 627, 793, 823.

7. Agh., xix, 40.

interlude indulged in praising all the related clans of Tamīm they could claim as being on their side. Al-Farazdaq dwelt on the merits of the various Dārimī clans, notwithstanding that he had satirized some of them earlier. In one poem¹ he boasted of Mujāshi', Nahshal, Fuqaym, Banū-Ṭuhaiyya, the Rabā'i', Banū-l-'Adawiyya, Barājim, Ḥaṇṣala and Ḍabba while Jarīr,² after declaring his victory over Mujāshi' boasted of his lofty place at the top of the 'two mountains of Tamīm' ('Amr and Mālik). This awareness of a wider circle which ultimately encompassed the whole of Tamīm sometimes acted as a brake on poets' indulgence and forced them to restrict the scope of their satire. It is perhaps the fear of 'escalation' that prompted Jarīr to frustrate the attempt of al-Ba'īth and afterwards of al-Farazdaq to represent the feud between them as though it had been between the Banū-Mālik and the Banū-Yarbū', the major branches of Tamīm to which their respective clans belonged. He rebuffed al-Ba'īth by telling him:-

Would you reproach Yarbū' so that I might slander Mālik,
while someone other than yourself is the patron of
Mālik and [is] of their pure stock?[40]³

He further boasted of belonging to Mālik in the same manner as did al-Ba'īth when he boasted of his position among them⁴ and said:

1. Naq., 182; cf. Far., ii, 155-161; cf. i, 39-40, 99-105, 222-4, 282, 418-21, 423-4; ii, 269-270, 274-5, 305-6, 318-321; 324, 326, 329-332, 355-8.

2. Naq., 224; Jar., 358.-

3. Naq., 124.

4. Ibid., 143.

I have the credit among the tribal groups of 'Amr and
Mālik.[41]¹

In order to cut the grass from under the feet of his Mujāshī'ī
opponents he often instigated the Banū-Mālik against Mujāshī'
as in his verse:-

O Banū-Mālik there is no truthfulness among Mujāshī',
but only a share of vain boasting [mixed with]
deceit.[42]²

The feud displayed the impact of tribal rivalry in the
town as a whole in another way. A marked tendency to boast
of the military glory of the sub-tribe and to enumerate its
victories not only against the rival sub-tribe which had
been the usual practice earlier, but against other tribal
groups is discernible especially after the death of Yazīd.
Thus Jarīr in satirizing al-Ba'īth³ did not stop at
castigating Mujāshī' but also dwelt on the victories of his
own branch of Kulayb against Shaybān and Bakr and other tribes.
Al-Ba'īth himself managed to burst the narrow tribal
boundaries and explored wider horizons when he replied to
Jarīr, indicating the power of Mujāshī':-

Of all Ma'add we have requited the debts, paying [them]
misfortune for adversity and favour for favour.[43]⁴

At this juncture a new element is introduced demonstrating
the increasing power of Quraysh to which the Umayyads belonged.
Thus Jarīr in rebutting the arguments of al-Farazdaq said:-

Then go back to the two judges of Quraysh⁵ for they are
the possessors of prophethood and the revealed
Book,[44]⁶

1. Ibid., 162.

2. Naq., 165.

3. Ibid., 66-77.

4. Ibid.

5. i.e. 'Abd-Shams (Umayya) and Hāshim.

6. Naq., 224.

making Quraysh the arbiters in addition to Muḍar and Rabī'a,¹ while al-Farazdaq would regard Quraysh the only tribe which could compete with them in glory:-

There is no Ma'addī whom we can reckon as equal to us
except the two families of 'Abd-shams and Hashim.[45]²

Although the share of Tamīm was overwhelmingly large in this connection, as has been pointed out earlier,³ they were not unique and in all probability the attitude of other tribes, though not as fully documented, was not far removed from that of Tamīm judging by the case of al-'Udayl ibn-al-Farkh, the poet of Bakr ibn-Wā'il whose quarrel with his cousins concerning the marriage of their sister ended in a blood-feud.⁴

6. The tribe against other tribes and larger groups:

The tendency of smaller groups to join their related branches to form larger groups such as Tamīm, Qays, Azd, Bakr, 'Abd-al-Qays and others upon which the division of the town into akhmās had been based⁵ loomed large in the experiences of poets and inspired a considerable portion of their compositions. Despite the fact that a large part of this poetry dwelt at great length on the distinctive merits of the respective clans, indicating thereby their powerful hold on poets' minds, it nevertheless steadily portrayed, and at times concurrently, the glories of the larger group. But

1. Ibid., 225; cf. ibid., 763-4.

2. Naq., 747.

3. cf. P.133 above.

4. cf. Agh., xx, 11-19.

5. cf. Chapter 1, pp.11-17, 30 above.

it is important to point out that although this feeling of belonging to a larger group had always been a reality in Baṣra as the events of the Battle of the Camel indicated, it was rarely emphasized, at least in poetry, except in times of crisis or hostility with other larger groups especially after the death of Yazīd I. It is not amiss here to anticipate a forthcoming point and mention that it was the relative weakness of this feeling which prompted Jarīr, under certain conditions, to be the spokesman of Qays-‘Aylān who had been in many cases the enemies of his own tribe of Tamīm.¹ A chronological survey of some of the available poetry would show the rising graph of this tendency. Thus if we take the case of Tamīm as an example we notice the scarcity of references to Tamīm as such in the early compositions especially those concerned with the feuds between the various clans. But as the importance of Tamīm as a 'power' in the politico-tribal framework increased, the corresponding note in poetry steadily grew stronger. This tendency is evident even in the poetry extolling the merits of the minor clan. In condemning the rival clans poets did not hesitate to praise Tamīm and to boast of belonging to it. Thus in listing the merits of his clan Jarīr told al-Ba‘īth:-

And on the day of ‘Ubaydallāh we waded [through the
battlefield] with banners [in] a regiment
encompassing the whole of Tamīm.[46]²

1. cf. p.147 below.

2. Nag., 112.

Al-Ba'īth made a similar claim in another piece against Jarīr:-

You found us defending Tamīm who, horsemen and foot-soldiers alike, trace back their origins to us.[47]¹

This sentiment sometimes overshadowed the original feud as the words of Jarīr concerning al-Ba'īth and al-Farazdaq during the governorship of al-Qubā' would suggest:-

Some men of Tamīm desired my death, whereas none has defended their glory as I have done.
As though they know not where I hail from, and yet they know that I am the invincible forerunner.[48]²

This awareness of the larger group was heightened by the intensity of tribal confrontation in the town. Thus the burning of Ibn-al-Ḥaḍramī in 38/659³ which had been performed by a section of Tamīm was represented by al-'Arandas of Azd as a disgrace embracing the whole of Tamīm, while the glory of protecting Ziyād was represented as being to the credit of the Azd.⁴ The internal crisis following the death of Yazīd I was the most important factor in sharpening tribal divisions. The high-handedness of Tamīm in forcing the pace of tribal rivalry is indicated by the lines of Ḥāritha ibn-Badr of Tamīm⁵ when his tribe took a decisive part in appointing 'Abdallāh ibn-Ḥārith (Babba) as governor of Baṣra,⁶ probably against the will of Azd, Bakr and 'Abd-al-Qays⁷ who were forced to join forces against the combined forces of Muḍar.⁸ The military encounters between the two

1. Ibid., 143.

2. Ibid., 161.

3. cf. Chapter I, p.15.

4. cf. Chapter V. verse No.206, p.226.

5. cf. Chapter V, verse No.210, pp. 228 below.

6. cf. Ṭab., ii, 444; cf. also Chapter 1, 18.

7. cf. Nag., 112.

8. cf. Chapter 1, 19.

groups were depicted vividly by Ḥāritha when he told al-Aḥnaf ibn-Qays:-

'Abs, the member of Kahmas, will relieve you of
fighting the Azd at Mirbad,
While [the sub-tribe of] 'Amr and its followers will
be charged with meeting Lukayz ibn-Afṣa and their
planning,
As for me I shall be a sufficient [counterpart] for Bakr
piercing them when they advance with [lances] the
thrusts [of which] turn grey the hair of beardless
youth.[49]¹

The result of the struggle was the murder of the Azdī leader
Mas'ūd ibn-'Amr al-'Atakī. The incident was viewed in the
general context of tribal alliances as the lines of 'Arham
ibn-Qays² would suggest:-

When Mas'ūd ibn-'Amr came to us we caused the sharp
blade of a whetted sword to visit him in the morning,
Mas'ūd desired to be an emir but he was left prostrate -
we have made him taste death,
Our multitudes will be gathered to [meet] the sons of
our father (i.e. Rabi'a) like coupling two horses
[in a race],
The Zuff will deal with 'Abd-al-Qays for us, while the
Asawira will be a sufficient foil on our behalf for
the Mazun (i.e. Azd).[50]³

The bond between Qays and Tamīm who joined forces as Muḍar
was mentioned by Sawwār ibn-Ḥayyān al-Minqarī when he said:-

Were there not admonitions in the murder of Mas'ūd?
He came seeking the post of emir but failed to
achieve it,
Until we struck his head and he fell, no pillow being
placed beneath his cheek where it was soiled with
dust,
Thus the Mazūnī slave had tripped to the extent that he
saw death coming at close quarters,
They were overwhelmed by the sea of Tamīm when it ran
high, and that of Qays-'Aylan which burst out
Around them so that they failed to find a way of escape
until the torrent overtopped and swallowed them
up.[51]⁴

1. Agh., xxi, 29; Mub., Kamil, ii, 126.

2. Naq., 115; cf. Ṭab., ii, 456 where the name is given as
Jurhum.

3. Ibid.; cf. Pellat, Milieu, 32n. 7 for Mazūn.

4. Naq., 117.

Political considerations confirmed and accentuated these divisions. The Muḍarī group, especially Qays¹ and most of Tamīm² were pro-Zubayrid and anti-Umayyad. These tribal divisions were the predominant features in the Battle of Jufra.³ When Muṣ'ab defeated Ibn-Asīd, Abū-Nukhayla, speaking on behalf of his people Tamīm said:-

We have struck the Azd in Iraq together with the rebellious tribe of Rabi'a, And the son of Asid, the leader of hypocrites, without pensions or allowances, [Relying on nothing] but [our sense of duty to defend] what remained of noble origins, [goaded] by intense fear and anxiety [to avoid] disgrace and lasting shame.[52]⁴

Events in Khurāsān cast their dark shadow on the Miṣr and precipitated the division of the Muḍarī camp.⁵ The murder of the Qaysī Ibn-Khāzim by Tamīm in 74/693 started the cleavage. The activities of Bishr ibn-Marwān, whose mother was a Qaysite, and of al-Ḥajjāj⁶ were decisive factors in promoting the fortunes of Qays. It appears that they persuaded Jarīr to sing their praise and to act as the spokesman of Qays, a task which he actively carried out since his maternal uncles were also from Qays.⁷ The strong rule of al-Ḥajjāj, however, ensured a period of tribal peace extending for 20 years. Once he died rivalries started afresh and the split between Qays and Tamīm reached its

1. Ansāb, v, 314, 319; Ibn-Sall., 437.

2. cf. Chapter IV, verse No.54, p.150

3. cf. Chapter I, 20-21

4. Mub., Kāmil, ii, 102; Ibn-Mu'tazz, 18.

5. cf. Chapter I, 19.

6. cf. Chapter I, 23.

7. Mub., op.cit., iv, 219.

climax when the latter murdered the Qaysī governor of Khurāsān, Qutayba.¹ From now onwards tribal relations were firmly geared to Umayyad politics, and poets - as we shall see in the following Chapter² - depicted the shifting pattern of tribal alliances within the general framework of Umayyad politics.

1. cf. Chapter I, 24.

2. cf. Chapter IV, pp. 184-202.

CHAPTER IV

POETRY AND THE STATE

i. POETS AND THE CALIPHATE

The general attitude of Baṣra to politics was captured at an early stage by the mother of the famous Baṣrī judge, Ka'b ibn-Sūr the Azdite¹ who had been killed with three or four of his brothers in the Battle of the Camel with a copy of the Qur'ān tied round his neck.² She stood over their dead bodies uttering the brief lamentation:-

O eye of mine! Let your tears flow liberally over youths [who were] of the best of Arabs, Whose portion was none but loss of life whichever₃ of the two emirs of Quraysh had triumphed.[53]³

But despite this indifference arising in the main from the preoccupation of Baṣrīs with their endemic tribal strife which often cut them adrift from the main current of Umayyad politics,⁴ the general picture provided by Baṣrī poetry is one of acquiescence in the religious basis of the caliphate and the acceptance of Quraysh's right to it. Our records of the early days are meagre; thus the rivalry between Mu'āwiya and 'Alī and the eventual triumph of the former left little trace⁵ in extant poetry. The deficiency of poetic production in this connection may be attributed

1. cf. Ibn-Sa'd, vii, Part 2, 65-66 on his initial withdrawal from fitna.

2. Mub., Kāmil, viii, 152.

3. Ibid., 153.

4. cf. Chapter I, p.15 ff. above.

5. cf. Dīwān of Abū-'l-Aswad, who was a Shī'ī, pp.174-179.

in part to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the majority of Baṣrīs who were reluctant to commit themselves wholeheartedly to either side.¹ When that commitment was forthcoming the picture became different. The consequences of the decision of the Muḍarī element in Baṣra, with Tamīm at their head, to support the Zubayrids against the Marwānids, following the death of Yazīd I in 64/683, were momentous in the spheres of politics and poetry. The Umayyad cause suffered in consequence a considerable setback and the majority of poets were decidedly anti-Umayyad, an attitude which later prompted the caliph 'Abd-al-Malik (65-86/685-705) to refuse admission to his court to all Muḍarī poets because of their pro-Zubayrid leanings.² The predominant sentiment of Tamīm at the time was expressed by al-Farazdaq when he addressed some of the Tamīmīs who had joined the Marwānids at the Battle of al-Jufra:-³

I marvel at some men, their ancestor being Tamīm, who
occupy high-ranking positions among the Banū-Sa'd,
They had been chieftains of their people before joining
forces with the yellow-bearded Azdis and Malik,
Whereas it was we who expelled Mālik from our homeland
And pierced his eye with shooting lances;
How do you think Muṣ'ab, the son of the Prophet's
companion, [will treat you] when he shows his canine
teeth, not laughing?[54]⁴

But the Bakrīs of whom the above mentioned Mālik was a leader were not all anti-Zubayrid. Suwayd ibn-Manjūf as-Sadūsī,

1. cf. P.152 below.

2. Ibn-Sall., 357.

3. cf. Chapter I, p.20 ; Ṭab., ii, 799-800; Naq., 750-752.

4. Far., ii, 57; Ṭab., ii, 800-801; Naq., 752.

one of their leaders¹ warned Muṣ'ab ibn-az-Zubayr against the treachery of those around him when he said:-

Now convey a message from me to Muṣ'ab - and sincere advisers are not to be found in every valley -
[Telling him]: Know that most of those you take as confidants are the real enemies however close you draw them to you.[55]²

It is noticeable that during this chaotic period some poets, sensing the weakening effect of the rift between the two Qurashī factions, found courage to criticise Quraysh openly. Thus when 'Abdallāh ibn-az-Zubayr abused al-Farazdaq and told him, "You and your people are nothing but the emigrants of Arabs",³ the poet said:-

However angry Quraysh might be, or feign to be,
Tamim would engulf the earth,
They equal the stars in number whereas no other tribe
has stars [to be] counted,
Had it not been for the temple of Mecca, you would
not have settled [therein], it is there that roots
and origins become sound,
It was there that your numbers multiplied and you
achieved excellence, while other people were being
taken captives, reduced to unquenchable thirst,
So go softly in adducing excuses for deceiving the
one you have betrayed and who had been tormented
by [his] closest associate,
O 'Abdallāh! Be wary in [your efforts] to harm me
for I am neither a weakling nor the one who readily
desists.[56]⁴

But this open criticism did not always go unchallenged from other Baṣrīs. When Abū-Ḥuzāba criticised the Qurashī governor of Sijistān in al-Mirbad saying:-

-
1. cf. Ibn-Sall., 401, 402; Ansāb, v, 171.
 2. Ansāb, v, 343.
 3. Agh., xix, 10.
 4. Ibid., 10-11.

So reject the whole of Quraysh because of that one [amongst them] who is afflicted with chronic disease,[57]¹

another Tamīmī dignitary, 'Awn ibn-'Abd-ar-Raḥmān interrupted him exclaiming, "What! Would you dare to slander Quraysh in public?" The poet had to defend himself by pointing out that his slander was not indiscriminate, for he had singled out only one Qurashī, but the other Tamīmī threatened and eventually did him some mischief, for which the poet retaliated later by castigating him bitterly.²

The Zubayrids, however, do not feature prominently in poetry. With the exception of a few scattered lines³ there is virtually no Baṣrī poetry defending them or expounding their policies, and the assumption is that whatever poetry had been composed in this connection was later suppressed either by the poets themselves or by the Umayyads or by both.

With the triumph of Marwānids and their assumption of the caliphate the tables were turned against the Zubayrids. Subsequently poetry, especially that of the major poets, came increasingly to reflect the general policies of successive caliphs and their governors, extolling their merits. Already, immediately following the murder of Muṣ'ab (72/691), al-Ba'īth of Yashkur had set the tone when he said:-

1. Ibid., 155.

2. Agh., xix, 153.

3. cf. ibid., xvii, 65 where Ibn-Mufarrigh praised Ibn-az-Zubayr; Dīwan of 'Ajjāj, p.3. where he praised Muṣ'ab.

When we realised that things had become inverted,
that those in the forefront were about to be
relegated to the rear,
We waited for the command of God to be fully unfolded,
accepting none but one from Umayyads as a ruler,
And it was we who killed Muṣ'ab, and the son of
Muṣ'ab - that member of the tribe of Asad - as well
as the Yemenī, the Nakha'ī. [58]¹

The Umayyads, having won on the battlefield, lost no time in trying to win people's hearts and minds. Concerted efforts were made to exploit religious susceptibilities. The caliphate and the religious paraphernalia attached to it were used extensively to represent the Umayyad occupants as the protectors of Islam, while their political opponents were represented as acting against Islam. The correlation between the content of Baṣrī poetry reflecting this aspect of political life and Umayyad declarations of policy is significant. We can easily see in the religious element which predominates in most of this species of poetry the main outlines of policy especially as propounded earliest by al-Ḥajjāj (75-95/695-714) and 'Abd-al-Malik. Al-Ḥajjāj is said to have held the view that obedience to the caliph and to his agents is obligatory on men by divine sanction.² His words are reported to have been, "By God, obedience to me is more binding [upon men] than obedience to God. For God says, 'Fear God to the best of your ability'³ allowing some leeway. But when he says, 'listen and obey'⁴ he makes no allowance. If I order a

1. Ṭab., ii, 810.

2. Ibn-Ḥajar, Tahdhīb, ii, 210-211.

3. Q., lxiv, 16.

4. Ibid.

man to enter through this door and he refuses to enter, his blood is lawful to me."¹ The governor is further credited with having held the view that the caliph was superior to angels, prophets and apostles, basing his conviction on the reference made to Adam when God had made him a vicegerent (khalīfa) on earth,² sending angels as messengers to him.³ He drew from that the basic conclusion that the caliph of God on earth was in greater favour with God than His messenger to men.⁴ He used to drive his point home by asking those around him, "Which of the two is more honoured: the one put in trust over one's household, or the one sent as a mere messenger to them?"⁵ It is in accordance with such ideas that al-Ḥajjāj subjected the rebels who had joined the abortive revolt of Ibn-al-Ash'ath⁶ to the ordeal of having to declare themselves unbelievers by revolting against the caliph, and whoever refused to admit his guilt was put to death.⁷ This practice was mentioned by al-Farazdaq after the death of al-Ḥajjāj (95/714) and the accession of the caliph Sulaymān (96/715) when he said:-

... When whoever failed to declare himself an unbeliever, would be [held] guilty of an unforgivable stumble in daylight,
Losing thereby his head by a stroke, swift in removing what rests between the shoulders,

-
1. Jāhīz, Ḥayawān, iii, 5.
 2. Q., ii, 30-35.
 3. 'Iqd, v, 332.
 4. Ibid., 334.
 5. 'Iqd, v, 333.
 6. cf. Chapter I, 23.
 7. cf. Ibn-Ḥajar, op.cit., ii, 211.

Even though he had performed his prayers for eighty years, fasted and offered white-muzzled sacrificial animals.[59]¹

The core of al-Ḥajjāj's argument was expressed by Jarīr when he said in his praise:-

You regard aiding the imām as a duty incumbent upon you when they confuse their faith with doubt.[60]²

All political issues were reduced accordingly to religious ones. The anti-Umayyad stand of Iraq was represented by Jarīr as opposition to faith when he told al-Ḥajjāj:-

You have come forth to the people of Iraq, some of whom had transgressed the faith of Muslims and had forsaken it,
So you cured those of them whose hearts religion had failed to cure, and caused the reluctant hypocrite to hasten [with his obedience].[61]³

The Banū-Marwān were consequently portrayed as the bulwark of Islam. Al-Farazdaq told the caliph Sulaymān:-

We have found the Banū-Marwān [to be] the pegs of our faith, as the earth has its mountains for pegs, And you are, with respect to faith, like the direction-mark by which people are guided when they go astray.[62]⁴

To celebrate their dedication to the defence of Islam the same poet said in his praise of 'Abd-al-Malik:-

When the Banū-Marwān encounter [an enemy] they unsheath, in defence of God's religion, angry swords, Sharp ones with which the security of Islam⁵ is guaranteed, their blows being directed solely against those spreading doubts.[63]⁶

1. Far., ii, 75;

2. Jar., 21.

3. Jar., 355; cf. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 376 and Bayān, i, 300 for similar words by al-'Udayl ibn-al-Farkh.

4. Far., ii, 76; cf. ibid., i, 89 and Jar., 278.

5. cf. Chapter V where this term is taken, in such contexts to mean the state rather than the faith.

6. Far., i, 22; cf. Diw. of Ru'ba, 144, 146 on Maslama ibn-'Abd-al-Malik.

By the same token various terms with religious connotations were lavishly used by poets, especially Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, with reference to the political opponents of the Umayyad regime. The followers of Ibn-az-Zubayr were designated as mulhidūn (heretics)¹, as in the lines of al-Farazdaq in praise of Umayyads:-

With them (i.e. the swords) they encountered at Mecca
its deviators together with those at Maskin, and
excelled in fighting,
[Their swords] leaving none who used to perform prayer
behind a liar without forcing him to turn back
[to the right path][64]²

In praising 'Abd-al-Malik, Jarīr addressed Ibn-az-Zubayr in these words:-

You have summoned, O Abū-Khubayb, the deviators,
indulging in your own fancy; have you [now] been
cured of this indulgence? [65]³

In another context al-Farazdaq, castigating Ibn-az-Zubayr, alludes to Musaylima, the arch-liar of Yamāma:-

After the corruption wreaked by the liar of Mecca,
with all its craftiness and devastation...[66]⁴

A host of other derogatory terms were employed in describing opponents to make them a scandal in the minds of the believing populace. Definite appellations were used in a systematic manner to suit every category of rebels. The consistency with which poets use such terms betrays some sort of concerted plan designed to brand the group in question with a sinister accusation which would be frequently

1. For this term, cf. L. Massignon, La Passion d'al-Ḥajjāj, 1921, p.188; B. Lewis, "Some observations on the significance of heresy in the history of Islam", Studia Islamica, i, p.56.

2. Far., i, 22; cf. ibid., ii, 15.

3. Jar., 78.

4. Far., i, 24.

repeated by poets to give it currency, as we have seen in the application of the term 'mulhids' to the followers of Ibn-az-Zubayr. The opponents of al-Ḥajjāj in Iraq were consistently termed: 'munāfiqūn' (hypocrites), as in the line of al-Farazdaq:-

Whenever al-Ḥajjāj fights against any hypocrite he
strikes him with a sword that cuts with every
sweep.[67]¹

Jarīr, who was closer to al-Ḥajjāj, dwells at great length on this theme. He once told his patron:-

Whenever you see hypocrites choosing paths of clamorous
contention, you resolve every contention,
Providing them with the right medicine, and curing them
from a rebellion, dust-coloured, smoky and
blazing.[68]²

Jarīr makes the antithesis of religion and hypocrisy more manifest when he tells al-Ḥajjāj:-

Every hypocrite secretly harbours hatred against you,
whereas every religious-minded man feels compassion
towards you.[69]³

The Iraqī rebels who challenged al-Ḥajjāj are further systematically depicted as 'afārīt and shayāṭīn (demons).

Jarīr tells al-Ḥajjāj:-

You avenged yourself on the demons of Iraq, reducing
them to submission.[70]⁴

In demonstrating the tenacity with which the vicegerent carried out his measures to reduce opponents, al-Farazdaq says:-

Certainly al-Ḥajjāj has struck the blow of a resolute
man, causing the Devil's hosts to stumble and suffer
humiliation,

.....

1. Ibid., i, 417.

2. Jar., 74, cf. also 74, 96, 316; Far., ii, 283.

3. Jar., 316.

4. Ibid., 21.

And the country's demons fell down to their knees as though, in their fear of another [blow], they were bound submissively in halters.[71]¹

With rebels of a later date unequivocal terms are used. The followers of Qutayba ibn-Muslim who rose against Sulaymān ibn-'Abd-al-Malik in 96/715 are described by al-Farazdaq as down-right polytheists (mushrikūn) in his lines:-

When we saw the polytheists led by Qutayba, moving slowly among the assembled companies,
We struck with a sword held in your right hand, sparing therewith no eye for a transgressor as far as the gate of China.[72]²

The Yemenī rebels led by the Muhallab family receive the appellations reserved only for non-Muslims. Jarīr in praising Yazīd II, calls them 'kuffār' (unbelievers):-

You have left, may we never lose you, for the son of al-Muhallab, when they became unbelievers, a broken bone that cannot be set.[73]³

Al-Ḥajjāj, whose career in Iraq was punctuated with a number of uprisings, is accordingly endowed with all the proper epithets which usually go with this religious conception. In praising 'Abd-al-Malik, al-Farazdaq says of al-Ḥajjāj:-

[It was, i.e. Iraq] a land, being corrupt, upon which you have thrown one of God's sharp and blazing swords, He never sheathes the sword but to unsheath it [to strike] the nape of a transgressor, [later] crucified in the market-place,
Being a fighter against the enemies of God, seeking reward in combating them relentlessly.[74]⁴

1. Far., i, 417.

2. Ibid., ii, 312.

3. Jar., 195. The line may also be read as: "when they made obedience to Ibn-al-Muhallab" cf. Lane, S.v., kafar li; for other epithets in this connection cf. Jar., 167, Far., ii, 353; i, 343

4. Far., i, 24.

Pious attributes are showered upon him as in the lines of the same poet:-

Never have I seen an aid to piety, or a seeker after
revenge, as al-Ḥajjāj.[75]¹

He is further represented as being given divine aid.

Al-Farazdaq tells him:-

About your person little do you care, a course bringing
you nearer to your creator with respect to reward,
Whoever boasts of having bestowed victory upon you lies,
save God who elevates clouds,
The sole bestower of grace upon you is a Lord who answers
the call of any humble soul.[76]²

The analogy with the Battle of Badr, when angels were presumed to have come to the aid of early Muslims, is drawn by Jarīr in his praise of the same governor:-

Were it not that your Lord approved he would not have
sent down, with victory, the enraged angels.[77]³

A parallel is further drawn between him and the Patriarchs, as in the line of Jarīr:-

Al-Ḥajjāj has invoked [the curse of God] as Noah did,
his voice reaching the master of lofty ascents who
answered him.[78]⁴

Having their rulers being represented as divinely-appointed monarchs, people were left no choice but to surrender on pain of damnation in this world and the hereafter. The message is driven home by Jarīr in his lines:-

Al-Ḥajjāj has exerted his utmost in the matter of faith,
amassing such treasures [of virtue] that no calamity
would befall,
So obey, otherwise neither will al-Ḥajjāj spare you nor
will the two-winged Gabriel be heedless.[79]⁵

1. Ibid., ii, 137.

2. Ibid., i, 81; cf. ii, 138.

3. Jar., 21.

4. Ibid., 21; cf. 95 where he is likened to Hūd.

5. Jar., 356.

Nor were poets always passive in getting the message across. Rulers were sometimes exhorted to exact penalties on rebels. Al-Farazdaq once advised al-Ḥajjāj:-

Make, may my mother be your ransom, a mark on them, and
prohibit them from marrying virtuous wives,
[So that] we may draw a distinction between them and
believers when they mingle with the throngs in the
fairs,
No other people are more evil than they; you might take
them for the like of Turks and Kabul dwellers.[80]¹

It is not amiss to indicate here that rebels of all persuasions, faced with this massive smearing campaign, reacted by employing the same device as their adversaries. The Khārijī groups, who based some of their arguments in this matter on purely religious grounds, were not the only rebels who declared themselves to be the community of believers to the exclusion of all their opponents.² Other rebels with less pretentious claims availed themselves of the same device. Ṭufayl ibn-ʿĀmir ibn-Wāthila, a Baṣrī follower of the rebel ibn-al-Ashʿath said:-

Now convey to al-Ḥajjāj that a smiting chastisement at
the hands of believers has drawn nearer to him,
When we alight at the two miṣrs, Muḥammad (i.e. Ḥajjāj's
brother) will flee, but flight will never rescue the
son of the accursed one.[81]³

The position of the caliph as the fulcrum upon which the balance of society rests receives due attention in encomia addressed to individual caliphs. A sizeable portion of this genre dwells on asserting the powers of caliphs and attempts

1. Far., ii, 137-9; cf. Ansāb, ivB, 163 for similar measures taken by Muṣʿab against his adversaries.

2. cf. ʿIqd, i, 84.

3. Ṭab., ii, 1066.

to adduce arguments for their entitlement to the office. The reader of much of this poetry cannot help wondering, whether those poets were not at pains to convince the subjects rather than the patrons praised. Poets were fully aware of the political message they were expected to propagate and, judging by their profuse production in this connection, they missed no opportunity to get that message across. The traditional panegyric in which the individual merits and personal qualities of the patron feature prominently is accordingly transformed, and a genre of political poetry in which propaganda is blended with personal praise is evolved. If the particularity of poetic expression on the part of individual poets is set aside, a systematic pattern of ideas reflecting the general theme of Umayyad policies noted earlier is discernible. The indispensability of the caliph for the spiritual and material well-being of the community is a cardinal concept. Jarīr expressed it in powerful terms in one of his poems on ‘abd-al-Malik:-

Were it not for the caliph and the Qur’ān [which] he recites, neither the administration of justice nor the [performance of] communal prayers would have been established for people.[82]¹

His assumption of office is by divine decree which is unalterable according to Jarīr in his line:-

God has garlanded you with caliphate and guidance, and there is no changing what God has decreed.[83]²

1. Jar., 278.

2. Ibid., 380.

Appeal to the Qur'ān¹ is implicit in the line of al-Farazdaq on 'Abd-al-Malik:-

Earth, being God's property, He has given His caliph to run, thus the one in command over it is invincible.[84]²

Accordingly the caliph is designated as 'khalīfat allāh'.³

Other titles as amīn allāh (God's trusty vicar),⁴ rā'ī allāh (God's pastor)⁵ and the like are frequently employed.

But since the post of caliph was more often than not a bone of contention, and claim to it by divine decree could easily be disclaimed by rival aspirants, more tangible arguments had to be sought. Sometimes the Umayyads are admitted to have gained the honour on account of their work for it, as in the line of Jarīr:-

The caliphate has devolved to you on account of the excellent deeds you have done, and its authority shall not be turned away [from you]. [85]⁶

The idea of mulk (sovereignty or possession) to be inherited by successors reflects the actual, as opposed to the ideal, state of affairs. Being a worldly sovereignty it must perforce derive from a recognizable origin. With the accession of Walīd I (86-96/705-715) poets begin to harp upon the legacy of 'Uthmān. The Marwānid right to the caliphate is represented as deriving from the caliphate of 'Uthmān.

1. cf. Q., ii, 30-35.

2. Far., i, 24; cf. i, 25, 214; ii, 17, 89, 100, 147, 210; Jar., 211, 307, 331, 396.

3. cf. Jar., 195, 210, 211, 303.

4. Ibid., 278; cf. Far., i, 286; ii, 9, 301.

5. cf. Far., i, 250.

6. Jar., 380.

Al-Farazdaq made the point clear when he said:-

They are the guardians of 'Uthmān's heritage, being an
apparel of sovereignty over them that none can
strip.[86]¹

Their right to the office is thus based upon their blood-
relationship to the deceased caliph. Al-Farazdaq said:-

The sons of Marwān inherited it (i.e. the caliphate) one
from another as an inheritance originating from him
(i.e. Marwān) and from 'Uthman after a momentous
event.[87]²

In very few cases the caliphate is mentioned as the legacy of
Muḥammad.³ In many cases the Umayyads' right to it is given
as going back to their ancient ancestors, as in the line of
al-Farazdaq on Sulaymān:-

You have inherited the staff of sovereignty, not being
remote relatives, from the two sons of Manaf: 'Abd-
Shams and Hashim.[88]⁴

The right of caliphs to bequeathe the office to their sons
becomes the recognized practice. Al-Farazdaq described
Yazīd II as:-

A nursling of monarchs in a heritage whereby never a
sovereign dies without bequeathing [to his successor]
a dais.[89]⁵

The same poet told Sulaymān:-

The heritage of your father was not wrongfully usurped
when it passed on to you.[90]⁶

1. Far., i, 25.

2. Far., i, 285; cf., i, 62, 79, 81, 249, 336; ii, 89, 92-93,
210, 214.

3. Cf. Far., ii, 283-4.

4. Ibid., ii, 309; cf. ii, 210, 215. On ancestors cf. e.g.
Far., i, 51, 80, 215, 265, 267; ii, 150, 209, 211, 215,
231, 282, 353; Jar., 107, 108, 114, 117, 211, 304, 307,
347, 396, 397, 410, 411, 412, 414.

5. Far., i, 348.

6. Ibid., ii, 99; cf., i, 143, 248-251; ii, 143, 145, 149,
210, 302.

Despite their inalienable right to it¹ through inheritance, references are sometimes made to other constitutional methods. The caliphate of Walīd I is described by al-Farazdaq as being:-

A caliphate, the counsel of which was not forcibly obtained, its bases being firmly established by the Bountiful Compassionate.[91]²

This counsel, "mashūra", however, does not apply to the process by which Walīd I acceded to power, for he had been the heir-apparent of his father 'Abd-al-Malik. It is likely that the poet is not referring to any practice employed by the Umayyads but to that earlier "mashūra" commissioned by 'Umar I, resulting in 'Uthmān's assumption of the caliphate, and this is strengthened by another remark of the same poet on Hishām:-

I perceive that the sovereignty of the Banū-Marwān had been firmly entrenched through a true counsel, their kinsman (i.e. 'Uthman) having contributed to it.[92]³

The "bay'a" (the declaration of fealty) was mentioned once by Jarīr in the case of Sulaymān, but with a tag attached to it:-

Allegiance is now paid to you alone, because of the firmness of a bond of appointment.[93]⁴

Despite the personal involvement of some poets, especially Jarīr,⁵ in the dynastic feuds, the general tendency was to side with whoever exercised authority. Efforts to enhance the prestige and public standing of caliphs increased with the

1. cf. Far., i, 25, 213; ii, 210; Jar., 380.

2. Far., ii, 210.

3. Far., i, 62.

4. Jar., 347.

5. cf. Jar., 13-14, 33-36; cf. Far., i, 244-247; ii, 99-101, 244-247.

passage of time. An excessive note of adulation is discernible in poetry addressed to later Umayyad caliphs.

Al-Farazdaq referred to Walīd I as:-

To the most trustworthy [man] under the heavens, and the
most entitled to uncontestable right,
I swear by the forelegs of sacrificial animals.....
That surely the mother who gave us al-Walīd as caliph
is a nobler progenitor than the sun, had the moon
been its offspring.[94]¹

With Sulaymān the idea of al-mahdī enters poetry as a constituent element of panegyric, especially in the poetry of al-Farazdaq. The epithet was not just another empty title of praise, but seemed to have been a matter of a popular belief spreading at the time. The idea is expressed by al-Farazdaq addressing Sulaymān:-

You are the one whom the Book has sent forth to us, in
the words of the Torah and Psalms,
How many a priest or doctor used to inform us about the
caliphate of the mahdī. [95]²

The time seemed to have been one of adversity, following the repressive reign of al-Ḥajjāj. Prior to his accession, Sulaymān had been expected to rectify the damage, and he seemed to have promised people so, according to al-Farazdaq in his lines:-

[God] has answered our invocation and rescued us from
misfortune through the caliphate of the mahdī,
You have thus been put to the test with regard to that
which you had promised us if ever you were put in
authority over us. [96]³

With Yazīd II (101-105/720-724) the adulation reaches a high

1. Far., i, 80.

2. Far., i, 264; cf. i, 12, 262; ii, 17, 73, 90, 99, 311;
Jar., 34, 116, 211, 346, 410.

3. Far., i, 262.

peak. His mother is likened to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as in the line of al-Farazdaq:-

No mother that I know of, except the mother of Jesus, resembles your mother as to the nobility and excellence of maternal origin.[97]¹

His authority would even be recognized by prophets:-

Had the wise prophets kept company with him, they would have realised that with his grand sovereignty he was the real leader.[98]²

It is not enough that he is described as the best of all the living and the dead after the apostles of God, as in the line of al-Farazdaq:-

O you who exceed in excellence every living person whose foot is given protection by a shoe, and also, after the messengers of God, every dead person interred in a tomb.[99]³

Other preposterous claims are attributed to him. Al-Farazdaq tells him:-

Had there been any other prophet after the chosen (i.e. Muḥammad) to undertake great tasks, You would have been the one chosen by God after him to carry burdensome trusts.[100]⁴

The caliph might have been the Prophet had not Muḥammad been mentioned by Jesus:-

Had not Jesus revealed the news about him, specifying him [by name], You would have been the Prophet inviting people to light.[101]⁵

This adulation was probably also a reflection of notions widely spread by the Umayyads and their governors. A case

1. Ibid., i, 144.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., i, 213; cf. i, 346.

4. Far., ii, 282.

5. Ibid., i, 214.

in point was the report that Khālīd al-Qasrī, the governor of Iraq (106-120/724-738) used to argue in the same manner as al-Ḥajjāj regarding the sanctity of the caliph, and was reported further to have held the view that Hishām was better than the Prophet.¹

At the same time a kind of backward look is evident. The glorious past is often recalled in praising those later Umayyads. Thus Sulaymān is expected to repeat the model practices (sunan) of the rightly-guided caliphs and early Umayyads who followed the Prophetic sunna.² He is also described as having followed the sunna of 'Umar I and 'Uthmān.³ Hishām is also described as having brought back the sunna of the two 'Umars and to have filled the world with justice after oppression.⁴ Not only is this caliph credited with restoring the glorious sunna, but it is asserted that his prestige is further augmented by possessing the holy relics of the prophet: the pulpit, the stick and the ring.⁵

Although the poets did not confine themselves to any one line of argument or even to a consistent set of arguments, it is clear nevertheless that they reflected principles systematically put forward by the supporters of the dynasty.

1. Aghānī, xix, 60.

2. cf. Far., i, 265-266.

3. cf. ibid., ii, 101.

4. Ibid., ii, 294.

5. cf. ibid., i, 59; ii, 302.

ii. POETS AND ADMINISTRATORS

The dictum attributed to 'Uthmān that "God restrains through the Sultān (i.e. state power) more than He does through the Qur'ān" though intended as a statement of fact rather than of parable, found an apt justification in the activities of some poets who continued for a long time to challenge the authority of the state by asserting their right to independent action. These activities, however, when viewed from the angle of the social development of the miṣr as a whole, can be seen to represent general social tendencies rather than purely individual acts prompted by personal initiative. We can discern in them a variety of patterns corresponding to the different phases of development attained. Generally the tendency to revolt was more manifest in the bādiya than in the miṣr. But at times of political troubles when the authority of government had become weak, the miṣr itself usually exhibited signs of lawlessness that found expression in the works of contemporary poets. Taking the period discussed as a whole and making allowance for the fact that the pace of urban development was not always uniform, thus allowing different stages to exist side by side at the same time, the overall picture is one of evolution where the intractability of Bedouins, very marked in the early stages, gradually gives way to resignation and a form of conformity.

The aversion of Bedouins to authority underlay the early episode of Ḍābi' ibn-al-Ḥārith,¹ a gamester and a poet who

1. cf. Naq., 219-222; Ḥayawān, i, 181-182.

lived in the bādiya during the caliphate of 'Uthmān. He was accused of satirizing a Nahshalī woman of Tamīm, telling her sons:-

As for your mother, do not give her up to your dog, for
the disobedience of mothers is a great [offence],
Now you are a dog that has grown fond of what you see -
able to hear and to perceive what is above the bed,
When she burns incense late at night, he spends the night
over the bed, snarling.[102]¹

The Nahshalīs raised the case to 'Uthmān who sent for him. After hearing the satire the caliph told the poet, "I know no one among the Arabs who is more obscene and debased than you. I presume that had the Apostle of God been alive then certainly there would have been a Quranic revelation in your case." He then ordered his hair to be shorn to disgrace him and offered a fifth of his camels to the Nahshalīs as a compensation. The penalty was meant to deter the poet, but his mischief could not be contained by legal measures. He soon retaliated by battering the head of another Nahshalī, and the case was reported once more to the caliph. Dābi' was brought to Medina and kept in custody, pending trial. He attempted to assassinate the caliph while he was inspecting the prison inmates one morning. The plot was foiled and the poet was lashed and kept in prison until he died. But before he died he had expressed his grudge against 'Uthmān in a bitter satire which he asked to be delivered to his folk. He told them:-

Is there anyone returning - may God convey him in safety -
who will convey on my behalf verses when their
composer is dead?

Let none after me accept the adverse consequences of an
affair for fear of meeting death, because death will
inevitably overtake him,

1. Naq., 220; Bal., Ansāb, v, 84-85; Hayawān, i, 181-182.

Nor should you blame me after my death, for it would be
no disgrace to kill the one I have not tried to kill,
I resolved but failed to act [though] I was near
[success] - would that I had succeeded! - in causing
the womenfolk of 'Uthman mourn over him,
Many a woman will say when Ḍābi' dies in prison, "How
excellent as a youth had he been to be lonely with or
to enter upon,"

.....

How bad as a cousin was Firās when I called upon him,
swinging his buttocks about.[103]¹

The personal note which runs through these lines and the rest
of the poem betrays, apart from the sense of disenchantment at
his relatives' failure to come to his rescue, his conception of
the whole affair as being a personal contest between him and
'Uthmān the man, not the epitome of the state.² This conception
was reinforced by the attitude of some of the early caliphs
especially Mu'āwiya who exercised hilm (tolerance) in his
dealings with Bedouins and acted at times not so much as a
sovereign but rather as a tribal shaykh. Al-Qulākh al-
'Anbarī, a Baṣrī poet related an encounter he had with
Mu'āwiya in his lines:-

Mu'āwiya, the son of Hind, asked me whether I had met
the father of the progeny of 'Abd-Shams (i.e. Umayya),
And I told him, "I saw your grandfather an old shaykh
who had not [completely] lost sight,
Led by a wretched slave with legs wide apart;" he
interrupted saying, to dispel my dubiousness,
"Nay, that was his son" (i.e. Ḥarb).[104]³

It is evident that this conception of the relationship
between ruler and poet was an anomaly incompatible with recent
developments in Arab life. Despite the survival of a tribal

1. Naq., 221-222.

2. cf. Dhayl al-Amālī, 137 for a similar case involving Mālīk
ibn-ar-Rayb.

3. Mar., Mu'j., 226.

structure to which this outlook was relevant, the emergence of the state under the aegis of the caliph and his governors who controlled the administration of the empire, required and eventually effected a comparable change in attitudes.

Requirements of good government necessitated the use of force to eliminate all forms of rebellion and intransigence. Poets, whose activities often ran counter to such requirements were the most exposed to disciplinary measures. Their freedom to practise what their Jāhili counterparts had indulged in unmolested was increasingly restricted as the power of the state gradually overwhelmed the major elements of dissent.¹ The most important development in this connection was the tribes' abdication of their right to give protection to their individual members when they committed crimes. The state assumed that function and people were expected to seek redress from it. This development weakened the position of poets in their stand against the state immensely. The impassioned invective of Ḍābi' against his cousin for failing to come to his aid indicates his unawareness of the change that had come about. The realisation on the part of other poets was not long delayed. The Tamīmī poet and leader Ḥāritha ibn-Badr al-Ghudānī discovered the futility of insurrection when the caliph 'Alī ordered his blood to be shed unavenged for his waywardness. He sought the protection of most Arab nobles within reach but they all rebuffed him. They advised him, however, to contact Sa'īd ibn-Qays of Hamdān who had access

1. cf. Chapter II, pp. 83-84.

to 'Alī. Sa'īd had to argue in his favour by quoting a verse of the Qur'ān exonerating him from his guilt.¹ Ḥāritha, narrowly escaping death, recounted his plight in a eulogy addressed to the Yemenī benefactor:-

May God reward the Sa'īd of goodness with bounty - I mean
Sa'īd ibn-Qays, the chief of Hamdan,
Who rescued me from the brink of a dust-like and dark pit,
and but for his intercession I would have been covered
with my shrouds,
[When] the Tamim ibn-Murr had said, "We shall not
communicate with him,"² and likewise had refused the
Qays ibn-'Aylan.[105]²

Insurrection provided governors with opportunities to tighten their grip. The chaos following the murder of 'Uthmān dictated the measures of Ziyād (45-53/665-672) who was aware of the adverse effect of words and ideas on authority.³ In his time fear of authority became a potent element in poetic composition. This stands out prominently in the early poetry of al-Farazdaq when Ziyād forced him to seek refuge in Medina. His fear is real and intense:-

Threats have reached me from Ziyād, rendering me sleep-
less, though the torrent of Liwa and the highlands of
Tihama separate me [from him],
So I spent my night as though I was clothed in an under-
garment of Khaybarī fever creeping in my bones, or
covered with the poisonous blood of speckled snakes,
I recognize that whenever you become enraged against some-
one, he spends his night sleepless even though he has
plenty of kindred.[106]⁴

1. cf. Agh., xxi, 35.

2. Ibid., 36.

3. An index of his sensitivity to potential forms of sedition was his remark on someone he had heard abusing time, "Had he been aware of [the identity of] time I would have decapitated him. Time is authority (sulṭān)." Mub., Kāmil, iii, 116.

4. Far., ii, 215-216.

The mere remembrance of the governor excites his fear:-

Whenever the memory of Ziyād occurs in my mind, fear causes my bowels to contract, and the partings of my hair to become grey.[107]¹

Ziyād is further described as a frightening beast that terrifies even lions:-

[I am] running away from a reddish austere one that scares away lions by threats.[108]²

When the poet actually met a lion while traversing the desert in his flight he addressed it:-

You are certainly more tractable than Ziyād, so be gone O destroyer of travellers.[109]³

The measures of 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād against Ibn-Mufarrigh,⁴ those of al-Qubā' against Jarīr, al-Farazdaq⁵ and Murra ibn-Maḥkān,⁶ those of Muṣ'ab against this latter poet, Murra,⁷ and those of Khālīd ibn-Asīd against al-Farazdaq⁸ all tended to emphasize the strength of the state in dealing with intractable poets. With al-Ḥajjāj this became an important element of policy. He deliberately frightened poets and felt it necessary as a matter of policy to emphasize his relentlessness in dealing with opponents. His repressive

1. Ibid., ii, 40.

2. Ibid., i, 146.

3. Ibid., i, 257.

4. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 319-323; Yāq., Irshād, vii, 192-198; Agh., xvii, 52-67; Ibn-Sall., 554-556.

5. cf. Chapter III,

6. cf. Mar., Mu'j., 296.

7. Agh., xix, 10.

8. Bal., Ansāb, ivB, 164-165; v, 168.

measures forced a number of poets and learned men who had fallen out with him, to seek refuge outside his jurisdiction. Abū-'Amr ibn-al-'Alā', the philologist, had to flee to Yemen,¹ while Yaḥyā ibn-Ya'mar was deported to Khurāsān reputedly because he had detected some grammatical inaccuracies in the governor's speech² though his Shī'ite leanings and his outspoken criticism of al-Ḥajjāj's building of his town at Wāsiṭ³ might have been the real causes. Al-Ḥajjāj also deported most of the outspoken qurrā' (reciters of Qur'ān) after the revolt of Ibn-al-Ash'ath,⁴ decapitated a few⁵ and imprisoned others.⁶ He was firm with poets especially those who challenged his authority. A host of poets, among whom al-'Udayl ibn-al-Farkh, Mālik ibn-ar-Rayb, Sawwār ibn-al-Muḍarrab and Yazīd ibn-al-Ḥakam stand out conspicuously, had for some reason or other to flee from his wrath. Some of them took refuge in the desert as in the case of Sawwār ibn-al-Muḍarrab of Tamīm, who was apparently opposed to the measures taken by al-Ḥajjāj to force people to join al-Muhallab in his fight against the Azāriqa. He stated his contention in his lines:-

1. Mar., Mu'j., 72; Ibn-Anb., Nuzha, 16.

2. Yāq., Irshād, vii, 296.

3. Suyūṭī, Bughya, 417; cf. 'Iqd, ii, 47.

4. cf. 'Iqd, iii, 367-368; Kāmil, v, 9-10.

5. cf. Ibn-Ḥajar, Tahdhīb, ii, 211-212.

6. cf. Ibn-Sa'd, Ṭabaqāt, vii, Part 1, 157.

Will al-Ḥajjāj kill me for failing to visit Zarābī at
his command, leaving my heart behind with Hind?
If your satisfaction lies only in returning me to
Qaṭarī, then I reckon you will never achieve
satisfaction,
When my she-camel passes beyond the transit posts then I
defy al-Ḥajjāj to bring me back,
Would the Banu-Marwan hope for my obedience while my
people are Tamīm and the desert lies in front of me?
[110]¹

The same attitude was taken by the Tamīmī brigand, Mālik ibn-
ar-Rayb who had earlier questioned what he thought to be the
one-sided justice of the state in his words:-

Is it a particular privilege of the state (sulṭān) that
whatever belongs to it is given, whereas whatever is
demanded [of it] is denied?
It is up to you, O family of Marwan; seek my left-overs,
for there is in them no satisfaction,
[For] I am not like the docile ass, remaining with its
owners in fetters, enjoying the luxuries of oppression,
Were it not that the Apostle of God originated from you,
it would have become manifest which [of our two
tribes] is satisfied with receiving half [his
entitlements]. [111]²

When he fell out with al-Ḥajjāj he addressed the Banū-Marwan:-

If you treat us justly, O family of Marwan, we shall draw
nearer to you, otherwise know that we are keeping aloof,
For we have, as a substitute for you, a place of
retirement [reached] by reddish white camels eager
for desert breeze,
And there is always refuge in the world [for those] for-
saking the land of humiliation, and every habitable
land is home to me,
Had it not been for the Banū-Marwan, the son of Yūsuf
would have been, as he used to be, one of the slaves
of Iyad,
When he had been the slave [who] acknowledged submissiveness,
making his way morning and evening, to the boys
in hamlets (i.e. he was a teacher). [112]³

1. Mub., Kamil, v, 21-22.

2. Agh., xix, 164.

3. Kamil, v, 26-28.

But it was not always easy to escape the wrath of al-Ḥajjāj even in the hearts of deserts. The episode of al-ʿUdayl ibn-al-Farkh is a case in point. He fled to Byzantium either because he had committed a murder,¹ or because he criticised al-Ḥajjāj,² instigated the people of Iraq against him,³ and tried to exploit the rivalry between him and Yazīd ibn-al-Muhallab, when he said:-

If al-Ḥajjāj has secured his door with niggardliness,
then the door of the Azdī youth is opened with
graciousness,
His two hands [are such that] one of them allows what it
contains to be plundered out of graciousness while the
other overpowers and wounds the enemies,
Come all of you to [partake of] the graciousness of the
emir whose favours are diffused among people,
Unlike a foreigner belonging to Thamūd in whose palm
is ill-disposed determination against liberality and
graciousness.[113]⁴

For a while the poet felt secure in his refuge and he made a point of demonstrating to al-Ḥajjāj his inaccessibility in his lines:-

There lies between me and the hand of al-Ḥajjāj -
preventing it from reaching me - a broad expanse of
land that only excellent camels can traverse,
Waste lands looking alike as though their mirage is clean
sheets in the hands of washer women.[114]⁵

But when the hand of al-Ḥajjāj did reach him and extricated him from Caesar,⁶ he felt the chill in his spine which he expressed in his lines:-

1. Agh., xx, 12.

2. Ibid., 13; Ibn-Qut., Sh., 375.

3. Agh., xx, 18.

4. Ibid., 13.

5. Ibid., 13; Sh., 375.

6. Sh., 376.

I am haunted with fear of al-Ḥajjāj to such an extent
that I feel as though a broken bone is being
briskly stirred in my heart,
Whenever al-Ḥajjāj is mentioned I conceal a fright
that sends a shiver through my crooked ribs.[115]¹

His despair was manifest when he found himself in the presence
of the governor:-

Here I am [brought] to you, having found the world
narrow after roaming everywhere,
Had I been at Thahlān or the two branches of Aja
mountain I would have thought that you would,
unless you desist, see me.[116]²

His whole tribe of Bakr did not dare give him protection
against the governor and told him bluntly, "Al-Ḥajjāj cannot
be opposed and [all that we can do] is to ask for you to be
returned as a favour from him."³ The boasting - mentioned
earlier - of such poets as al-Musawwar about the power of his
tribe was often of no avail when the recalcitrant poet did
fall in the hands of the ruler. Mu'āwiya ibn-Ṣa'sa'a, the
uncle of the Tamīmī chief al-Aḥnaf ibn-Qays and who was the
ruler of Baḥrayn incurred the displeasure of al-Ḥajjāj who
dismissed him, fined him 40,000 dirhams and imprisoned him.
His people let him down and to console himself he told them
bitterly:-

Is there none among Tamīm who repels a catastrophe or
one who is steadfast or who consoles when honour is
defended?

Had I been a member of the two branches of Rabī'a, the
pillars and foundations of my house would have been
honoured through them.[117]⁴

1. Agh., xx, 18, 13.

2. Agh., xx, 18.

3. Ibid., xx, 14; cf. Ṭab., ii, 192 for a similar reply of
al-Aḥnaf ibn-Qays to Ibn-Mufarrigh when the latter asked
his protection against 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād.

4. Mar., Mu'j., 314.

This fear which the repression of al-Ḥajjāj induced in the hearts of his contemporaries found its most articulate exponents in al-Farazdaq and Jarīr who were themselves exceptionally subdued during his long tenure of office (75-95/695-714). The fact that al-Ḥajjāj and his deputies had used all forms of intimidation and coercion to bring poets to heel¹ is attested by numerous references in their works. Al-Farazdaq, in a eulogy addressed to the caliph ‘Abd-al-Malik speaks of al-Ḥakam ibn-Ayyūb the deputy of al-Ḥajjāj in Baṣra, expressing his fear of him:-

My heart was about to be carried away by flying [birds]
out of fear when the son of Ayyūb said,
In the abode, "If you commit an offence you will incur
punishment, including amputation and torture,
In a dreadful gaol wherein those open to suspicion are
interned,"
So I said, "Is it of any avail if I approach you with
obedience and a heart full of your fear?
Whatever you forbid I shall never approach, and nothing
deters a self-controlled man like experience,
What you are after never escapes you, and what you
prohibit is never approached." [118]²

The poet tells al-Ḥajjāj on another occasion:-

You have conferred on me a favour like the favour of
rain benefiting whomever it falls on,
Had my family been in China and had I closed the gate of
Hajar (in Baḥrayn),
[Locking] myself inside, I would have seen, O son of Abū-
‘Aqil, claws and teeth of yours behind me,
Your pardon, O son of Yusuf, is the best [of pardon], and
you are the severest avenger when you chastise,
I have seen people so much in dread of you that they
feared [the hastening] of Reckoning at your hands.
[119]³

1. cf. Dhayl al-Amālī, 43.

2. Far., i, 26.

3. Ibid., i, 83.

The awe and terror which al-Ḥajjāj generates in his beholders is enormous:-

When al-Ḥajjāj appears to people they cast their eyes
down and whoever was talking among them becomes silent,
And they are reduced to those who urinate out of fear,
and those who are choked with saliva,
People's hearts fly east and west leaving them either
muttering confusedly or delirious.[120]¹

His wife's exhortation against rebellion indicates the fear of ordinary folk of the governor:-

She says, her eyes flowing with tears, "Do you realise
your position with respect to the one against whom
I cannot see how you can contend?
Keep away from al-Ḥajjāj, for he is difficult to press
[even] if he overlooks the one competing against him,
No one can feel secure against al-Ḥajjāj - knowing that
the jinn seek to ward off his punishment - except one
of feeble resolution." [121]²

The magnitude of the poet's fear was such that he disclosed it in emphatic terms to the caliph al-Walīd I, recalling to mind similar lines which an-Nābigha addressed to an-Nu'mān:-

I was so overpowered by fear that had I seen death coming
forward to take me away - and the visitation of
death is detested -,
It would have been less fearful than al-Ḥajjāj when he
contracts his eyelids as from above he lowers his gaze,
I crawl forward and, although a month's march and a
night with its fixed stars separate me from you, I
press on as if you were in sight,
I recalled what relations existed between you and myself
when the lowlands of Tihama caused my descent from
the mountain range,
And I felt sure that however remote I make myself from
you, my remoteness will bring me to nothing save that
against which I guard,
And had I mounted the wind, and then you sought after me,
I would have been like a thing overtaken by its fate,
So I could think of nothing other than driving my she-
camel towards you when my affair had become tangled
and confused,

1. *Ibid.*, ii, 53; cf., ii, 137.

2. *Far.*, ii, 204.

I dread of al-Ḥajjāj the assault of a lurking lion, the females of which can strike the necks.[122]¹

Even Jarīr who became intimately connected with al-Ḥajjāj and often boasted of his entrenched position with the authorities,² found it imperative to depict the fear induced by the governor in himself and in others. In a eulogy addressed to al-Ḥajjāj he says:-

Who feels secure against al-Ḥajjāj? As for his punishment it is bitter, and as for his bond it is firm.

Never have I tasted sleep without being frightened, nor have I easily swallowed any saliva, I was so filled with dread of you that my fear forced me down though the top of 'Amaya mountain had given me refuge.[123]³

He tells al-Ḥajjāj on another occasion:-

They are so much afraid of you that men's hearts throb like sand-grouses trapped in snares.[124]⁴

There is, however, sufficient evidence to indicate that a sizeable portion of the poetry composed during the tenure of al-Ḥajjāj depicting fear, was not always so much a natural response to real situations - though these might have existed intermittently - as a part of a concerted policy of intimidation and fear which al-Ḥajjāj energetically pursued to ensure the success of the physical measures he had adopted to liquidate opposition. The fact that most of this poetry extolling the terrifying characteristics of the governor was recited in his presence as praise, indicates the relish in which he held this genre of poetry. His sensitivity to any poetry - even in

1. Far., i, 251.

2. cf. Jarīr, 277.

3. Ibid., 615-6; cf. Dhayl al-Amālī, 43.

4. Jar., 353.

his praise - which smacks of inciting or condoning rebellion is tremendous. It is reported that when he heard the lines of al-'Udayl ibn-al-Farkh¹ in his praise:-

Leave aside cowardice, O men of Iraq, for whoever fails
to fight is humiliated and taken captive,
Al-Ḥajjāj has certainly unsheathed his sword, so be
upright and let none deviate [from truth],[125]²

he asked his courtiers what they thought of them. On being told that the poet praised him he said, "No! Rather he instigated the people of Iraq against me," and he sent after him, but the poet managed to escape.³ When Jarīr said in the middle of a celebrated poem in his praise:-

Ask the coward when he holds back his horse, "Can you
ever escape the snare of death?
So suspend yourself to the constellation of Ursa in
flight or [take refuge] in seas with towering waves,"
Who has barred the source of hypocrisy against them, and
who darts furiously upon enemies, as does al-Ḥajjāj?
[126]⁴,

he interrupted the poet retorting angrily, "You have emboldened people against me you son of a stinking slave," to which the poet only remarked in bewilderment, "By God I never noticed that except at this moment, O emir."⁵

It is in response to this policy that poets exerted themselves to represent the formidable al-Ḥajjāj in a Herculean mould, and to invest him with the appropriate traits of invincibility. He is often represented as a sword of God, and a scourge of the enemies of the regime. Al-Farazdaq tells the caliph 'Abd-al-Malik:-

1. They are also attributed to Jarīr, cf. Dīwān, 354-5.

2. Aghānī, xx, 18.

3. Ibid.

4. Jarīr, 74.

5. 'Iqd, i, 84.

O Commander of believers whose affairs we have tried
[and found] all straightforward and correct,
Know that al-Ḥajjaj is but a sword whereby skulls and
necks are cut off,
He was the sword with which Marwān rendered succour to
the smitten 'Uthman, son of Arwa.[127]¹

On another occasion he represents al-Ḥajjāj as a blazing
meteor:-

He is the blazing meteor wherewith the enemy is
confounded, and he is the sword which Muḍar employs
as a staff,
He revived Iraq after its pillars had been undermined
by an all-consuming insurrection.[128]²

He gives a vivid description of his measures to reduce the
anarchy of Iraq:-

When al-Ḥajjāj threatens or intends to threaten [some-
body], fear of him causes what is in the wombs of
pregnant women to fall down,
He is capable of a sudden attack such that, whoever
succeeds in averting it, continues to live afterwards
with trembling limbs,
Never has al-Ḥajjāj followed, in guiding his subjects,
the example of one who is haughty or cowering,
How many a man, weak-sighted of eyes, blind of heart,
you caused, together with him whose head deviates
from truth, to be upright,
By means of a sword with which you strike, for the sake
of God, whoever rebels, on the base of the neck.
You have cured Iraq from ailment, leaving therein no
suspicion after the upsurge of calamities,
And they were like an ailing man, his suffering deep
beneath the ribs, cured by an expert doctor,
Who cauterised [the spot of] ailment with branding iron,
so that he dispelled therewith from the heart the
evil eye of every Genie and devil.[129]³

Jarīr, in turn, portrays the effectiveness of al-Ḥajjāj:-

When the caliph kindles the fire of a war, he recognizes
that al-Ḥajjaj is the blaze that kindles most
effectively,
You have avenged yourself on the demons of Iraq,
reducing them to submission,

1. Far., i, 82; cf., i, 24; cf. p. 159 above.

2. Far., i, 349.

3. Far., ii, 137.

And they used to say: No emir who applies canonical penalties and follows the Book will ever suit us,
When your traps hold fast to a rebel he conceives that fate is drawing nearer,
In the sense that there is no turning back the sword when it rips off the diaphragm from the lung.[130]¹

He advises obedience and warns against rebellion:-

The son of Yūsuf is clear-sighted, clear in his manner [of dealing], a fact you should know and be certain about,
He prohibited bribery, indicated to you the true course of guidance, and caused thieves to desist from nocturnal activities,
So fall in line and be clear of the course of guidance, avoiding secret talks, for they are no longer tenable.
If the enemies shoot at you, you [retaliate by] throwing at them the top of the 'Amaya mountain or the depressed hill of Suwaj,
You have broken the resistance of every hypocrite, giving protection to the provision-bags of pilgrims.[131]²

The death of al-Ḥajjāj in 95/714 and the accession of the pro-Yemenī caliph Sulaymān ibn-'Abd-al-Malik in 96/715 were turning points in politics and attitudes of poets. In the first place they heralded the termination of the Qaysī hegemony over both Iraq and Khurāsān and resulted in the assassination of their governor Qutayba by the combined forces of Tamīm and the Yemen.³ The episode brought into the open the clash of interests between the contending parties which the repressive policy of al-Ḥajjāj had staved off for about 20 years. For although al-Ḥajjāj leaned heavily on the support of Qays in times of crisis,⁴ he was generally above party politics and attempted to rule as an Umayyad rather than a Qaysī governor. This perhaps, in addition to his

1. Jar., 21-22.

2. Ibid., 74; cf. also 95-96, 315-316, 353-356.

3. cf. Chapter I, pp. 24-25 above.

4. Ibid., 23.

firmness, explains the muted tone of tribal poetry during his reign. The monolithic support of most factions, enjoyed for some time by 'Abd-al-Malik and his successor al-Walīd I, was no longer possible after the death of al-Ḥajjāj. After him the tone of political animosity grows sharper as the various caliphs increasingly sought the support of one faction against the others.¹ Tribalism received a shot in the arm when it became, more than at any time before, firmly geared to the machinery of caliphal politics. Caliphs and governors tended to represent not the whole community, but distinct tribal interests. Poets in their turn projected these conflicting tendencies according to their respective loyalties. Thus the policy adopted by Sulaymān against Qays and the memory of al-Ḥajjāj, found its exponent in al-Farazdaq who said regarding al-Ḥajjāj:-

Had the host of al-Ḥajjāj, the family of Mu'attib,
encountered an adversity which only the enemy used
to suffer,
The survivors among them have become debased, and in hell
fire is their final abode, being grin-faced,
They used to see the vicissitudes of fortune on others,
and now these turned against them with chastisement,
It was his custom, whenever he was exhorted to fear God,
to be goaded by a frenzy with which it was impossible
to contend,
Come on to Islam and justice among us, for the insanity
of Iraq has disappeared.[132]²

The poet, finding his people's anti-Qaysī stand in line with that of the caliph, does not hesitate to proclaim his people's loyalty and to indicate the humiliation they suffered earlier:-

1. Ibid., 24.

2. Far., ii, 75-76; cf. also, i, 19-22, 265, 268; ii, 75, 100, 309-310.

If we are not given protection on account of our obedience and our love and gratefulness for the mahdī, Then we are visited in our abodes by messengers of chastisement with the rumble of thunder [like that following the hamstringing] of Thamūd's young camel, We have achieved glory through you after having been abased, and we used to refuse coercion.[133]¹

He seizes the opportunity of Qutayba's murder to assail Qays for their rebellion and to praise his tribe Tamīm, representing them as the defenders of the caliphate:-

You (i.e. Jarīr) regretted disobedience when you saw us like the mountain peaks with projecting rocks, Steadfast in obedience such that, had the mountains of Ṭayyī' and the depressed hills of Tihama directed themselves towards it, To transfer it, they would have failed to tackle that part of it resting permanently at a height of over seventy [statures], Nothing lies between him who fails to pay allegiance and between Tamim but the cutting of throats.[134]²

The position of Jarīr, who had been the staunch defender of Qays and a close associate of al-Ḥajjāj, was embarrassing to him at this juncture. This is reflected in his Diwān where he addresses only one poem to Sulaymān³ as compared with nine by al-Farazdaq, describing the hardships of Nizār and alluding indirectly to the injustices of al-Ḥajjāj. When he found it necessary to rebutt the allegations of his rival al-Farazdaq regarding the murder of Qutayba he steered a middle course, attempting to placate both the caliph and Qays. Since Wakī', the assassin of Qutayba, belonged to the clan of Jarīr, the poet had a better claim to boast of his kinsman's act before the caliph. So he told al-Farazdaq:-

1. Far., i, 263-264.

2. Ibid., ii, 311-312.

3. Jar., 246-247.

Someone other than yourself has fulfilled to the caliph his pledge, and has brightened the faces of al-Ahtam family,
For [it was] Waki', who, when Mujāshi' lost heart, sufficed to arrest the widening cleavage of insurrection.[135]¹

But he was at the same time earnest to clear the name of Qays from the charge of treason levelled by al-Farazdaq. He expresses his sorrow to the tribe of Qutayba, Bāhila, and instead of representing his murder as an act committed in defence of the caliphate, he makes it, quite rightly, a question of blood-revenge:-

O Bāhila, I have never liked the murder of the son of Muslim, nor that you should frighten your people with wrongful acts,
O Bāhila, you have avenged your blood when you murdered the kindred of Qays ibn-'Āṣim [of Tamīm].[136]²

The prominence of the tribal factor in politics is further attested by the reactions aroused by the rebellion of Yazīd ibn-al-Muhallab (101-102/719-720) who had managed to escape from the prison of 'Umar II shortly before the accession of the pro-Qaysī caliph Yazīd II (101-105/720-724).³ By attempting to usurp the caliphate he represented a danger not only to the Umayyads, but also to the Muḍar and Qays as a whole. So Jarīr and al-Farazdaq were at one in celebrating his defeat and praising the caliph Yazīd II⁴ for bringing about his downfall. They also praised the generals who had actually defeated him in the battlefield.⁵

1. Jar., 460.

2. Ibid., 461.

3. cf. Chapter I, 23-25; also Wellhausen, Arab Kingdom, 312-319.

4. cf. Far., i, 111-112, 213-216, 330; ii, 37-38, 252, 341; Jar., 165-167, 195, 304-308.

5. cf. Far., i, 260, 407; ii, 21, 36.

What appeared earlier as an obvious reaction of Bedouins against authority in general, manifesting itself in the activities of certain individual poets, as we have seen earlier, found a better justification now that the state itself had become partisan. Poets identified themselves with their respective groups and began to assail governors acting as the spokesmen of their people. Thus the appointment of 'Umar ibn-Hubayra of Fazāra,¹ as governor of Iraq in place of Maslama ibn-'Abd-al-Malik, prompted al-Farazdaq to compose a few lines indicating the displeasure of Tamīm who loathed the ascendancy of Qays:-

The riding camels turned away with Maslama, who had been bidden farewell, so pasture yourself O Fazara, may you find your pasture unwholesome!
I have already known that if Fazara were given a government post, Ashja' would certainly aspire to be emirs,
And I can see now that the familiar shapes of things have assumed different appearances so much so that even the Umayyads seek the succour of Fazara,
The son of Bishr (i.e. 'Abd-al-Malik) was dismissed as was the son of 'Amr (i.e. Sa'id, governor of Khurasan) before him while the governor of Harat (i.e. Sa'id ibn-'Abd-al-'Aziz) is expecting a similar fate.[137]²

The poet became notorious for satirizing the Qaysī governor³ and he addressed several pieces to the caliph regarding him. He once told Yazīd II:-

O Commander of believers! [We know] that you are a compassionate ruler who is neither vicious nor greedy, How come that you give Iraq and its two rivers as sustenance to a Fazari whose shirt is lopped at the hand (i.e. a thief)?

1. cf. Chapter I, 25 ; Wellhausen, 320.

2. Ibn-Sall., 288-9; Agh., xix, 17; Mub., Kamil, v, 17; vi, 226; cf. Wellhausen, 320 Note, 1.

3. Kamil, vi, 224.

And Never before had a tender of pregnant she-camels
trusted him with the two hip-bones of a young she-
_camel (i.e. he copulates with it),
Abū-'l-Muthanna has become profuse in speech in Iraq
and has taught his people the eating of delicious
sweets.[138]¹

The fears of al-Farazdaq and his tribal group were not
always mere emotional reactions. They were sometimes
justified by the actions of the governor who seemed to have
imposed some sanctions on the poet and his people. Al-Farazdaq
told him on one occasion:-

You have stopped a pension coming from a hand, the owner
of which partakes of no share in a Fazārī breast
(i.e. the caliph),
Thus becoming, with respect to what you have stopped,
like somebody attempting to hold water in his palm,
his fingers failing to secure it.[139]²

He alludes to the punitive measures taken by the governor:-

Had Ghaṭafān been guiltless in their dealings with me,
their wise men would have blamed 'Umar,
When he feigned bravery in my case, scaring me away by
shouting from sun-set to sun-rise,
If you prohibit the dates from Razān to our purveyor, you
cannot debar the majority of the clan from [obtaining
dates from] Hajar.[140]³

The poet was forced to seek refuge with the caliph whom he told:-

In reaching you I have outstripped the two sons of
Fazāra who had intended detaining me in fetters,
I told them: Was it not God who had given me protection
earlier against the invincible Ziyad?[141]⁴ /

He further expressed his predicament in a long poem addressed
to the caliph in which he said:-

-
1. Far., i, 389; Ibn-Sall., 289-290; Kāmil, vi, 224-225.
 2. Far., ii, 93.
 3. Ibid., i, 230.
 4. Ibid., ii, 281.

Were it not for their (i.e. the camels) removing me when
the rapidly moving means of death had drawn nearer,
I would have been like an antelope overcome by traps
whereas it had always dreaded falling in a snare,
.....

There is no protector after God better than the one at
whose steps I put the foot of a scared man,
To the best protector in whom one can seek refuge, and
the most faithful to his promise [given] to the
fugitive who is approaching,
The abyss of death which, given the chance of carrying
him hurriedly, would have hurled him in remotest
deserts,
But there is no harm now that I grasped a handle, a most
firm handle, belonging to the best of caliphs,
He quickened my soul after it had heaved with fear, the
throbbing of the leaping heart having forced me to
walk out,
And he averted what they had wilfully planned against me,
together with what they had registered elegantly in
documents.[142]¹

But it seems that the poet was eventually imprisoned and 'Umar
refused any intercession on his behalf until the Tamīmī
rajaz - poet Abū-Nukhayla addressed to him the lines:-

You released the prisoner of Bakr the day before, so is
there not - may my people and my property be your
ransom -
Some reason, plea or excuse to save the ungrateful Tamīmī,
From the heavy brown rings of shackle? He never ceased
to be mad,
His noble descent elevates [him] but his inferior
intelligence pulls him down, so grant him as a present
to your uncles on the festival marking the end of
fasting,[143]²

when he set him free.

The reign of Hishām (105-125/723-743) and the governor-
ship of his deputy in Iraq, Khālīd ibn-'Abdallāh al-Qasrī
(105-120/723-738) represented the culmination of tribal
feeling and recalled in many respects memories of the days of
Ziyād and al-Ḥajjāj. Despite his otherwise irreproachable

1. Far., ii, 17.

2. Agh., xviii, 141-142.

record of administrative achievement over 15 years,¹ his Yemenī leanings impelled him to take some harsh measures against his political - who usually coincided with tribal - opponents, a course of action accentuating an already tense situation. He was apparently passionately hostile to Muḍar and Nizār,² and there are sufficient indications that relations between him and the Tamīmīs had become embittered long before his appointment to Iraq. The story is related³ that when Khālīd had governed Medina on behalf of Sulaymān (96-98) he lashed a Qurashī youth excessively and his father raised the case to the caliph, imploring al-Farazdaq who was visiting the court at the time, to intercede on his behalf. The poet is reported to have said:-

Ask Khālīd, may God be unbountiful to him, when did it
come about that Qasr ruled Quraysh and subjugated them?
Was that before the Apostle of God or after his era?
Certainly the fat among Quraysh has become lean,
We desired his guidance, may God deny him guidance, but
then his mother is not one whose offspring is [likely
to be] rightly guided.[144]⁴

The caliph became furious and ordered Khālīd's hand to be amputated, and only the intercession of Yazīd ibn-al-Muhallab, the caliph's favourite, could persuade the latter to commute the penalty to lashing. Al-Farazdaq is said to have recorded the event in his lines:-

1. cf. Wellhausen, pp. 326ff. where he makes a sympathetic assessment of his rule.

2. cf. Agh., xix, 29, 60.

3. Ibid., xix, 61; 'Iqd., v, 192-193; Far., i, 301.

4. Far., ii, 334; Agh., xix, 61; 'Iqd., v, 193.

I swear by my life that showers, other than those
emanating from falling rain (i.e. whips) were poured
on the back of Khalid,
Would you, O member of Qasr, beat on allegation of
rebellion, him who is obedient, while you disobey
the commander of believers?
Had it not been for Yazid ibn-al-Muhallab, a weak-limbed
bird would have soared with your hand to its weaklings
in the nest,
So receive death at your own hands for you have only been
requited, in retaliation, with brown whips,
I imagine that you are excessively grieved over [the loss
of] a quarter of a hypocrite (i.e. his hand), being
clothed in robes of treachery and betrayal.[145]¹

Khālid's encounter with the Tamīmī leader 'Umar ibn-Yazīd al-
Usaydī at the court of Hishām in which 'Umar castigated the
Yemen and exposed their rebellious record, culminating in the
insurrection of Ibn-al-Muhallab,² embittered him all the more
and eventually led him to lash the articulate Tamīmī to death,
precipitating a crisis that continued to dominate the Baṣrī
scene for a long time. The poetry of this period accordingly
gives the picture of an atmosphere fraught with repression,
fear and recriminations. The lukewarm acquiescence which
poets had earlier displayed in their relations with al-Ḥajjāj,
gave way to open criticism and defiance. Al-Farazdaq was most
outspoken when he said, taking advantage of the fact that
Khālid's mother was a Christian slave from Byzantium:-

May the Compassionate break the back of a riding-beast
which, tottering from Damascus, has brought us Khalid,
How can he lead people [in prayer] whose mother believes
that God is not One?
He built a church for his mother where Christians [pray],
and yet he demolishes out of unbelief the minarets of
mosques.[146]³

1. Far., i, 301.

2. cf. Ibn-Sall., 298-302.

3. Kāmil, vi, 230.

He further attempted to incite the caliph against him in the lines:-

Act, O commander of believers, against Khālīd and his associates, may God deny him purification,
He built a church for his mother wherein [rests] the cross, and yet he demolishes mosques out of hatred for prayers.[147]¹

A closer look at the records reveals that the hostility was not always one-sided. Labaṭa, the son of al-Farazdaq, relates that when Khālīd first arrived in Iraq and his father prepared himself to visit him, he told his father, "Father, this man is decidedly Yemenī in sentiments, and you know full well his bias, so make a point of reciting to him some of your poetry in praise of Yemenīs so as to receive his favours, since you have become too old to undertake any long journey," but the old poet remained silent until he was admitted to the governor and when asked to recite he said:-

People disagree as long as we don't come forward in unity before them, but there is no disagreement once Muḍar reaches consensus.
Amongst us are bases of necks topped by necks wherein the heads are rooted, containing the [organs of] hearing and seeing,
We ally ourselves, God apart, to none but swords at times when the eye is drowned in tears,
As for the enemy, we shall not soften to them until the stone softens to the one chewing it,[148]²

and he then went out cutting short his son's remarks by retorting, "Be silent! Never have I filled his heart [with admiration] more than I did today."³ In point of fact the poet knew too well that his record with Khālīd was beyond

1. Far., i, 160; Kāmil, vi, 230. For the reasons for his demolishing minarets, cf. Mub., Kāmil, vi, 231.

2. Far., i, 200; Agh., xix, 30.

3. Agh., xix, 29-30.

repair. On another occasion he approached the governor to aid him raise some blood-money he had undertaken to pay, but Khālīd retorted, "I can imagine you saying, 'I approach the weaver, the son of a weaver with a view to cheating him if he gives me, or to lampooning him if he refuses'. Yes I am the weaver, son of a weaver, and I shall never give you anything, so do what you will!" Farazdaq thereupon said, sarcastically:-

Would that I belonged to the vile Bajīla,¹ until that
governor ruling over Iraq is discharged,
Then when the governor of the two Iraqs has turned away,
I would revert to [my position] among the family of
noble and excellent men.[149]²

In Baṣra itself al-Farazdaq was bound to come into collision with the security officer Mālīk ibn-al-Mundhir ibn-al-Jārūd, whom Khālīd had appointed as his representative in the miṣr. Al-Farazdaq welcomed the occasion by satirizing Mālīk in his line:-

What renders the police of the miṣr hateful to us is that
I saw Mālīk, the progeny of a dōg, put in charge of
them.[150]³

The murder of 'Umar ibn-Yazīd al-Uṣaydī inflamed passions enormously among the Tamīm against Khālīd and his deputy Mālīk who seemed to have actually carried out the order of killing. This prompted al-Farazdaq to compose some fiery lines on the occasion:-

Has not the wrongful murder of Abū-Ḥafṣ by 'Abd-al-Qays
ranked among capital violations?
He died a victim of animosity without committing a crime,
crying out to the caliph while his body was being cut
to pieces.[151]⁴

1. Khālīd's tribe.

2. Agh., xix, 60-61.

3. Ibid., xix, 41.

4. Far., ii, 276; Ibn-Sall., 300; Kāmil., ii, 77-78;
cf. Far., i, 308.

He is said to have told the caliph Hishām:-¹

When we lament we do not lament mishaps inflicted by Time,
since days are fraught with contentions,
But we lament Khālīd's violation of certain inviolable
rights of ours, it is unlawful to infringe,
So ask the Banu-Marwan: What of an obligation and an
inviolable undertaking the pledge of which is not
honoured?

Certainly in the path of God is the shedding of our
blood without any obvious guilt on our part;
Khālīd has avenged the murder of Ibn-al-Muhallab, for
amongst us reside the lasting remnants of guidance
and its imam,

I see that the succour of Muḍar in the two miṣrs has
weakened but the Syria of Qays is never weakened,
Now who would convey to Qays and Khindif in Syria
narratives of incurable maladies,

The blood of Ibn-Yazīd became lawful to Khālīd. What
a pity for a soul the thirst of which cannot be
quenched!

So make a reversal [of policy] O commander of believers,
because they are but weak-minded Yemenis and you are
their destroyer.

Is it [in revenge of] Ibn-Yazīd and Ibn-Zahr² that the
blood of Tamīm was rendered lawful and their
pasturing camels became free booty?

Should we be killed in your presence because we had
killed your enemy in accordance with your dictates
while the dust of war was still visible?

We displayed our indignation on your behalf, O family of
Marwān, so show us your indignation, so that some
souls might find their food palatable.[152]³

It is instructive to point out here that Jarīr who
composed several poems on Hishām⁴ in which he scattered praise
lavishly on the caliph and depicted the obedience of people to
him, being careful not to make any specific reference to what
was distressing his people, remarked in one of his poems:-

-
1. Abū-'Ubayda suspects that al-Farazdaq composed only 2 or 3 lines of this poem and that the rest was fabricated by Naṣr ibn-Sayyār, cf. Far., ii, 239.
 2. These were two Yemenī Khārijīs killed by Tamīm
 3. Far., ii, 240-241; cf. ii, 231-232.
 4. Jar., 9-11, 115-118, 407-410, 411-412.

Do not treat the Banū-Tamīm harshly, for they have sincerely repented and returned to true guidance, Those [of them] whose heart suffered from any suspicion feared your punishment, while the prudent desisted, And remember the blood-relationship you have with the family of Barra, for kinship is demanding and can easily be satisfied.[153]¹

Al-Farazdaq seized the opportunity of Khālīd's digging the canal entitled 'al-mubārak' (blessed) at Wāsīt, an enterprise which seemed to have aroused discontent,² and criticised him bitterly. He told him once:-

Some men of Tamīm have approached you with their testimony but you have washed away what is due to God by [condoning] the wrongful act of Mālik,³ And you have spent the property of God improperly on your ominous and unblessed stream.[154]⁴

The poet is said to have found himself in trouble with the caliph himself. He incurred the caliph's displeasure when he praised 'Alī ibn-al-Ḥusayn, thereby revealing his shī'ī tendencies,⁵ and the caliph ordered him to be imprisoned. He is reported to have lampooned the caliph saying:-

Would you detain me between Medina and the spot towards which the most penitent of men's hearts yearn (i.e. Mecca)?

He frequently turns a head that does not belong to a chief, and [rolls] a squint eye with visible defects.[155]⁶

1. Ibid., 10.

2. cf. Wellhausen, 348-349; cf. Dīwan of Ru'ba, 151; Far., i, 339; Jar., 118, for attempts to sway public opinion in favour of such schemes.

3. Khālīd refused their testimony regarding the charge that Mālik had killed 'Umar al-Usaydī.

4. Far., ii, 59; cf. ii, 58; Agh., xix, 23, 42, 61.

5. Far., ii, 178-181.

6. Agh., xix, 41; cf., Naq., 984; Far., i, 47.

The report claims that when the lines reached the caliph he released him.¹

Things came to a head when Khālīd imprisoned Naṣr ibn-Sayyār al-Kinānī, and al-Farazdaq cried in exasperation and defiance:-

O Khālīd! Had it not been for the [dictates of] faith
you would not have been offered obedience, and but
for the Banu-Marwan you would not have been reinforced
with succour,
Nay, rather would you have found forbidding the fastening
of his bonds, sons of war who are neither unarmed nor
easily annoyed,
Now, O Banu-Marwan, the like of our endeavour, if the one
who offers it bountifully is not given the credit for
it,
Is likely to be forgotten when you summon people, and is
liable to occasion rancour in the heart of him who
reiterates it,
Is it not a truism that we never cease to fight with
lances any detachment of cavalry until they submit
to you forcibly?
If you do not desist, cavalry will brandish the spears,
and we will summon Tamīm and then we demand no excuse,
Of you, and you will find us the sons of noble mothers
who fulfilled their promise and paid that which is
neither scanty nor diminished,
We are certainly the killers of kings when they come
forth in the morning of battle, and we are not good
at excusing [others]. [156]²

The upshot of all this was that al-Farazdaq was arrested and imprisoned. He became frantic in composing poems defending himself, denying the many charges levelled at him, praising the caliph, Khālīd and Mālīk and expressing his consuming fear. The inability of his own people to defend him against the state was evident. Authority once more asserted itself and the rebellious poet was once more on the defensive, at the mercy of those he had persistently assailed. Mālīk and his

1. Agh., xix, 41-42.

2. Far., i, 323.

family were praised¹ and the poet portrayed the awe-inspiring qualities of Mālik in a manner recalling his poetry on Ziyād and al-Ḥajjāj. Thus on one occasion he said:-

When Mālik throws away his turban then take your guard
against the fits of his hands when he is enraged,
For if they seize you aggressively there lies in them a
fierce example of naked torment.[157]²

The fear that Mālik induces in others is vividly described:-

I have seen Abū-Ghassān suspending his sword from a
shoulder that baffles whoever seeks to harm it,
You behold people as though they are ready to shed their
tears in his presence, their hearts throbbing violently
and none among them is able to address him,
Through him God has debased the wrong-doer while the
wronged person became powerful and firm,
The miṣr which previously lay waste - its remote and
close quarters dreaded by all - has learnt,
That you are the sword of God on earth which He
unsheathes when the battalions of death glitter
with swords.[158]³

He denies the charge⁴ laid against him and dwells on his lamentable condition in prison to enlist the mercy of Mālik:-

I swear by the Lord of ships when they sail and [by the
place] where the well of Zamzam neighbours the Marwa,
That your putting me in prison has not increased my
dread of you over that fear which you knew,
I seek refuge in a tomb containing the shrouds of Mundhir,
an inviolable refuge for those seeking protection,
How [terrible] is the condition of him who suffers fifty
shackles and rings in addition to the intense darkness
of night,
I endure the whole night sleepless while some of those
guarding me fall asleep leaving others awake,
Had solid mountains suffered what my two legs endured
they would have almost collapsed,
O Mālik! If I achieve release safely at your hands
then it is like a case of a benefactor granting
favour to a protégé,

1. cf. Far., i, 256; ii, 56, 121-123, 133, 317.

2. Ibid., i, 30,

3. Ibid., i, 70-71; cf. also ii, 249.

4. cf. Far., ii, 122-123, 248.

Khālīd has taught me to walk as a fettered man and never before had I managed the easiest of such steps, I say to my two legs, being covered with silent loops and iron fetters restricting the pace:

"Is there none among the sons of al-Jārūd who would bestow favours on us as flows the torrent of the Euphrates whose banks are swept away?"[159]¹

Similarly he addressed a number of poems to Khālīd in which he praised him and went out of his way to deny the charges and to acclaim the achievements of the governor, especially the canal:-

They have alleged that I censured [the stream belonging] to Khalid, yet certainly al-Mubarak surpasses every other stream in abundance,
And surely you will never fail to recognize my poetry, the forerunners of which when they come forth,
Could wreck the mountain of Suwaj, had they been hurled at it; and had they touched Hira' they would have disturbed and upset its firm and lofty rocks so that they became round,
If I show patience it is in accordance with divine command, and the best of God's people are those showing maximum patience,
I used to be excessively cautious, and had I felt any fear I would have been more cautious than the wild goat at the mountain top,
But they approached me when I was feeling secure, never suspecting them, in broad daylight, but then whatever God has decreed should take its course.[160]²

He proceeds to indicate the material benefits people derived from the canal in several poems:-

Our caliph has been given through the energy of Khālīd a stream which flows [to his credit] over other rivers, and surely al-Mubarak (blessed) as its name indicates irrigates lands producing stable food and lofty date-palms,
When al-Mubarak reached maximum flood food became cheap for purveyors and merchants.[161]³

1. Far., ii, 248-250; cf. also ii, 121-122.

2. Far., i, 296; cf. i, 270.

3. Ibid., i, 269; cf. i, 132-133.

In addressing Hishām he claims that he was wrongfully arrested only because of his prestige and glorious lineage. After imploring the caliph to release him, reminding him of the protection offered him earlier by his grandfather Marwān,¹ he says:-

If I am detained without any crime [it is no stranger than that] they arrested me when I had been feeling secure, dreading naught,
In fact they have imprisoned me only because I am the son of Ghālib and because I am one of the excellent nobles not of the rabble,
And because I am the one whom Tamīm used to rely upon in frontiers facing abodes of assailing enemies,
And because I am the spokesman of Khindif against their detractors, [pursuing my task] as a wealthy noble, fond of calamities, seeking his revenge.[162]²

After recounting his victories against his detractors, he goes on to stress his precarious position, indicating his many enemies:-

I perceive people who are poets, other than myself, as though they are the tame pigeons resident at Mecca, I wonder at a group of people who are ready with their apologies when they see me, and who when I am absent either inform against me or do me wrong,
Whereas they used to fear my assault when the overflowing eyes stopped shedding their tears through me,
Had I feared that Khālid would frighten me I would have flown with a perfect wing, the feathers of which are not broken,
As I had flown from the two miṣrs of Ziyād when he had gnashed his canine teeth against me with calamities,
Never had I feared the prospect of being seen in a gaol, short of step, walking as a fettered man,
Spending the night with the bell-carrying Indians circling around me, some of them guarding me as closely as if bound to me by a covenant.[163]³

1. cf. ibid., ii, 7-10; cf. i, 61; ii, 188-189.

2. Far., ii, 10.

3. Ibid., ii, 11; cf. also i, 140-141; ii, 284.

The real significance of the various anecdotes related by the sources in connection with al-Farazdaq's imprisonment and release - some of which are evidently apocryphal - lies primarily in the way they underlined the entrenchment of state control and the marked inability of local tribal support to stand against it without the help of the larger groups. Al-Farazdaq discovered that appeal to blood-relationship was of no avail and he made this clear when he lampooned Ayyūb ibn-‘Īsā of Ḍabba - Ḍabba being the poet's maternal uncles - the agent of Mālīk who actually arrested him:-

Had you been a Qaysī you would not have detained me,
but [you are] a negro with thick lips,
I reminded him of the blood-relationship that existed
between us, but I realized that his [favourable]
commands were remote from me,
And I said [perhaps] he was one of Ḍabba family, but the
colour of his buttocks and the orbit of his eye
asserted that he belonged to others,
The Nubian shall see what his hands have initiated when
the diffused verses of poetry are recited.[164]¹

The betrayal of his tribe was rudely pointed out to him by the poet Salama ibn-‘Ayyāsh² who had met him in prison. On being abused by al-Farazdaq who slandered his base origin, Salama told the Tamīmī poet: "The basest men are the Banū-Mujāshi‘. You are their poet, their chief, and the son of their leader and none of them raised a finger in your defence when the police of Mālīk confined you in prison."³ The fact that his patience with his tribe Tamīm wore thin was made out in his appeal to the Kalbī dignitary Sa‘īd ibn-al-Walīd al-Abrash

1. Agh., xix, 24; cf. Far., i, 147.

2. cf. Agh., xxi, 129-132.

3. Ibid., xxi, 131; cf. ibid., xix, 16-17; Ibn-Sall., 287.

when he told him:-

To al-Abrash of Kalb, I have referred for his support a request which the two tribes of Tamim and Wa'il treated with indifference.[165]¹

His main hope of protection was Qays despite his earlier hostility to them. He is reported to have sent his son to Syria telling him, "Enlist the support of the Qaysis and let not my satires against them deter you from approaching them because they will certainly show their indignation on your behalf."² By this time Qays and Muḍar were at one against the Yemen, and the story proceeds to relate that Qays told the caliph, "Whenever there emerged among Muḍar a gallant warrior, a poet or a leader Khālīd would jump on and imprison him."³ Their intercession brought about his speedy release and he sang their praise in a number of poems.⁴

This unity of purpose manifested itself further in the attitude of the poet's rival, Jarīr who appealed passionately to Khālīd in a long poem⁵ requesting his release. When the news of the poet's imprisonment reached Hishām the caliph jubilantly told Jarīr, "God has disgraced the transgressor." On being told that the transgressor in question was al-Farazdaq Jarīr promptly replied, "O commander of believers, if you desire to bestow any favour on the settled communities of Muḍar and their Bedouins then release for them their poet [who is also] their leader and the son of their leader." The

1. Ibn-Sall., 296; Agh., xix, 24.

2. Ibn-Sall., 295.

3. Ibid.

4. cf. Far., ii, 202; Agh., xix, 25.

5. cf. Jar., 139-140; Naq., 985. A number of Farazdaq's verses are interposed in it; cf. Far., i, 132-133.

surprised caliph said, "Are you not pleased that al-Farazdaq is disgraced?" Jarīr replied, "No, by God O commander of believers, unless he is disgraced through my own tongue." Hishām reflected thoughtfully, "What a man is he concerning his lineage (ḥasab)!"¹

iii. POETS AS PUBLIC CONSCIENCE

The role of poets as spokesmen of their people and defenders of their honour looms large in the verses and activities of Baṣrī poets. Although this role was in many cases inflated out of all proportions for considerations of prestige and mere boasting, many poets lived up to their image by identifying themselves with their people in times of adversities. A considerable portion of encomiums addressed to caliphs or their governors was not mere flattery to secure material gain - though the importance of this was never in doubt - but embodied a wide range of critical views deprecating malpractices and calling attention to corruption. The spectacles of appalling poverty and hardship to which people were often exposed in the wake of droughts and other natural disasters found pride of place in many eulogies. Jarīr tells al-Ḥajjāj at the end of a poem celebrating his victory over Ibn-al-Ash'ath:-

1. Naq., 984-5.

Should we not complain to you of a period of drought,
and of drinking water at the time of snowing?
And of the household's wrangle, while starving, over the
milk of a milch camel that ceases not in winter?
[It was] a time rendering maidens black, whereas even
their eyes had not at any time been black.[166]¹

But it is during the latter days of al-Ḥajjāj and more
so after his death that poets elaborate on these themes. In
a passionate poem addressed to al-Walīd I at the end of which
the poet seeks refuge with the caliph from al-Ḥajjāj, al-
Farazdaq portrays the depressing situation of the various
tribes of Muḍar:-

When they saw me drive my riding-beast they called out
to me with the voice of a perishing group of
travellers whose womenfolk were starving,
Saying: "Rescue us, when you approach, through calling
[attention to our plight] in the presence of the
best of men [whom] you are visiting."
And I told them: "If God brings me and my she-camel
safely [to the caliph] I shall give information
as to what I know,
Of how I saw the wolf every day assailing your
emaciated [camels] evening and morning,
To drag away, if they lay exposed to him, some of the
camel corpses you set as enclosure around you,²
Relieve Muḍar for lean years have come successively over
them, striking with blows that fracture bones,
Whereas all the other Ma'addī tribes reside close to
fertile lands, the vaulted bridges of which are not
barred to them,
They (i.e. Muḍar) remain where starvation alighted in
the region between Tihama and Khaybar and the valley
wherein hunger is ever present,
While Tamīm alighted at their Dahnā' desert, taking
refuge in a fertile land producing huge quantities of
good quality dates,
Looking to the one seeking provision among them as though
they are Bactrian camels owned by a camel-driver
whose huge camels are lean in the flank,
And had 'Abs not been fighting they would have been
stricken with misfortune on account of hunger
rendering the afflicted sleepless,

1. Jar., 96.

2. Corpses of perished camels were strung as enclosure to
ward off wolves from the living herds.

But, in any case, they compel their enemy [to submission] when spear-heads are shaken by mischief-makers,

Rescue me on account of my standing among Nizār and my coming forth [to you] because I am the noble one of the two easts (i.e. Baṣra and Kūfa or Iraq and Khurasan) and their poet.[167]¹

Things must have become unbearable when Sulaymān acceded to the Umayyad throne (96/715). Al-Farazdaq adopted the rare practice of starting one, perhaps the earliest, of his major panegyrics on Sulaymān with a vivid description of the lamentable condition of the people as it was reflected in their womenfolk. After a few lines on the general theme of misery he makes his wife Nawār ask him:-

Can't you see that [the women] around your abode seeking refuge in your honour are at the limit of their resources?

And how could you desire easy life after what you have seen at Najd of poverty-stricken men and women?

And many a blackened woman wearing the patched garments of orphans came forth leading them and asking about us,

Carrying two of them on the shoulders, violently shaking, so lean they almost break,

And behind her [are] two daughters, clinging to her shreds; evil is her condition!

Bound to her waist there followed a dishevelled young she-camel pierced at the nostrils, barely a year since weaned,

She fell down - throwing them to us, as though she was a female ostrich at the time of drought with her young ones at her side -

At an enclosure encompassing many a tent and pavilion seething with starving men and children.[168]²

These conditions seemed to have persisted until the time of 'Umar II judging by the passionate appeals by both al-Farazdaq and Jarīr. Jarīr told him:-

1. Far., i, 248-250; cf. also, ii, 126.

2. Ibid., ii, 72; cf. i, 263, 266; Jar., 347.

Shall I mention the distress and pressure of calamity
that has befallen us or shall what has reached you
of my news suffice for me?

I have been constantly since leaving you, in an abode
that continued to emaciate me, while the tribe
became tired of my journeys to and fro,

The distressed urban dweller is of no avail to his
Bedouin counterpart, nor is the Bedouin capable of
returning [any good] to the urban dweller,

At feast-times many a dishevelled widow and many an
orphan weak of voice and vision,

Cry out to you with broken hearts, as though they are
afflicted with demonic evil or amulet magic,

Each reckoning on you to compensate him for the loss
of his father, being like a chick in the nest,
unable to walk or fly,

Their merchants expect you hopefully, as they expect
rain, may you be blessed as a healer of broken bones,

If you abandon them whom would they hope for after you?

But if you rescue you them from it you will have
rescued them from real misfortune.[169]¹

In addition to the ravage of natural disasters the
ferocity of extortion and administrative highhandedness
accentuated the general spirit of resentment in town and
desert, and furnished poets with worthy causes which were
skilfully exploited by many of them. In certain respects
conditions of life, especially in the case of Bedouins
remaining in their desert, were worse than they had been
before. Islam prohibited their previous practices of raiding
and plundering which ensured in certain cases the livelihood
of the poorer tribes. In addition it imposed on them the
poor-tax, zakāt, which was a source of resentment as the
ridda wars had revealed, and a heavy burden of which their
poets consistently complained.

Government agents, especially the tax-collectors and the
police were the obvious targets of censure, even by the emirs

1. Jar., 210-211; cf. Far., i, 182-183; on other caliphs,
cf. Far., i, 59, 143; ii, 124-125, 293.

themselves as Ziyād indicated when he was told about the man in charge of Baṣra police. His comment on him was the line:-

Many a tax-gatherer slanders [his people] to the governor,
and many a one against whom people guard themselves is
a guardian over them.[170]¹

The notorious practice of administrators to enrich themselves through stealing and acquiring public funds was pilloried by either Abū-'l-Aswad² or Anas ibn-Abī-Unās³ when Ḥāritha ibn-Badr the Tamīmī poet was appointed by 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād an emir over Surraq. The poet admonished the emir sarcastically:-

O Ḥāritha ibn-Badr! You have been appointed an emir
over a region, so be therein a large rat that
deceives and steals,
And despise nothing that you may acquire, for your
share of the whole domain of Iraq is but Surraq,
For men are either regarded as liars, talking according
to their whims, or taken as truthful,
They tell stories based on conjecture and uncertainty,
and when asked to substantiate them they fail to do
so,
And falter not in your endeavours, for sluggishness is
the slowest vehicle, and [know that] not all who are
invited to [get] sustenance receive it,
And vie with Tamim in wealth, for wealth has a tongue
through the aid of which the inarticulate achieves
power and articulation.[171]⁴

Ḥāritha took the advice as the accepted norm and is reported to have replied:-

May the sovereign of mankind requite you with His highest
reward, for you have uttered a gracious speech and
offered a satisfying advice,

1. Ḥayawān, i, 101.

2. cf. Dīwān, 243; Agh., xxi, 33.

3. cf. Mub., Kāmil, iii, 191-192; Ḥayawān, iii, 36;
v, 79-80.

4. Aswad, 243; Agh., xxi, 33.

You have commanded [the pursuit of] a firm course [of action] and had you commanded otherwise you would have found me disobeying your view.[172]¹

The atrocities of tax-collectors were portrayed vividly by ar-Rā'ī when he addressed 'Abd-al-Malik:-

O caliph of the Compassionate! We are an upright Muslim people who prostrate ourselves at daybreak and sunset, Being Arabs who recognize as due to God in our property the obligation of the zakaṭ by divine revelation. The tax-collectors have disregarded your instructions and committed, if you only knew them, abominations and monstrosities, They seized the local government agent² and split apart the middle of his chest, whipping him with Aṣḥāḥī whips, he standing in fetters, So that when they have left neither flesh on his bones nor power of understanding in his mind, They brought their document and a humpbacked [man] whom whips have rendered faint-hearted, fear-stricken, Oblivious of honesty out of fear of pregnant and refractory whips that left his partner sore in the neck, They have taken his beast of burden, leaving him seated [on the ground] unable to move away from his abode, Calling out to the Commander of believers, but parted from him by a desert vehemently swept by winds, Like a hoopoe, its wing broken by hunters cooing for its chick on the road of ash-Shurayf, So remove from us injustices that impaired the feeding of our children and rescue our devoured limbs, For [otherwise], if I remain alive, I shall certainly induce [my people] to undertake a journey that renders taxable camels scarce at ash-Shurayf.[173]³

The last line betrayed the impatience and desperation of the poet. The caliph viewed it as a flagrant act of rebellion when he snapped at him, "Whereto [would you escape] from God and the sulṭān, mayst thou have no mother?". The poet had to retreat by saying, "From one governor to another, and from one

1. Agh., xxi, 33; cf. ibid., 30 for the lines of 'Alqama ibn-Ma'bad on the ill practices of this emir.

2. cf. Chapter I, p. 26 above for 'arīf'.

3. Ibn-Sall., 439-442; cf. Mub., Kāmil, vii, 102-103; Khiz., iii, 121; Agh., xx, 172.

tax-collector to another," but he was dismissed without any redress.¹ The following year the same poet approached the caliph and recited:-

As for the destitute whose milch camel sufficed only for the household, nothing was left over for him,
And the camel owners were upset, while men of wealth retained, in the face of rough treatment, only handfuls of their wealth,
So if you pay attention to them you will revive them, but if they encounter the like of it, in the following year they will become depraved.[174]²

The caliph deemed him more prudent than he had been the previous time³ and asked him what request he had to make, thereupon the poet said, "Refund to them their poor-rates (ṣadaqāt) in order to revive them."⁴

Other sinister practices of tax-collectors were revealed by al-Farazdaq when he complained to al-Walīd I saying:-

The two easts looked to you every captive, widow and frontier force,
Since you have promulgated a decree for governors wherein safeguards against dissoluteness were stipulated,
O commander of believers, the fairness of whose hands cures the maladies of breasts,
How does this [tally] with a governor who, in collecting taxes, imposes upon us the [delivery of] dirhams at times of full moons,
And wherefrom [can we obtain] dirhams as inaccessible to us as the star Sirius to the one raising his palms to reach it?
When we lead to him the stipulated number of animals he rejects them, turning away from both the young goat and the camel,
When he puts the whips forward to us in daytime we purchase by means of usury pieces of silk,

1. Ibn-Sall., 442.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Agh., xx, 172.

Thus the usury to which we have resorted to protect our
backs, has brought us into Hell-fire,
Would that the caliph heard the voice of a caller
invoking God, crying, "Will there ever be a protector
for me?"

And the voices of women bound together with their
children on their laps,
Then would they have been answered by the tongue of one
who calls to God's religion, one zealous and helpful.
[175]¹

The same poet drew another list of complaints and put them
forward to Sulaymān when he said:-

You have been put to the test with regard to what you
promised if you ever became in command over us,
Many a vow have we made if you exercise authority over
us,
Such as performing pilgrimage by a bare-footed woman or
fasting for two years by another, the mother of
scanty-haired weaklings,
Of whom nothing has remained but tongues, weak bones and
red bellies,
And without stipend they station in hostile territory
longer than can be endured the troops they dispatch
over land and sea,
And they impose [taxes] on camels long dead and done with,
So that we envied every one borne on a bier whose corpse
was carried to the grave,
And the living wished that they were beneath the earth
and that the Day of Resurrection was in sight,
I swear by camels ambling with all kinds of devout
supplicants from the ravines of dusty and far-
extending valleys,
That I have uttered nothing but the truth which you
recognize in improvised speech or verse,
The land of Iraq has been denuded of all its wealth.[176]²

The methods of torture employed and the corruption of
government officials were dwelt upon by poets. The use of the
whip to produce the desired effect became common as aṣ-ṣaltān
al-'Abdī noted:-

1. Far., i, 285-286; cf. also ibid., i, 191 for complaints
about taxes and shortage of money especially in the bādiya.

2. Far., i, 262-263.

I behold a people that have unsheathed their sword and
to their whip was added the Aṣḥāḥī brand.[177]¹

The wide use of bribes which resulted in miscarriages of
justice was pointed out by al-Farazdaq in one of his poems on
al-Ḥajjāj:-

We were living in a land, O son of Yūsuf, where no
governor minded what bribe he received,
Deeming, when the two opposing parties approach him,
those who offer bribe more entitled to legal claim,
But objects of desire are not sought with you through
bribes, being only fulfilled according to what is
recorded in documents.[178]²

Corruption seemed to have become so widespread that even those
in charge of public watering-places exacted their unlawful
toll on those who approached them, judging from the lines of
al-Farazdaq:-

May God curse a watering-place over which Ḥanbal - the
back of a female lizard firmly entrenched beneath a
rock - is in charge,
Whenever you come to the water walk stealthily to Ḥanbal
with a wooden cup containing gruel of parched barley
or flour,
May I seek hospitality among wayfarers away from a person
who drinks [water] from water-vessels and fills up
wells with earth,
Had al-Ḥajjāj known your case, your right hand would
never have sold water to a Muslim in exchange for a
precious [reward],
Instead you would have attempted mutilating [your body]
or would have been found crippled, crawling like
Ibn-Waḍīn.[179]³

Al-ʿAjjāj echoed the same sentiments when he told Sulaymān:-

Many an agent of the imām, carries out his activities
blindly, heedless as to guidance,
In that they were able to drive people mad, distressing
their emirs by violating,

-
1. Mub., Kāmil, ii, 246; the second hemistich may also be rendered: who has their Aṣḥāḥī whip lengthened.
 2. Far., ii, 137; cf. Rumma, 473-474 for a specific case.
 3. Far., ii, 343.

That which is inviolable by divine command, and when they
find a weak person they demand a bribe,
And when he refuses to pay it he is tied and fettered
with many folds,
Those are said to be governors; how evil are they as
governors, not excepting any among them,
All of them, however long they may stay in office, are
deaf-hearted, eating of what virtuous men loathe,
Loving it with the passion of the pack of hounds [when
they hear] the sounding bridles [of chasing horses],
carrying within themselves an honesty like a sieve,
Thus people were reduced [to poverty] after having
enjoyed easy life, like a garment reduced to shreds
after having been new.[180]¹

The conduct of emirs was also exposed in unequivocal
terms. Al-'Ajjāj blamed them for precipitating social
dissolution when he said:-

Many an emir who has spread corruption, causing mischief
thereby, augmented disorder and confusion by treating
people tyrannically.[181]²

Certain emirs were particularly noted for the invectives
levelled against them by poets. The atrocities committed by
'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād were listed by Ibn-Mufarrigh³ whose
personal hatred for this emir renders his testimony suspect.
Al-Ḥārith al-Qubā' was the target of attacks from various
poets. Murra ibn-Maḥkan told him once, before being
sentenced by him:-

O Ḥārith act with deliberation in passing your judgement,
for when an imam deviates from fairness in his
sentence, he hits and kills on the spot,
Your responsibility is solely the passing of judgement,
so maintain [fairness], since whatever you acquire
today, you will achieve success thereby tomorrow,
As for myself I achieve my aims through patience and
the breaking of the sword inside the emir's head.[182]⁴

1. 'Ajj., 53.

2. Ibid., 75; cf. 'Iqd, vii, 305; Kāmil, vi, 46 for other
cases.

3. cf. Agh., xvii, 65.

4. Ibid., xix, 10.

It seemed that al-Qubā' s reply to him was a severe beating which the poet bitterly lamented in his poetry.¹ He paid with his life later at the hands of Muṣ'ab for uttering such defiant lines.² But the most memorable verses which summed up the career of al-Qubā' in the view of a contemporary poet, were those of Abū-'l-Aswad addressed to 'Abdallāh ibn-az-Zubayr:-

O commander of believers, may you be rewarded with
goodness, relieve us of the Qubā' of Banū-al-Mughīra,
We tested him and found him blameful, baffling all our
endeavours at securing his co-operation,
And he is, in addition, fond of marrying and eating, given
to venturing [on people's homes], resourceful of
ways and means.[183]³

The extravagance of Muṣ'ab, as especially displayed in the dowry he paid to 'Ā'isha, the daughter of Ṭalḥa, which is said to have amounted to a million dirhams,⁴ drew sharp comments from Anas ibn-Abī-Unās, also addressing the anti-caliph 'Abdallāh ibn-az-Zubayr:-

Convey to the commander of believers a message from a
disinterested adviser, not seeking material benefits,
The dowry of a maiden [is paid] a thousand thousand full
dirhams while the army commanders spend their night
in hunger,
Were it that al-Farūq (i.e. 'Umar I) was informed of what
I have witnessed and seen, he would have, I imagine,
been horrified.[184]⁵

When 'Abdallāh withdrew Muṣ'ab temporarily in favour of his own son Ḥamza who became the governor of Baṣra,⁶ he reversed the liberal policy of his uncle Muṣ'ab and imposed very strict measures regarding the allocation of public funds. This

1. cf. Mar., Mu'j., 296.

2. Agh., xix, 10.

3. Aswad, 220-221; Bayān, i, 169, cf. 122.

4. Ansāb, v, 282.

5. Ibid., 283; Agh., iii, 122-123; Ibn-Qut., Sh., ii, 714.

6. Agh., iii, 123.

infuriated the public figures of Baṣra and resulted in his dismissal forcibly by Mālīk ibn-Misma' of Bakr, an occasion celebrated by al-'Udayl ibn-al-Farkh in his praise of Mālīk, which throws light on the strength **of some tribal leaders** especially when weak emirs confronted them:-

Whenever we suspect that an emir is contemplating a foul act, we call out to Abu-Ghassan (i.e. Mālīk) who will form an encampment [with troops], Whenever Abu-Ghassan is refused his demand, he strives to assume command.[185]¹

1. Ansāb, v, 265; Agh., xx, 17; Naq., 1090.

CHAPTER V

POETRY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The divergent social forces which impinged on Baṣrī life,¹ and helped to give it what shape it ultimately took, were bound to leave their marks on the production of poets whose lives were influenced in varying degrees by these forces. At the outset and before embarking on tracing these marks it is appropriate to call attention here to an error - reflected in many works by modern Arab writers - which a literary historian is sometimes exposed when discussing the impact of social change on poetry or on literature as a whole. Instead of viewing the entire career of the poet as reflected in his poetry as a whole, considering all the divergent, and sometimes contradictory currents as integral parts of his character, which is the product of his social environment, and then instead of relating the various streaks which stand out conspicuously in his production to the life of society in which he lived, certain themes, which may admittedly be predominant in his production, are singled out and regarded as representing the whole character of the poet. If this dominant feature does not accord with new developments known to have occurred in the society the poet is then dismissed accordingly as someone belonging to an age other than his own. It is in this manner that the majority of Baṣrī poets in the Umayyad period are represented as the

1. cf. Chapter I, pp.26-55.

upholders of Jāhili tradition in life, and imitators of Jāhili style in poetry. The fact is that their depiction of Jāhili ideals, conspicuous in their poetry as that may be, was only a part of their poetic career, and reflected at that a living element of Baṣrī society. This element was predominant in their poetry not because of a nostalgic desire on their part to cling to ideals of a vanished antiquity that, though revered, was no longer experienced, but rather because it was a living part of their daily experience, and a very intense one at that. Separating this element, and consequently the poets expressing it, from the welter of Baṣrī life, and branding them as Jāhili or continuing the Jāhili tradition, which is viewed as something divorced from the life of their community, results only in distorting the nature of this poetry and the image of life it purported to convey. It is more proper that we should start from the proposition that those poets, even when they echoed Jāhili ideals in their most outspoken forms, were not in fact echoing ideals of an extinct society, but rather those of their own community.

In dealing with the social content of this poetry it is also important to make allowance for the fact that poets vary in their awareness of the problems besetting their society. They perceive and react differently to dominant social and political currents. But despite the apparent conventionalism in theme and form which mark the production of most poets with whom we are concerned in this study, it is a gross misrepresentation of poetic talent to dismiss whatever insights or remarks

they make concerning their social milieu, as something unintentional or subsidiary to the major theme, be it elegy, eulogy, censure or the like. At the same time we must resist the temptation to credit them, or some of them, with a virtue that is not theirs. It is futile to look in their poetry for a definitive or a consistent outlook which may be loosely regarded as constituting some kind of a systematic social or political philosophy. All that we can hope for is a collection of diverse reflections indicating the responses and reactions of poets to the different forces at work in their environment. Yet although we cannot delineate any systematic outlook in any one individual poet, we can nevertheless draw a fairly coherent picture of the social environment by considering what those poets as a whole had to say in this respect.

i. ISLAM VERSUS JĀHILĪ CUSTOMS

The pattern we find in Baṣrī society was such as may be found in many others which are subject to rapid growth. A kind of equilibrium was maintained between the old order and the new. The degree to which both systems co-existed in an uneasy balance - ever tilting in favour of the new - was determined by the relative potential of each to meet new demands and to suit new conditions of life. But on the whole social habits died hard, while new ideals took a long time to seep into the unconscious mind of the community, and the balance

had sometimes to be maintained by exerting pressure, since those in authority usually represented the new order. Baṣrī society is an apt demonstration of this process. Although the major features of Islam as a religion were, on the whole, tenaciously upheld by the Community, yet on the social level, more often than not, the Islamic veneer only disguised deep-seated Jāhili sentiments that often erupted into prominence with the weakening or removal of state authority. While it is exceedingly difficult to assess accurately the degree of ultimate fusion of elements whereby the stark Jāhili practices, very conspicuous at the outset, were gradually modified or superseded by Islamic practices, it is safe to assume that the process was an evolutionary one resulting, by the end of our period, in Baṣrī society reaching the stage where the ultimate social equilibrium was approached.

1. Jāhili features:

The stronghold that Jāhili practices exercised on the minds of Baṣrīs whether in the miṣr or its bādiya is indicated by numerous events the echoes of which found their way into the compositions of various poets. The intention, however, is not to furnish a comprehensive register of all that had taken place, but rather to indicate trends and to delineate prominent features. The outward observance of religious duties apart, the general attitude seemed to have been to accommodate Islam itself to the inherited structure of Arabian life. Islam as a political system with its

various institutions such as prophethood, caliphate and the like were eventually exploited as mere instruments of tribal glory. Thus in enumerating the past glories of tribes or individuals in the Jāhiliyya, Islam is sometimes appended as just another item of praise. The bond of blood-relation upon which the Jāhili system rested and which Islam attempted to supersede by substituting faith for it, is celebrated in many compositions. The Prophet himself features prominently in many of them. Jarīr, in expounding the merits of his people portrays the Prophet, who should belong equally to all Muslims, as belonging solely to them:

To us belong the Prophet's watering-trough with its two water-carriers, and also the one who inherited prophethood and the Book,
And from us was the one whose duty was to allow the congregating pilgrims to pass from 'Arafat to Muzdalifa and the one who gains mastery over you in discourse when you address him.[186]¹

While al-Farazdaq, in lampooning al-Muhallab, says:-

From us is the Prophet of God reciting His Book by means of which its (i.e. Arabia's) idols and Jews were subdued,
There remains not one tribe - whether of those who turn to the qibla or otherwise - but is subject to Quraysh's leadership.[187]²

In the same vein al-Farazdaq represented the sanctuaries of Mecca as being the property of his own tribal group to the exclusion of other people when he said:-

To us belong the two holy mosques of God, as does guidance; while the most illustrious of names has become our lot,

1. Naq., 450.

2. Far., i, 159; cf. also i, 282, 283, 322; ii, 38; cf. Naq., 912, 913.

Excepting [that of] God, since nothing resembles God, for Whom all ancient peoples are resurrected. As for the imam of guidance whose light was intended for the broad earth, how many a forefather or brother, he has [amongst us].[188]¹

The power of Islam was further conceived as the power of the reigning tribal group, which had produced earlier the Prophet and then the caliph. In satirizing aṭ-Ṭirimmaḥ of Ṭayyi', al-Farazdaq said:-

None was left but he who paid to us his zakāt (poor-rates) or who remitted the jizya (poll-tax) when it fell due.[189]²

The caliph, whose official title was 'commander of believers', came to be narrowly identified with the tribal group. Jarīr taunted al-Akhṭal and his kin:-

There, at Damascus, my cousin resides as a caliph; had I desired it, he would have driven you to me as slaves,[190]³

to which boasting the caliph is reported to have said, "What he has said amounted to making me no more than a policeman. Had he said, 'had he desired it', I would have driven them to him."⁴ In all probability the remark reflected no more than the opinion of contemporary critics on how to address the caliph. Putting it into the caliph's mouth helps to underline the general atmosphere especially at the beginning of the Umayyad period when tribal affinity was held, especially in the court, in high esteem. This conception permeated the compositions of most poets of the larger group of Muḍar

1. Far., i, 368; Naq., 529; cf. 571.

2. Far., i, 115.

3. Jar., 477.

4. Agh., vii, 63.

and the more restricted group of Khindif from whom Quraysh originated.

There is furthermore, as we have seen earlier,¹ a marked tendency to equate "Islam" with the temporal authority of the state. The term recurs in this context in the majority of compositions devoted to insurrections against Umayyad rule. On the occasion of the defeat of Ibn-al-Muhallab, al-Farazdaq told Yazīd II (101-105/720-724):-

Islam has never found after Muḥammad and his companions
a guardian of the faith who resembles you,
I perceive that God has caused your might to overwhelm
that of your opponents through Islam and [His] succour,
.....
So that your swords have spared none who deviated from
Islam behind me at the two market-places.[191]²

The same poet represents his tribe Tamīm as the bulwark of Islam in this sense when he addressed Hishām:-

[They are] the mainstay of the bonds of Islam and the
upholders of all authority; is there any obedience
of which Tamīm is not the mainstay?
Have there not been formed in Islam, from you and us,
formidable barriers hard to surmount?[192]³

Hilāl ibn-Aḥwaz, the Tamīmī commander responsible for the defeat of the Muhallabids, is, frequently praised by this poet in a manner making the identification of Umayyad authority with Islam clear:

Ibn-Aḥwaz straightens the staff of Islam amongst us
when the staff of Islam proves soft at the knots.
[193]⁴

1. cf. Chapter IV, pp. 153-155.

2. Far., ii, 252-253.

3. Ibid., ii, 242.

4. Far., i, 56.

On another occasion he says of the same commander:-

I swear by my life that Ibn-Aḥwaz has certainly led [his troops] with such skill as paved every road for Islam.[194]¹

The Muhallabids and their allies, although not known for any religious deviation, were attacked, as we have seen earlier,² as heretics. Hilāl who defeated them is further invested with the qualities of a champion of Islam:-

He relieves with his lances the effect of anyone who initiates a course (or faith) deviating from the Furqan (i.e. the divider between right and wrong, the Qur'an) and traditions.[195]³

The Banū-Bakr who allied themselves to the Muhallabids are addressed by the same poet:-

Would the Bakr ibn-Wa'il follow idols after they have accepted Islam and performed prayers for ninety years?[196]⁴

Such remarks and many others to the same effect⁵ which poets assiduously stressed do not go beyond underlining the fact of the religious basis of the caliphate. They might perhaps be taken in the main as political slogans designed to woo people and enlist their support for the Umayyad cause. It is hazardous to take them at their face value and regard them as a veritable pointer to the degree that Islam as a religion and as a social system permeated the life of community. But by the same token it is equally unrealistic to dismiss them

1. Ibid., ii, 36.

2. cf. Chapter IV, p.158.

3. Far., ii, 340; cf. Jar., 100.

4. Far., i, 112.

5. cf. Chapter IV, pp.155-159.

offhand as unrepresentative on that score alone, for slogans that do not strike a popular note and appeal to certain sentiments in the people addressed are unrewarding gimmicks in the game of politics. Appeal to religion was the surest way of achieving political ambition. That was the reason why all political parties, be they Umayyad, Shī'ī, Khārijī and the like based their claims on religious foundations, since the whole idea of state authority and the community it purported to control issued from the religion of Islam and its community, the jamā'a. This conception which equates faith with submission to the caliph and renders obedience to him obligatory, as we have seen earlier, was bitterly contested by some Khārijīs judging by the words of 'Ubayda ibn-Hilāl when he contrasted the stand of his own party with that of their opponents:-

We never say: The immunity of our faith in any conceivable case rests on obedience to Mus'ab,
But we say: Judgement belongs to God alone, and we are content with God and His favoured Prophet.[197]¹

Politics and authority apart, it is quite easy to detect many layers of alien elements conflicting with this general framework of 'Islam'. The glories of the Jāhiliyya were always present in poets' minds and were frequently mentioned in the same breath with those of Islam. In praising the tribe of 'Ijl for generosity and war, al-Farazdaq said:-

Both (generosity and courage in war) are among the loftiest of merits, set apart among people in Polytheism and Islam.[198]²

1. Khaw., 56.

2. Far., ii, 220.

When he praised the family of Mālik ibn-al-Mundhir, the security officer of Khālīd al-Qasrī in Baṣra, the same poet said:-

To their credit are two things: the glory of the Jāhiliyya and [the fact] that they submitted themselves to God before other people.[199]¹

References to the Jāhiliyya and its practices were made quite freely as when Jarīr satirizing the tribe of Taym, said:-

Never had the Taymī excelled in his Jāhili times in his companionship of the powerful [monarch] while drinking reclining over cushions.[200]²

In attempting to deny Arab origin to the Muhallabids al-Farazdaq went out of his way to mention the idols and Jāhili religious practices, representing them as the mark of a true Arab:-

Beards of Nabataeans conceal noses that had no Arab origin, and tongues that were never arabicised,
And how [could they be otherwise] since they neither attended a place of pilgrimage at Mecca, nor worshipped the idols at al-Muḥaṣṣab (i.e. site where pebbles are thrown),
And never did the crier call at dawn that they might ride to war - except on bolted boats,
And never did an Azdī woman suffer pain on account of circumcision, nor did she drink milk from a leathern vessel,
Nor was she provided with eggs and gathered fruits by hunters who visited her consecutively; nor did she eat of the share of the she-camel slaughtered for gambling.[201]³

On another occasion he told them:-

And how [can you be Arabs] whereas your father never led a horse, or carried his sons to the idol Duwar,
Nor worshipped Yaghuth, nor did he observe what Ḥimyar or Nizar worshipped,
Certainly the Azd of Buṣrā do not prostrate themselves to God, but rather they bow down at every burning fire.
[202]⁴

1. Ibid., ii, 250.

2. Jar., 317.

3. Far., i, 16.

4. Ibid., i, 208.

The preponderance of Bedouins of the eastern flank of Arabia and the immense pressure they exerted on the life of Baṣra account for much of what Jāhili elements we detect behind the Islamic veneer. It has been pointed out earlier¹ that those Bedouins brought with them many of their tribal institutions and endeavoured to adapt them to their urban environment. Of these the institution of granting protection had ranked high among the virtues of pre-Islamic Arabs, and was tolerated at the beginning by Islam.² In practice, however, it ran counter to effective control by the state whose duty it was to safeguard the rights of everyone irrespective of tribal origin. Therefore with the strengthening of state authority tribes and dignitaries fought shy of undertaking such a commitment even in the case of the nearest of kin against the formidable power of emirs, as many poets realized to their cost.³ But nonetheless the idea persisted, especially at times of crisis, and poets continued to attach great importance to it. Thus Jarīr makes a capital of the presumed betrayal by Mujāshi', al-Farazdaq's group, of az-Zubayr ibn-al-'Awwām when they granted him protection at the time of the Battle of the Camel but someone murdered him while he was in their protection.⁴ He once told them:-

1. cf. Chapter I, p. 28 ff.

2. cf. 'The Constitution of Medina' in Ibn-Hishām, Sīra, tr. Guillaume, 231-3; cf. Watt, Muḥ. at Medina, pp. 231-3; cf. Chapter I, p. 42 above.

3. cf. Chapter IV, p. 171 above.

4. cf. Naq., 80-81.

Owners of ships indulge in recounting reports of your
treachery as do [riders of] she-camels, sunken of
eyes, the girths of which run over Marrān.
You grumbled at each other on the day when az-Zubayr was
murdered as though you were hyenas the dung of which
dried in a cave,
And had you been of us beasts and birds encountering
none to chide them away, would never have shared
[the corpse] of your protected neighbour.[203]¹

The idea features prominently in the naqā'id between the two
Tamīmī poets.² Al-Farazdaq said concerning his
adversary's clan:-

May God render the Banū-Kulayb hideous since they are
capable neither of breaking faith nor of fulfilling
a promise to a neighbour.[204]³

But in boasting of his own folk he said:-

You perceive our neighbour grant protection [to others]
among us, and even if he commits a crime he is free
from blemish,
While our kinsman, however remote he be, safeguards his
neighbour through us against what he dreads and
abhors.[205]⁴

In times of turmoil when state authority broke down
people automatically reverted to the old practice, and even
the emirs themselves had to avail themselves of the
possibilities of protection offered by a strong tribe as did
Ziyād shortly before the death of 'Alī when he sought refuge
with the Azd,⁵ a course of action later followed by his son
'Ubaydallāh in 65/685. The feat of the Azd is sharply
contrasted with the betrayal of Tamīm who allowed their
patron Ibn-al-Ḥaḍramī to be burnt alive in 38/659⁶ by the

1. Jar., 207-208; Naq., 544-545; cf. Jar., 218.

2. cf. Naq., 120, 699, 752, 762, etc.

3. Ibid., 329.

4. Ibid., 562.

5. cf. Dīnawarī, Akhbār, 290-292.

6. cf. Chapter I, p.15 above.

Azdī poet, al-'Arandas al-'Awdhī, who boasted:-

We brought Ziyād back safely to his abode, while the
one seeking refuge in Tamim went up as smoke,
May God curse a people who roasted their neighbour,
failing to avert from him the heat of flames.[206]¹

But example of effective tribal protection (jiwār) occurred only when central authority was insecure. The practice was progressively muted by the universal ascendancy of state power. Extreme cases were at first not uncommon in the bādiya; thus when Hilāl ibn-al-As'ar injured a protected neighbour (jār) of his cousins, they retaliated at the risk of their own lives;² but they gradually subsided. An important corollary of it, clientship, however continued to play an important social role.³ The big claims made by tribal poets, especially Jarīr and al-Farazdaq on this score do not represent so much an anachronism as a yearning for an ideal very close to Arab hearts but increasingly stifled by the rising tide of civil power. Actuated by such sentiments, al-Farazdaq went beyond mere verbal protestations to declare his father's tomb a sanctuary and a refuge, and made it an obligation upon himself, true to Jāhili pattern, to assist whoever sought refuge in the tomb.⁴ This act became a fertile source of boasting for the poet who exploited it immensely in his rivalry with Jarīr. He said once:-

My father and I guarantee protection to him who approaches
me against the consequences of his crime, and neither
of us is ever perfidious,

1. Mar., Mu'j., 172.

2. cf. Agh., ii, 184.

3. cf. Chapter I, pp. 42-43.

4. cf. Naq., 379-381; Ibn-Sall., 261-262, 263; Mub., Kāmil, iv, 240-243.

The decayed bones of Ghālīb entertain guests with hundreds of camels readily provided by him, and he releases every convict, He is the one in whom refuge is sought, his bonds for the one seeking his protection being the firmest of bonds.[207]¹

The example set by al-Farazdaq in this respect exerted such a great influence on the mind of his contemporaries that one Thumāma ibn-al-Walīd took refuge in the tomb of the caliph Hishām ibn-‘Abd-al-Malik to avert the wrath of an Umayyad emir who however was not put off by the device and had him lashed to death. The reaction to this act was expressed by Abū-‘sh-Shaghb of ‘Abs:-

O family of Marwān, treachery will never cease to overwhelm you until it brings you one day to your knees on a rough [stretch],
The tombs of the Banu-Marwān have become a water-closet in which refuge is not sought and about which the guardian does not care,
The Tamimi's tomb is better than your tombs since he has somebody among his people who strives to honour his pledge.[208]²

Closely allied to the idea of jiwār, is that of confederation or alliance (ḥilf) between individuals and tribal groups which also served a vital security purpose especially in times of insurrection. It was indicated earlier that the regimentation of Baṣra into tribal blocks heightened tensions and speeded the outbreak of hostilities at such times.³ The relationship between state authority and the formation of alliances was made out by al-Farazdaq

1. Nag., 910.

2. Nag., 380.

3. cf. Chapter I, p.11 ff.

when he derided the alliance between the Azd and Bakr saying:-

I swear by your life that the Azd can neither afford one to be in charge of authority nor can they straighten what has inclined of the state of affairs, Nor has authority (sulṭān) so forcefully banded them in one cause as to make Bakr ibn-Wa'il give their assent to this alliance.[209]¹

But it was precisely this removal of the sulṭān which made it incumbent upon Bakr to seek alliance even among the Azd in the face of Tamīm and the Muḍarī camp. This point was made by Ḥāritha ibn-Badr al-Ghudānī when he said immediately after the death of Yazīd I:-

We discharged and appointed [rulers] while the Bakr ibn-Wa'il dragged their testicles seeking an ally. No Bakrī ever spent the night and awoke in the morning without having known baseness.[210]²

The struggle for the caliphate coupled with the general state of insecurity left the tribes in no doubt as to the wisdom of restoring all the Jāhili alliances and giving them an Islamic veneer, as in the important alliance between Tamīm and the Yemenī tribe of Kalb which was renewed after the death of 'Uthmān.³ This ḥilf seemed to have survived for a long time even after the death of al-Farazdaq in 110/728,⁴ and was greatly hailed by the two Tamīmī poets.⁵ The Islamic bond was added to the ḥilf by al-Farazdaq when he said:-

Kalb and we are brothers between whom there exist bonds of contract, the strands of which are firmly twisted,

1. Far., ii, 83.

2. Ṭab., ii, 445; Bal., Ansāb, ivB, 105; Naq., 729; cf. ibid., 112-117.

3. cf. Naq., 25.

4. cf. Agh., xix, 44; Far., i, 17-18.

5. cf. Agh., xix, 24-25; Far., i, 258-259; ii, 236-238.

Both [are] allies on account of Islam and truth, their affairs culminating in fulfilment at the hands of Ibn-Sulaym,
We grant protection in the name of Kalb and they confirm our pledge while he of Kalb that grants protection does so in our name.[211]¹

The role of the bādiya in this respect is of no mean consequence. The relative freedom of Bedouins helped, as has been indicated earlier, the traditional life to linger on largely unaffected by recent changes. In many respects they persisted in their traditional ways undeterred by official restrictions which could not always be effectively imposed. The breakdown of authority often offered them the opportunity to practise their earlier predatory life. Raids and battles over watering-places and grazing grounds became common.² The atmosphere of anarchy opened the door for violence and plunder. Al-Quḥayf al-‘Anbarī of Tamīm praised his people for plundering, saying:-

A ransom for the people who killed Mas‘ūd, plundered his new glittering weapons, fitted their helmets and clad themselves in iron![212]³

The same idea was expressed by Wāfid ibn-Khalīfa of Tamīm when he said on the flight of ‘Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād:-

Off how many a tyrant immense of ambition have we taken crown and booty,
Such a one was ‘Ubaydallāh whom we deprived of horse and weapons, and whose property we plundered.[213]⁴

1. Far., i, 258-259.

2. cf. Chapter III, p. 115 ff.

3. Mar., Mu‘j., 210.

4. Ṭab., ii, 456.

Changes in the Islamic practice apparently had to be enforced by the State, and they were revoked when the restraint was removed. Thus Ghālīb, al-Farazdaq's father brought back into slavery his ex-slave Suḥaym whom 'Uthmān had freed earlier, immediately after the revolt against 'Uthmān.¹ The decision of 'Alī, forbidding the enslaving of a Muslim, was immediately set aside during the uprising of Ibn-az-Zubayr.² But blood-feuds were by far the most potent danger. These frequently broke anew whenever state power disappeared,³ and they cast their dark shadow over the miṣr itself. Some poets aroused sentiments by citing memorable cases of blood-revenge. The revenge exacted for the murder of Ibn-al-Qiṣāf by his brother was celebrated by al-Farazdaq when he said:-

Had you been like the brother of al-Qiṣāf and like his
sword on the day of ash-Shibak, you would not have
been given to flight,
When he struck the son of 'Abla a memorable blow that
grieved some and quenched the thirst of others for
revenge,
Achieving thereby glory and emerging in the clothings of
one neither impure nor incapable of revenge.[214]⁴

On several occasions this poet inflamed the passion of his people to take their revenge as when he urged them against the Banū-Afṣā who had murdered a certain Tamīmī:-

O people of Tamīm, how excellent is your mother! You
have been confounded with a baffling disaster,
So put on the clothes of baseness, and acknowledge it
if you fail to terrorise Banū-Afṣā with raids,

1. Naq., 417.

2. cf. Ibid., 717; cf. also p.237 n.4. below.

3. cf. Ibn-Sall., 497-499; Far., i, 287-291.

4. Naq., 918; cf. also Far., i, 122, 152; Rumma, 275, 491.

If you fail either to requite the murder of the hero of heroes by killing his murderer, or to die not single but as one.[215]¹

But violence breeds violence, and killing leads to more killing, as al-Farazdaq himself indicated:-

When you killed one of us, Khidāsh, driven by deep-seated rancour and hatred,
We killed Ziyād, al-Faṣīl, Thābit; and 'Abda was smitten by the sword after Jamīl,
Thus, while you were boasting of murdering one person, five of your members paid with their lives for his.
[216]²

Even those policemen in the service of government, whose official duties impose on them the thankless task of having to kill some rebel, could not avert being implicated in the welter of tribal revenge. The idea was expressed by the Tamīmī poet, Murra ibn-Maḥkān when Muṣ'ab ibn-Khidāsh of Asad was on the point of killing him on the order of Muṣ'ab ibn-az-Zubayr, the governor of Iraq. He told the Asadī policeman:-

O Banū-Asad, if you kill me you wage war against Tamīm when ever-recurring fighting intensifies.[217]³

An earlier case in point which had tremendous repercussions and evoked much poetry was that of Hubayra ibn-Ḍamḍam of Mujāshī' who was in the police service of Ziyād,⁴ or his son 'Ubaydallāh.⁵ The gist of the episode is that the Banū-'l-Qa'qā' of Tamīm murdered a member of Banū-Ṭuhayya as a reprisal for an earlier killing, whereupon the governor

1. Far., i, 107-108.

2. Ibid., ii, 97.

3. Ṭab., ii, 803; Ansāb, iv, B, 163; Mub., Kāmil, ii, 247; 'Umda, i, 193.

4. Naq., 78.

5. Far., ii, 187.

directed the above Hubayra to pursue the Qa'qā'īs, who had taken flight. The pursuit ended in Hubayra killing one of the latter called 'Amr, who is reported to have shown his intense horror for the police act in a rajaz he recited while he was in the pangs of death:-

If you are ignorant [of me], then I know myself to be
the large measure and brother of the small one
(i.e. versatile),
Should I be killed for killing [the object] of my
revonge?[218]¹

The act of Hubayra was severely condemned by al-Farazdaq who called on the murdered man's people to take their revenge.² They, however, waited until anarchy set in after the flight of 'Ubaydallāh from Baṣra, and exacted their revenge on one of Hubayra's nephews, Mazād ibn-al-Aq'as.³ The murder of this Mazād figured prominently in the poetry of Jarīr who took it as a sign of weakness on the part of Mujāshi' as they failed to avenge his death:-

Have you not seen that the dogs of 'Awf have not ceased
dragging pieces of flesh among the dwellings of as-
Sibaqayn?

But you returned in disgrace, your food being minced
meat and flour, while the death echo⁴ (ṣadā) [of
Mazād] continued to call out to 'Iqal and Ḍamḍam.
[219]⁵

Sometimes, even when state authority was established, a
grieved family refused government aid and preferred to take

1. Naq., 79.

2. Far., ii, 187-8.

3. Naq., 79.

4. It was a myth among Arabs that when a person was murdered a bird called ṣadā (echo) would emerge from his head and would continue to call out for revenge until its call was answered and only then would it be silent.

5. Naq., 78-82.

their revenge with their own hands as did the family of 'Abbād ibn-Akhḍar who had been murdered by the Khawārij. His brother told the soldiers, "Allow us to take our revenge with our own hands," and they fought their enemies until they exterminated them. The event was celebrated by al-Farazdaq in his lines:-

In their endeavour to take their revenge, the Akhḍar family are blameless when other avengers are blamed, For they unsheathed their swords when Ibn-Akhḍar was killed, achieving that beyond which no avenger could achieve,

They retaliated for him by killing lion-like [warriors] guided by long experience whenever they plunged into the middle of the fray.[220]¹

Lack of reliance upon authority (sulṭān) in this matter is praised by al-Farazdaq:-

If you happen to be in an abode where you fear death, then be unyielding in your resolve as the Ghudani, Salim,

Who gave himself up freely to death in pursuit of revenge, and died, accordingly, as a nobleman who loathed blameworthy acts,

.....

And when he perceived the state authority would not give him redress, he died in their presence with a sharp sword,

Neither disturbed by consequences nor given to sleep, since a dedicated avenger never sleeps.[221]²

Dhū-'r-Rumma told his adversaries:-

Is it not becoming that you kill [the object of] your revenge as we killed your brother when we crushed his head with stones?[222]³

When his enemies approached the emir, he told them triumphantly:-

Though you kill me through the emir, yet then have I killed you forcibly without an emir.[223]⁴

1. Far., i, 315; cf. Mub., Kāmil, vii, 196-198.

2. Far., ii, 222.

3. Rumma, 491.

4. Ibid., 275.

The Jāhili practices relating to vengeance were often enacted to the letter. The daughter of Mas'ūd al-'Atakī, the Azdī leader whose murder at the hands of Tamīm precipitated the violent strife in Baṣra in the wake of Yazīd I's death, when the news of her father's death reached her, rode a saddled ass with her face towards its tail, her hair dishevelled, wearing a woollen cloth, shouting:-

O Mas'ūd! Whom shall we kill for you?
O Aḥnaf!¹ We will not be appeased by accepting you!
O Qafiz!¹ We will not be content with killing you! [224]²

Although they accepted blood-money, Mas'ūd's family exacted the amount payable under Jāhili custom for the murder of a king and this was ten times what was prescribed by Islam.³ But more often than not, following the Jāhili pattern, the blood-money was rejected, since acceptance was regarded a sign of weakness. Al-Farazdaq expressed the reluctance of a contemporary of his, seeking to avenge his brother:-

Don't you see that we found aḍ-Ḍabiḥ exigent regarding
the requital of his brother's death,
It was as though we were, in our attempt to convince
him, struggling with a snake on a mountain top that
would not come down,
Deaf, impervious to charms, seen by the sun but little,
Intractable and difficult to gain his confidence; when
we talk to him he refuses to answer back,
Except to say: "The young she-camels paid as blood-money
satisfy only the base man,"
And had they accepted blood-money for their revenge, we
would have offered them a large-mouthed stallion of
gentle nature. [225]⁴

1. i.e. 'Abdallāh ibn-'Āmir ibn-Kurayz.

2. Naq., 115.

3. Ibid., 117; Dīnawarī, Akhbār, 295.

4. Far., ii, 102.

The same poet was more forthright in condemning the acceptance of blood-money when he told Banū-Numayr who had lost one of their members called Jald:-

Answer the echo of Jald when it calls out to you with
short-haired horses the riders of which rival them
(i.e. the horses)[in stature],
Would your slaves kill you without any guilt [on your
part] whereas there exist among you the highest and
noblest men of 'Āmir?
Surely that which the bondsman loathes most (i.e. death)
is more conducive to truth - its path being clear,
So accept from him neither camels that are purchased at
a discount, nor black coins which are counterfeit,
Whereas if you kill [the murderer] with the axe, your
murdered kinsman will be restored to life, otherwise
killing with an axe is but a disgrace.[226]¹

On certain rare occasions poetry produced a salutary effect by taking the heat out of the protracted process of killing and counter-killing as in the aforementioned case of Banū-'l-Qiṣāf of Tamīm, whose kinsman Mas'ūd had been killed by a member of Banū-Taym-allāh during the period following the murder of 'Uthmān. At a later date some of the Banū-'l-Qiṣāf lured away the killer and murdered him while he was in the protection of Banū-Ḥāritha. Those were greatly infuriated by the infringement of their pledge of protection. The vicious circle would have been set in motion but for the initiative of al-Asla' ibn-al-Qiṣāf who was quick to compose a long poem presenting his people's case and adducing as his major argument the accepted practice among the Arabs of taking a life for a life. The poem² was so convincing that the Banū-Ḥāritha felt gratified and said, "They are a people

1. Ibid., ii, 120.

2. cf. Naq., 921.

who took their legitimate revenge, and they have kinship with us, so we have no ill feeling against them."¹

Poetry also reflects a host of Jāhili practices and notions concerning death and war. The custom of hamstringing a horse, or a she-camel, at the tomb of a celebrated man, was upheld by al-Farazdaq more than once. He is reported to have performed this ritual over the tomb of Bishr ibn-Marwān, the governor of Iraq (74/694), addressing the deceased:-

I have sworn to him that never after him shall I ride a horse perfect of tendons, without hamstringing it on the tomb.[227]²

He did the same thing over the tomb of al-Hudhayl, telling his people:-

Who will tell the men of Taghlib that I have hamstrung [a she-camel] at the tomb of al-Hudhayl that he might be remembered.[228]³

Lip service was paid to the practice by Jarīr, when he said in an elegy on Qays ibn-Dirār:-

Qays is certainly deserving that the inviolate enclosure should be declared violate for him, and that the prominent-cheeked she-camel should be hamstrung [at his tomb] when the travelling provisions it carried became light.[229]⁴

Some of the excesses of the Jāhiliyya were often given free rein especially in war. The mutilation and maiming of the dead enemy prohibited by Islam, continued to be practised. Al-Farazdaq described the grotesque sight of the vanquished 'Umayr ibn-al-Ḥubāb and his allies:-

1. Ibid.

2. Ansāb, v, 179.

3. Far., i, 289.

4. Jar., 91.

The testicles and the head of Ibn-al-Ḥubāb will give ample witness as to what happened on the day of the Araghim,
In that evening when they threw his head and testicles into the bag, [leaving him] crushed and robbed of feet,
We left the penises of the Bahilīs suspended from beneath their beards like amulets.[230]¹

The crucifixion of the dead was also common. The earliest recorded case was that of Ḥubaysh the commander of 'Abd-al-Malik, who was defeated by Baṣrīs at Rabadha.² 'Amr ibn-Ḥanẓala said regarding his crucifixion:-

May the one who placed Ḥubaysh on the wooden cross before all people - I mean Qudama of the Ajdar family - be ransomed,
He caused the most evil of riding-beasts to kneel down for him, but then Ḥubaysh had behaved tyrannically and had shown insolence.[231]³

Muslims were forbidden to take other Muslims as captives or slaves.⁴ But al-Farazdaq was also expressing a living idea when he boasted of his people's Jāhili feats in his words:-

In asking the daughters of any tribe in marriage, we direct against them a host like a lofty mountain, teeming with neighing [horses],
[And] when we meet them, our spears marry us to virgins of noble standing in the tribe,
And many a daughter of a noble man we have married, having been asked in marriage by none but the spear-head and its shaft.[232]⁵

1. Naq., 394; cf. Far., ii, 37.

2. Mar., Mu'j., 47; cf. Ansāb, v, 369-370 where al-Ḥajjāj crucified Ibn-az-Zubayr attaching a dead dog to him, an act deplored by 'Abd-al-Malik; cf. ibid., iv, B, 82 also; for the crucifixion of Ibn-al-Muhallab cf. Far., i, 215.

3. Mar., Mu'j., 47.

4. cf. Naq., 308 for a case of a captive released by the caliph 'Alī on the understanding that 'there was no captivity in Islam' but the judgement was revoked during the rising of Ibn-az-Zubayr; cf. p.230 above for another case; cf. also Naq., 717, for the first Muslim women to be captured in war by Busr ibn-Arṭa'a in 40/660.

5. Naq., 605.

Al-'Abbās ibn-al-Walīd captured the daughter of the Khārijī leader Qaṭarī ibn-al-Fujā'a and married her according to the Jāhili pattern.¹ Al-Jaḥḥāf ibn Ḥukaym as-Sulamī was expressing the same sentiment when he said after defeating the Taghlibīs at the Battle of al-Bishr:-

I was married to [women] of Zuhayr and Mālik through my sword - a forcible marriage where no dowry in dirhams was paid.[233]²

Dhū-'r-Rumma expressed the same idea when he said:-

There is many a noble group whose daughters we have taken in marriage through the points of swords and piercing spears.[234]³

Al-Farazdaq did once assert the authority of Umayyads and religious scruple to be deterrents against such practices when he told Jandal, the son of the poet ar-Rā'ī:-

Had it not been for the Banū-Marwān - the offsprings of our mother who restrained the powerful from aggression - and the faith,
Your two brides would have been given in marriage to the herder of our pregnant she-camels, while we would have bartered you at Najran for little goats.[235]⁴

Yet on another occasion he adduced this practice as being the proper procedure even in Islam. It is related that while he was in the company of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, a man asked the latter about the legality of contracting marriage with a married woman taken prisoner in war, whereupon the poet shouted to the man: Have you not heard what I have said in this respect? I said:-

1. 'Iqd, v, 186.

2. Ansāb, v, 330.

3. Rumma, 323.

4. Far., i, 178.

And many a wife, still in the custody of a husband, our
spears have given us in marriage, thus rendered lawful
- even though not divorced - for him who married her.
[236]¹

It is said that al-Ḥasan agreed to it.²

Many other Jāhili social ideals persisted for a long time in the Baṣri community. The extreme manifestations of generosity were occasionally in evidence especially in the bādiya. The famous episode of the "hamstringing" (mu'āqara) when Ghālib ibn-Ṣa'sa'a, al-Farazdaq's father, caused 400 camels to be slaughtered, brought upon him the wrath of 'Uthmān who chased him into the desert. Ghālib persisted in his defiance by calling upon pilgrims to plunder the amount of 40,000 dirhams.³ This feat was celebrated by al-Farazdaq in many poems.⁴ The practice seemed to have persisted until a much later date judging by the competition between Janāb ibn-Sharīk and the Banū-Nahshal, in which the former hamstringed eighty camels, an occasion immortalised by al-Farazdaq in a famous poem.⁵ Reference has already been made to the fury of Ziyād when al-Farazdaq, taking his father's lead, allowed people to plunder his money and clothes in al-Mirbad.⁶ But official intervention was not always the final

1. Ibid., ii, 38; Ibn-Sall., 284; 'Iqd, vi, 223; Agh., xix, 14, 33.

2. 'Umda, i, 55.

3. Naq., 417.

4. cf. Far., i, 27, 29, 38, 109, 173, 381, 387, 418; ii, 50, 65, 115, 118, 173, 199.

5. cf. Naq., 941; Far., i, 377-381.

6. cf. Chapter III, p. 121 above.

solution to these matters as the case of Murra ibn-Maḥkān, the Tamīmī poet, demonstrated. This Murra was very generous and often competed with his rival and kinsman, Abū-'l-Bakrā', in this field. When he once allowed people to plunder his wealth, Ziyād arrested and imprisoned him, an act prompting al-Ubayrid ar-Riyāḥī to say:-

You have restrained a generous man from being liberal in his wealth, but then you shall realise what intractable men his people encompass,
And if you punish Ibn-Maḥkan for generosity, you might as well - may God offer you guidance - punish the bones of Ḥatim (of Ṭayyi'). [237]¹

Thereupon Ziyād released him. To celebrate the occasion, the poet's rival, Abū-'l-Bakrā', slaughtered a hundred goats. The poet responded by slaughtering a hundred camels. The discrepancy between the achievements of the two rivals was sarcastically expressed in the line of an unknown poet:-

A generous man has purchased a hundred camels, and given them to be plundered, whereas you gave only young goats for plunder. [238]²

The Jāhili ideal underlying such activities was expressed by Muqātil ibn-Misma' who had showered benefits on people while in charge of Sijistān, and when he came to Baṣra people spread their cloaks for him to walk upon; overgratified he said, quoting the Qur'ān, "To such an end let those who endeavour direct their energies."³

Lavishing money on wine had always been a concomitant of liberality in the Jāhiliyya. The prohibition of wine in

1. Agh., xix, 9.

2. Agh., xix, 9; cf. xx, 18-19 for another extreme rivalry.

3. 'Iqd, v, 333; cf. Q., xxxvii, 59.

Islam succeeded partially - especially at the beginning - in driving the practice underground. People, especially some of those in authority, continued to drink it secretly, but the majority of poets with the exception of the Christian al-Akhṭal, were on the whole reticent in their wine songs. The hypocrisy inherent in such attitudes was revealed by Abū-Ḥuzāba of Tamīm who criticised Yazīd I saying:-

Would he drink it, when night falls, unmixed and
exquisite as musk, seeping into the heart,
And then blame those who drink it whereas his heart
yearns desperately for it if he suspends drinking
for a single day?[239]¹

Abū-Ḥuzāba, however, was more concerned with tarnishing the image of one he considered to be a lax ruler, than with moralizing about drinking wine which was very widespread in his own Baṣrī community. Already poets such as al-Farazdaq and Ḥāritha ibn-Badr, and later Abū-'l-Hindī were giving prominence in their poetry to the phenomenon. The attitude of those in authority was somewhat tolerant² and a firm ruler as Ziyād maintained a very intimate relation with Ḥāritha ibn-Badr who was given to drinking wine publicly and extolling its merits in his poetry. Ziyād even defended him when some people raised doubts as to his integrity.³ This tacit official sanction allowed this poet freedom to indulge in drinking, and provided him with latitude to sing the praise of

1. Agh., xix, 154.

2. cf. Naq., 359 for the episode of Wakī' ibn-Abī-Sūd who used indulgence in drinking to allay Qutayba's fears before revolting against him.

3. Agh., xxi, 39-40; Mub., Kāmil, iii, 190-191; cf. Pellat, Milieu, 154-156; E.I.², s.v. "Ḥāritha ibn Badr".

wine and to denounce all those who endeavoured to dissuade him from drinking. He describes vividly the soothing effect of wine, and declares his commitment to it:-

Drinking of clarified [wine] has dispelled my distress
and anxiety, and all that brings misfortunes,
And I swear by God that I shall never cease to be
passionately fond of wine even though I am blamed by
every virtuous free man,
I shall continue to drink it unadulterated, give it to
my companions, and lie in wait for the heedless
girded gazelle.[240]¹

Those who reproached him were always at the back of his mind:-

Many a slanderer who blamed me for drinking I have
rebuffed by telling him to leave me alone with what
I was drinking,
And certainly I shall never desist, as long as I live,
from taking the red liquor even though the promiscuous
continue to blame me,
Should I forsake my pleasure to follow your whims? O
son of Qays (i.e. Aḥnaf) the like of me is not
susceptible to deception.[241]²

When his kinsman al-Aḥnaf ibn-Qays advised him against
drinking he said:-

Abū-Baḥr condemns things I desire, and regards them as
loathesome, unbefitting the generous leader,
If you are a slanderer say what you will, and leave my
drinking alone, since I am not the only one who
practises it,
I shall drink it - a red liquor with the fragrance of
musk - and drink it openly in every meeting place,
You better, O son of Qays, restrict your advice to
yourself, leaving me to my own views, for my judgement
is not weak.[242]³

The fact that he was not the only one to drink it in public
was evident:-

-
1. Agh., xxi, 41.
 2. Ibid., 21.
 3. Agh., xxi, 26.

I shall continue to drink it openly - be I alone or in company - as long as pilgrims perform their duties to God,
Giving pleasure to my fellow-drinkers, following my desire and spending spontaneously all that my hand holds,
Such is living, not that of the Son of Qays and his companions, who drink water unmixed, in measured quantities.[243]¹

The continual reproach drove him to employ a polemical style which pervaded almost all the available pieces of his vinous poetry. He recorded his argument with a slanderer called Mukhāriq:-

Mukhāriq has not spared his efforts in giving advice, when he blamed [me] for drinking the choicest old wine, And I told him: O Abu-Şakhr leave people to their foolish ways, and avail yourself of glittering red liquor,
You view it when water mixes with it concertedly swaying in the hand of the girded waiter,
Its fragrance resembles musk while its smell dispels the obstinacy of the drinker by its gentle manner.[244]²

He told his friend Anas ibn-Zunaym that only his ignorance of its pleasures made him blame the poet and invited him to test it for himself:-

If the one who deprecates me for [drinking] wine would only taste it, then he would be possessed by it until he is concealed in the grave,
So whether you forsake it or praise it, we - speaking plainly - love it [in the same manner] as your Lord has caused you to love foul speech,
On what grounds would you blame wine whereas wine - like the very word from which it is derived (i.e. comfort) - relieves the youth of his anxieties for ever,
So blame me, since blaming with respect to it only increases my love for it, and blaming sometimes leads to incitement,
And I honestly swear by God that if only you drink it you will desist from reproving me, and become more inclined to excusing me,

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., 42.

If you wish try it and taste it - old with a perfume
like musk, an excellent experience,
And if, after doing this, you have not thrown off all
shame, then blame me and invoke God to curse me for
being an unexperienced weakling.[245]¹

The same polemical style was employed by his major detractor,
the above Anas:-

How long will you, O ibn-Badr, and your companions
persevere in sipping the juice of grapes?
If it is evil turn away from it, leaving it to those
given to waywardness and transgression,
And if it is a profitable acquisition, I should feel,
O ibn-Badr, that you must have become tired of
excessive indulgence in it,
And if you are aware of [evils of] wine and its drinking,
why do you commit what disgraces you knowingly?[246]²

In justifying spending money on wine, Ḥāritha adduces the same
Jāhili argument, recalling similar words of Ṭarafa:-³

Many a woman who says: O Ḥāritha, would you not spare
[your wealth] from waste? I told her to be fair,
And to advise righteousness, for I have seen that even
the possessor of immense wealth is not immortal,
And I have no fault other than drinking for my morning-
draught wine which foams whenever water mixes with it
in the cup.[247]⁴

The fact that such a practice was deemed meritorious was made
by the poet addressing al-Aḥnaf:-

I am a man who accustomed himself to a way of life, and
people undoubtedly seek to perform what they are
accustomed to,
I shall give my wealth, as long as I live, liberally and
spontaneously to others, whereas you are avaricious,
disliked by him who keeps your company,
Why do you interfere, and what is someone else's error to
you, except that all other courses of action are closed
to you?[248]⁵

1. Agh., xxi, 38-39.

2. Ibid., 38; cf. 33, 34.

3. cf. Mu'allagāt (Tibrizī's commentary, Cairo, 1369), 91;
Arberry, 83.

4. Agh., xxi, 26.

5. Ibid., 27.

Offering wine to guests which was a mark of hospitality before Islam continued to be so in Baṣra.¹ Sulaymān ibn-ʿAmr of Bakr praised Ḥāritha ibn-Badr saying:-

You have entertained us excellently, giving us for our drink a red liquor like moist amber [in fragrance], And granting us a share of what you possessed as a free gift, and you have been, O son of Badr, an excellent entertainer of travellers.[249]²

Al-Farazdaq praised a Tamīmī dignitary saying:-

He combined, out of generosity, roast with dried meat, for his guest, followed by the choicest wine.[250]³

In praising another, called Daykal, he said:-

I have drunk alone and have kept company with kings in drink, but I have never found a better fellow-drinker than Daykal.[251]⁴

Yet al-Farazdaq, unlike Ḥāritha ibn-Badr, was not an ardent advocate of wine in his poetry.⁵ He enjoyed drinking it and avoided replying to the many strictures which Jarīr passed on his conduct. His attitude - reflecting that of many of his contemporaries - seemed to have been expressed aptly by Abū-'l-Hindī - the most distinguished of early exponents of wine in Islam⁶ - late in the Umayyad era when he said:-

If I perform the stipulated five prayers every day, God will forgive my transgression,
And since I have not ascribed any partner to God, I have adhered to the firm faith,

1. cf. Iqd, viii, 8 for a specific case.

2. Agh., xxi, 21; cf. reply of Ḥāritha to it.

3. Far., ii, 18.

4. Ibid., ii, 151.

5. cf. E.I.², "Farazdaq" by Blachère.

6. cf. Agh., xxi, 277.

And since I have fought against enemies, earned an income that would permit me to visit the ancient sanctuary,
This is the true faith unconcealed, spare me the small roads that branch off from the main highway.[252]¹

The indifference of many **Arabs** to the secondary requirements of canonical law, especially when put to the crucial test, was demonstrated by the outspoken attitude of the Tamīmī chief, Wakī' ibn-Abī-Sūd, one instance of whose behaviour was noted earlier.² It is reported that when Qutayba ibn-Muslim murdered a number of Banū-'l-Ahtam of Tamīm, Wakī' refused to perform the noon, afternoon and evening prayers, and when he was reminded of that he retorted, "What can I do with prayers when a number of the Banū-'l-Ahtam were killed, and no body on earth or in heaven cared for them?"³ When Qutayba was ultimately murdered the same Wakī' ascended the pulpit, and instead of using the usual opening formula of praising God, he told his audience forthrightly:

Whoever overpowers a wild-ass sexually, he has subdued a master of sexual intercourse, [253]⁴

adding:

I am the son of Khindif whose tribes attribute to me excellent deeds, and my maternal uncles are Qays-'Aylan.[254]⁵

Thus the pre-eminence of tribalism in Baṣra had as a direct result the perpetuation of a number of these Jāhili aspects together with memories of many others, which had, to all

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1. Ibid., 280; cf. Aswad, 189 where he praises nabīdh as a substitute for wine.
 2. cf. Chapter I, p.37 n.1.
 3. Naq., 351.
 4. Ibid., 363.
 5. Ibid.

intents and purposes, disappeared physically from Arab life after Islam. Poets continued, as we have seen earlier to recall idols, and gambling in the Jāhili fashion featured prominently in tribal poetry. Ghassān ibn-Dhuhayl attacked the people of Jarīr, saying:-

They never slaughter sheep except in gambling, long
being their secret deliberations and small their
cooking pots.[255]¹

Yet Jarīr himself, in boasting of his people's hospitality, said:

A cauldron, round which people gather, with no curtain
to conceal it, we have prepared for our guests when
the she-camel is slaughtered in gambling.[256]²

Divination and the scaring away of birds for drawing auguries played an important part in their poetry. Many other superstitions persisted. The Jāhili notion that blood of nobles and kings is an effective cure of madness and rabies³ was often repeated by poets. In praising his people al-Farazdaq said:-

Those who treat [ailments] never found a more effective
cure than our blood, nor have those who drink found
a better substitute for bee-honey.[257]⁴

Al-Ba'īth gave a similar picture when he praised himself as being:-

One of the Dārimīs whose blood is an effective cure of
ailment of madness and mental disorder.[258]⁵

-
1. Ibid., 6.
 2. Naq., 504-5.
 3. cf. Ḥayawān, ii, 3.
 4. Far., ii, 154; Naq., 132.
 5. Naq., 138.

Strange competitions reminiscent of the Jāhiliyya were often pursued even in front of emirs as did two Bedouins of Tamīm and Azd, when they competed in breaking wind in front of Khālīd al-Qasrī, the governor of Iraq. The Azdī was said to have performed poorly, prompting his Tamīmī rival to say:-

You have broken wind very feebly, and were I to do it I
would make the runaway ostriches hear it,
Causing it to shoot like a catapult, its sound surpassing
in intensity the rumbling of thunder.[259]¹

The demands of Arab life, moreover, ensured the survival of some practices earlier frowned upon by Islam. A case in point is the upsurge in the fortunes of poets devoting their energies to panegyric and satire. We have seen earlier² that there existed at the beginning a kind of reluctance - changing into resistance at times - to accept the traditional claims of poets who used threats to bully dignitaries into granting them favours. The Mukhadram poet Ibn-Faswa - who was notorious for intimidating Iraqī dignitaries and forcing them to liberality through his poetry³ - indicated this attitude when Ibn-‘Abbās, the emir of Baṣra on ‘Alī’s behalf rebuffed him:-

I approached Ibn-‘Abbās hoping for his benefits, but he
neither wanted my favour nor feared my disagreeable
reaction,
And he told his door-keepers to bar my entrance, stuffing
the seams of the door against any peeping eye.[260]⁴

The poet earlier asked this emir to "assist him in carrying out

1. Ḥayawān, iv, 132; cf. Naq., ll for another example of competing in relieving bowels in Jarīr's poetry.

2. cf. Chapter II, pp.75-77.

3. cf. Agh., xix, 144; cf. Chapter II, p. 76 above.

4. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 330.

the obligations of murū'a," to which Ibn-'Abbās is reported to have replied, "What on earth is the murū'a of one who disobeys the Compassionate, utters calumnies and severs what God has commanded to be united? By God if I bestow any favour upon you I will encourage you to continue in your unbelief and disobedience. Be gone! I swear by God if it reaches me that you have satirized anyone of the Arabs, I shall sever your tongue."¹ Later on 'Abdallāh ibn-'Āmir, the emir of Baṣra (29-35/650-656) told the same poet, "By God you do not seek assistance on account of any honour, faith or rank, and I do not see why any man from Quraysh should give you anything," and the poet was ordered out ignominiously.² Later on, however, Ibn-'Āmir feared his vicious tongue and felt it necessary to placate him.³ Developments in political and social conditions contributed immensely to the recovery and growth of this kind of poetry.⁴

2. Impact of Islam:

The Jāhili infra-structure was, however, continuously modified and reshaped under the influence of Islam and urbanization despite the resurgent tribalism, which was, in its turn, undergoing important changes to suit the new conditions.⁵ This process would presumably be partially interrupted in time of insurgency, but it is important to note

1. Ibid., 144.

2. Ibid., 145.

3. Ibid.

4. cf. Chapter II above.

5. cf. Chapter I, 28-55; and Chapter III.

that what features of the Jāhiliyya asserted themselves at such times - though admittedly against the general spirit of Islam - were not so much directed against Islam as against authority in which Bedouins naturally saw an infringement of their freedom. The general framework of Islam had been accepted as the bedrock on which society rested, but naturally the assimilation of its ideals was a slow process, and consequently Bedouins continued, as we have seen, to practice their earlier activities within the framework of nominal Islam.

This duality of character in society can easily be detected in the personal conduct of poets as well as in their production. The portrait of the obdurate character of a poet like al-Farazdaq as revealed to us so far by words and deeds of his already reported, as well as by the attacks of Jarīr on him which were not altogether groundless, is tempered by other streaks of piety and religious sentiments bracketing his life. These, at a certain critical point in his life, assumed the magnitude of a spiritual crisis following which he tried to break away from his past and devote his energies to a new life of piety.¹ His failure to sustain his endeavour reflects the swing of the pendulum between stability and anarchy to which Baṣrī life was so often subjected. He was too sensitive an index of his times and community to have responded differently. Like his community which erupted every now and then in futile attempts to shake off manifestations of control and to restore vestiges of lost

1. cf. Chapter II, 127.

freedom, this poet's character reflected the stresses and strains of social change in a manner that merits studying him as a fairly accurate index of his society. As-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā said about him, "At the end of his life he desisted from slandering and transgression, and returned to religious conduct. However, even during his period of waywardness, he was not entirely cut off from religion or utterly heedless of its dictates."¹ It is reported that whenever he went out and saw the youths of Banū-Tamīm with copies of the Qur'ān in their laps, the spectacle pleased him immensely and his comment was, "May my parents be your ransom! This is how your ancestors behaved."² He was found on another occasion weeping late in a cold night in the mosque, and when he was asked by a friend he said, "I recalled my sins and they distressed me, so I sought refuge in God."³ His oft-repeated encounters with al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī - very frequent at the end of his life - in which al-Ḥasan is said to have ensured him of heavenly blessings and forgiveness of sins so long as his faith was pure, and the stories about how people saw him in a vision after his death and heard him say that God had forgiven his sins through the words he had uttered in his conversations with al-Ḥasan,⁴ most of which are obviously mythical, are extremely helpful in assessing the mood of society towards the end of the Umayyad era. By then most of the problems especially those concerned with tribal rivalry which

1. Khiz., i, 207.

2. Mub., Kāmil, ii, 79.

3. Agh., xix, 47.

4. Ibid., 47; Kāmil, ii, 77, 78-79.

were burning issues at an earlier stage eventually lost their vitality if not altogether their appeal. New relationships in the social structure were ameliorating sensibilities in a manner conducive to the cultivation of deeper feelings, social and religious. The consuming activities of an earlier period in which people were more given to waywardness and insurrection came to be viewed from the perspective of almost a century of social development in a new light. The rivalries and competitive encounters of those days came to be regarded as absurdities and sins from which absolution was earnestly sought from God, as the mythical accounts about the latter days of al-Farazdaq indicate. Similar features can be discerned in the character of Jarīr, who stood in sharp contrast with al-Farazdaq as far as personal conduct was concerned, a fact conceded by the latter.¹ Jarīr's devotion and piety were frequently praised by critics.² He was less responsive to the dominant mood than his volatile rival, judging from an anecdote which brings out this difference very clearly. Abū-'Ubayda relates that while performing their pilgrimage, the two poets met at Minā. Al-Farazdaq is said to have told Jarīr:-

You shall certainly meet at the dwellings in Minā a source
of glory [for me], so indicate to me what it is you
take pride in.[261]³

Jarīr's immediate reaction to the challenge was the formula: Labbayk! allāhumma Labbayk! (Here I am! O God I am at your service!)⁴ Yet, critics reckoned him as the severest of

1. cf. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 437.

2. cf. Naq., 32; Agh., vii, 38.

3. Agh., vii, 51.

4. Ibid.

slanderers,¹ and his contemporaries seemed to have recognized him as such. It is reported that he used to conclude his daily session of recital by indulging in praising God, a practice found distasteful by one of his audience who said, "This glorification of God is of no avail to you on account of your slandering innocent women." Jarīr simply said, "O my nephew, 'they have mingled a good deed and an evil one, maybe God will turn to them [with mercy]'.² By God they provoke me, and I find it difficult to forbear."³ The same practice was adopted by Dhū-'r-Rumma who used to say after reciting his poetry, "By God I shall pour on you (i.e. his poetry) something you never suspected: 'glory and praise be to God, there is no God but God Who is great'". The report adds that he was exemplary in performing his prayers.⁴

It is obvious that these remarks underlining the duality in the character of these poets and many of their contemporaries go beyond the simple fact of reflecting only their points of view or personal conduct. The fact that the 'good' poet Jarīr, and the 'villain' of Baṣrī community, al-Farazdaq, should both be equally dragged into actions, which both of them came to regret later in life, is indicative of the power of social forces which dictated their course. The piety of Jarīr, as well as that of his community, could not resist the upsurge of tribalism. But it is equally true that once stability was maintained, and conditions became

1. Ibn-Qut., op.cit., 437.

2. Q., ix, 103.

3. Agh., vii, 56.

4. Ibid., xvi, 128.

favourable for religious and urban sentiments to unfold, even a wayward character as al-Farazdaq was likely to feel the change and even attempted to cut himself loose from his earlier moorings. The final equilibrium in which the Islamic element by far outweighed its Jāhili counterpart was reached through a painful process of readjustment whereby the Arabs gradually adapted themselves to the dictates of their new destiny. We can trace the salient points of this evolution as they are manifested in poetic production. It is easy to discern the impact of Islam in three important areas. The physical presence of Islam as an integral part of the environment provided poets with ample material upon which they drew in description and in the formulation of images.¹ The second area is where Islamic notions are employed in matters of social intercourse. Human relations, as witness the nasīb and ghazal, came to be viewed in a new colour. The Muslim whose mind is occupied with the idea of sin speaks in the lines of Jarīr:-

The girl for which longed the heart of a repenting man,
given to prostrating himself to God, on that day at
al-Ḥamama ...

.....

So do not, in order to deny me, combine reproach for sins
with the estrangement and aloofness of one who is
proud.[262]²

He appeals to the religious sentiment of his sweetheart when he tells her on another occasion:-

Was it not more becoming for you to have feared God when
you alarmed one bent on pilgrimage who had travelled
all night and then alighted and fallen asleep?[263]³

1. This point will be elaborated in Chapter VII.

2. Naq., 986.

3. Ibid., 686.

Dhū-'r-Rumma, after describing his beloved in the most open Jāhili style where the girl is stripped of her clothing to reveal her concealed beauties, and the lover - who is described as 'the ardent seeker after corporeal pleasure' - is allowed to sleep with her in the dark,¹ ends the description of the passionate scene with the line:-

That is the girl to whom I have become unintentionally attached in love and certainly the man of noble character and the Muslim are susceptible to lurement.[264]²

In moralizing about love he utters the general statement:-

Certainly never have I seen anything like love as an ailment of the noble Muslim, nor anything like love to bring reproach to him who contracts it.[265]³

The same poet frequently describes the obsession of love in the same context as his religious experience as in his two lines:-

I direct my face towards Mecca in the morning when after the interval of night it appears to me,
And perform prayers, but when I remember her I fail to recall whether I performed two [rak'as] or eight.
[266]⁴

Complaining to God about love is a recurring feature in the poetry of Jarīr. On one occasion he invokes God saying:-

I beseeched the Owner of the Throne, the Patron of Muḥammad, to bring a dispersed group together or make a remote [resident] draw near,
O Owner of the Throne, I shall never, as long as I live, desist from seeking Sulaymā, so decree what you will.[267]⁵

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1. Rumma, 4-5.
 2. Ibid., 6.
 3. Ibid., 43.
 4. Ibid., 652.
 5. Jar., 174; cf. 173.

Al-Farazdaq calls the memory of his beloved a delusion (ghurūr) distracting him from prayers. After describing the vision of his beloved salmā he went on to say:-

But when the caller summoned [people] to prayers, I
arose, having been in delusion with respect to it.
[268]¹

Islam and its virtues were employed extensively in panegyric and satire. In addition to what we have noted earlier in connection with Umayyad caliphs and their governors, Islam was freely used even in the naqā'id, whose mainspring was the Jāhiliyya. Al-Farazdaq, in satirizing Bal-Ḥārith ibn-Ka'b, whom he accused of following Judaism, boasts:-

No! I swear by Him who honoured us by Islam, and Who
causes the dead to be buried in tombs,
The Banū-'d-Dayyan never achieved any merit or virtue.
[269]²

'Umar ibn-Laja' told Jarīr:-

Our women were not forced to ride behind [our enemies]
at the Battle of al-Hudhayl, nor did they stand in
line to prostrate themselves to the idol Sajja,
On the contrary, we have protected them in polytheism by
shafts [of spears] and in Islam we have believed the
Prophet Muḥammad.[270]³

In praising al-Ḥajjāj, al-'Ajjāj said:-

Never had he fulfilled any affair or faced a difficult
situation in war without seeking the blessing of his
Lord.[271]⁴

Islam also features in satire in different forms. In satirizing Ṭayyi', al-Farazdaq says:-

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1. Far., i, 283.
 2. Far., ii, 347.
 3. Ibn-Sall., 366.
 4. 'Ajj., 23.

Never had a Ṭā'ī woman experienced the healing of a wound caused by circumcision, nor was she ever found performing prayers in a mosque devoted to the faith.[272]¹

Ru'ba satirizes the opponents of his tribe Tamīm saying:-

Tamīm is afflicted by groups,
Who are neither maternal nor paternal uncles of ours
when the edge of the sword quivers in war,
They never guard themselves against the penalties imposed
by Islam, because of the flimsiness of their faith
and [their] disregard of kinship.[273]²

In satirizing al-Ba'īth, Jarīr said:-

And when I direct myself towards you, your treatment of
me is not that of Muslims, nor do you display
generosity towards me.[274]³

Jarīr, furthermore, refers frequently to the Qur'an and exposes the failure of those he censures to recite it. He sarcastically speaks of Sukayna, the paternal aunt of al-Farazdaq:-

Sukayna stood up to stallions, but she - the daughter
of al-Ḥutāt - refused to stand up when the Sura
of the booty⁴ was recited.[275]⁵

He speaks of al-Ba'īth and al-Farazdaq:-

Certainly al-Ba'īth and the slave of the Muqā'is family
never recite the Sūra of al-Aḥbar⁶. [276]⁷

And castigates al-Farazdaq in his line:-

May God curse al-Farazdaq when he spends his evening
wasting away the detailed and oft-repeated [portions
of the Qur'an]. [277]⁸

1. Far., i, 115.

2. Ru'b., 137.

3. Naq., 40.

4. Q., viii.

5. Naq., 322. It seems that there is no particular reason why this Sura of the Qur'an is mentioned.

6. i.e. Q., v. 1.

7. Naq., 340, where the poet is said to have meant that they do not fulfil their obligations.

8. Jar., 459.

He further indulges in criticizing his transgression:-

No Muslim neighbour of al-Farazdaq's is safe from a
monkey spending his whole night sleepless,
You have transgressed all the inviolable limits of God
since your boyhood, and when your hair became grey
this failed to restrain you.[278]¹

The third area in which the influence of Islam is
conspicuous comprises the diverse instances in works of poets
where the religious element features as either an immediate
experience or an underlying factor in personal attitudes.
The religious experience comes out vividly in the poetry of
al-'Ajjāj, who is otherwise given to Bedouin themes. He
devotes a complete poem of rajaz comprising 71 hemistichs²
to the description of a critical moment in his life when he
was overcome by illness and his family despaired of his
recovery, but at the last moment the mercy of God came to his
rescue and he was spared death. In addition to departing
from the conventional prelude and substituting for it
religious themes in a number of his poems,³ he is always
conscious of his faith, even when he treats the conventional
themes of tribal glory and the like. In boasting of his
people Tamīm he started one poem by saying:-

I swear by God had it not been for my fear that the
angels tormenting the damned should use me as fuel
for Hell-fire where there is no one to call upon
for succour,

[Placing me] among the inmates of Fire whose skins have
been excoriated, the ignorant ones would have known
that I overpower them,

1. Naq., 396.

2. 'Ajj., 5-7.

3. cf. Chapter VII.

[by] fracturing their heads, striking away the death-echo
from skulls, and wounding them in ear-holes.[279]¹

In another poem he invokes God to forgive his sins before
proceeding to boasting:-

O my Lord, the Lord of the sanctuary and the white-
washed [edifice], and the swift she-camels traversing
every barren, wide desert,
It is you I invoke, so accept my supplication, forgive
my errors, and bring my endeavours to fruition,
Whenever a war is waged, it is our custom to heed
neither any debt we might incur, nor stragglers who
fail to catch up.[280]²

The same device was used by his son Ru'ba. Before praising
Maslama Ibn-'Abd-al-Malik [d.120/738], he confesses his
shortcomings to God saying:-

O my Lord if I ever err or forget, you neither forget
nor die,
Certainly the one who gives protection like that
rendered to me - when He rescued me from what I
feared -
Is my Lord but for whose defence I would have passed
away - and only serious endeavour caused me to reach
what I have reached.[281]³

In a true Islamic spirit Ru'ba tells his detractor, before
praising his people Tamīm:-

O you who exposes himself to missiles after missiles,
If you are fearful of God and obedient to Him, then it
is contrary to truth to initiate [new courses],
Whereas God has shown you a convincing truth; certainly
nothing equals piety as a sustenance to him who seeks
pleasure,
And forbearance is the best that compels a man to
abstain from sin and viciousness,
And When a wicked man persists in obscene speech then
ignoring him is a sufficient defence against all
contemptible base men.[282]⁴

1. 'Ajj., 14.

2. Ibid., 40.

3. Ru'b., 25.

4. Ru'b., 87-88.

Al-'Ajjāj resorts to such notions even in his descriptions of desert animals. In one poem he ends such a description on this sobring note:-

O my Lord - I know not whereas you are Omniscient - every man is at a stipulated distance from you,
Are we, the two of us (i.e. the poet and his riding-beast),
passing over among those who pass over, or passing away
with those passing away?[283]¹

In another he prefaces the description of camels by the lines:-

O my Lord, you restore the broken [man] to his former
state, and give sustenance to the begging poor,
You have given [me] a herd of growling camels, brown,
reddish white, brisk and yielding much milk,
You never spoilt the unstinting gift by creating troubles
as punishment, nor was it overburdened,
Nor [did you exact] a back-breaking hire - they continued
that day trying to avert the hot and scorching wind.
[284]²

Even in describing the waywardness of his youthful days his son Ru'ba was careful not to exceed the lawful limits:-

The emaciation of my body - like yours - has disturbed you,
since grey hair is the headgear of [approaching] death,
And my roughness after active youth, when I never
distinguished, even if you asked me,
The difference between the worship of a Friday and that of
a Saturday, being young and tender not bothering about
the date of [any] fixed appointment,
Like the eel moving rapidly in a rock cavity, being both
a human being and a jinni, as you have described,
Committing everything short of absolute debauchery, but
now I came back to [my senses], and my conduct has
become upright.[285]³

These glimpses, patchy as they are, indicate the indelible mark of Islam, and the effect it had on the consciousness of the

1. 'Ajj., 26.

2. Ibid., 24.

3. Ru'b., 23-24; cf. 88 where he is more explicit about chastity.

Quasi-tribal community of Baṣra. Although it is exceedingly difficult to fathom the depth of sentiments underlying the framework of such religious themes, especially in the poetry of those poets devoting their entire energies to portraying traditional Arab life in its different facets, we can accept them at least - even if we doubt the sincerity of some of their authors - as genuine reflections of the community, or that part of it such poets represented, i.e. the quasi-tribal element of Baṣra. Although the marginal position, from a statistical point of view, of Islamic elements in their poetry on the one hand, and the dominance of traditional themes such as satire, panegyric, description of animals, deserts and the like on the other hand do not warrant any sweeping statements about the prevalence of Jāhili life over that of Islamic structure of society, it can nevertheless legitimately be said that this kind of poetry - with both elements taken together - represents one extreme end of the social scale where the traditional elements reigned supreme, especially in times of rebellion. A more realistic picture of the tumultuous life of Baṣra, however, cannot be reached without considering what was taking place at the other extreme end of the same social scale. The most articulate exponents of social transformation here are the Khārijī poets. Despite their rebellion against the Islamic jamā'a, their poetry reflected the puritanic spirit in its extreme forms. Their rebellion against the political jamā'a arose from what they thought to be the failure of this jamā'a to live up to the demands of the

Islamic system as they viewed it. We therefore notice the Islamic element in some of them, instead of co-existing with the traditional element side by side in the same character, revolting against the other component. Thus tribalism which constitutes the bulwark of the social system came under attack from some of their poets. 'Īsā ibn-'Ātik al-Khaṭṭī substituted Islam for it as an object of boasting:-

My parent is Islam beside which I have no other parent
when they boast of Bakr and Tamīm,
Either tribe supports the one claiming lineage among
its members in order to link him up with those of
noble descent,
But there is no nobility in descent - even though the
origins are noble - only the pious man is noble¹.
[286]²

This line stands in sharp contrast with what Abū-'l-Aswad maintained in his line:-

The best intrinsic quality a man can count upon in any
condition, once he has accepted Islam, is nobility of
origins. [287]³

Although 'Imrān ibn-Ḥiṭṭān utilized to full advantage the benefits of the tribal system in his flight from al-Ḥajjāj, and said:-

One day I am a Yemenī when I meet a Yemenī, and a
'Adnani when I meet a Ma'addī, [288]⁴

he expressed his disgust with tribal affinity which many tribes prized above all values, in a poem in which he praised an Azdī group who offered him hospitality:-

1. cf. Q., xlix, 13.

2. Khaw., 13; cf. Watt, Integration, 100.

3. Aswad, 165.

4. Khaw., 23; Agh., xvi, 153; Mub., Kāmil, vii, 85.

I felt secure among them unlike that group who started
by enquiring whether I belonged to Rabi'a or Muḍar,
Or the tribe of Qaḥṭan; and that is certainly¹ foolishness
as it proved with Rawḥ and his friend Zufar²
None among them but is pleased with a relationship that
would make me one of their members, even though they
are numerous,
We are but the sons of Islam, and God is one, and the
best deserving of God among his servants are those who
are thankful.[289]²

Their revolt against the status quo provided them with
heightened insight into the maladies of their society and they
often contrasted the prevailing practices with their puritanic
ideals. In addition to their bitter criticism of Umayyad
administration they attacked a variety of social features which
must have been of considerable importance to their
contemporaries. The marked note of asceticism which
impregnated their poetry, especially that of 'Imrān ibn-Ḥiṭṭān
whom al-Āmidī described as "the most gifted of poets in the
matter of asceticism,"³ is worthy of attention. 'Imrān
detested the acquisitiveness of the people around him and
never tired of pointing out the futility of their endeavours
which are invariably thwarted by death:-

This life of ours has no splendour, nor is this abode
of ours a [real] abode,
I can see that we are never tired of living in it, and
that we are rendered desirous of covetousness and
expectation,
Whereas neither it nor we will continue [to survive]
indefinitely, nor are we given the choice,

-
1. Rawḥ ibn-Zinbā' of Judhām, and Zufar ibn-al-Ḥārith of Kilāb, two Arab dignitaries with whom the poet sought refuge from al-Ḥajjāj.
 2. Agh., xvi, 154; cf. Khaw., 64, 74 for references favourable to tribal affinities.
 3. al-Mu'talif wa-'l-Mukhtalif, 91 No.245.

And our wealth is but borrowed stuff which the one who
lent it shall eventually retrieve from the borrower.
[290]¹

Such a hollow endeavour should not engage the attention of or
deceive the wise man who is not given to dreams and vain hopes.

'Imrān proceeds to exhort and warn:-

How long should souls be given death to drink from cups,
while you are playing and enjoying easy living?
Or is it that you have become content with being diverted
with wishes, whereas you are being pushed every day
[nearer] to death?
It is only visions or passing shadows, and the man of
judgment is never beguiled by the like of it,
So amass provisions ceaselessly for the day when you
will become really destitute, and gather [merits]₂ for
yourself; it is not for others that you do.[291]²

But nonetheless the majority of mankind whom he describes
as 'damned' never lose interest in the pleasures of this
world, however hollow or transitory these might be:-

I perceive that the wretched among men never get tired
of it despite the fact that they are naked and
starving therein,
I view it - even though it is loved - as though it is a
summer's cloud that will soon clear away,
Just like a party of travellers who, having satisfied
their wants, departed, their road being well marked
and broad.[292]³

Consequently death as the inevitable end features prominently
in his poetry. He once told his wife:-

If death is a distasteful matter to you, depart and seek
the inhabitants of another earth who do not die,
And you will not find an earth inhabited by human beings
who will not come [through birth] and go away [through
death].[293]⁴

1. Khaw., 18, No.31.

2. Ibid., 17, No.29; cf. Dhahabī, iii, 284.

3. Dhahabī, iii, 284; Khaw., 17-18, No.30; cf. also P.19
Nos. 32, 33, 34.

4. Khaw., 16, No.27.

Although the death of his friend and leader, Abū-Bilāl Mirdās ibn-Udayya which he lamented passionately,¹ was the most devastating blow to his emotional life, as well as that of many of their associates, and must inevitably have heightened his predilection for describing death in passionate terms, death as a favourite theme flowed naturally from his view of the world as a transitory and void existence in which even death itself - the destroyer of existence - is destroyed:-

Nothing but its Creator defeats death, and death itself
is destroyed when fate overcomes it,
And every grief - compared to death - is insignificant,
death being overriding above everything else.[294]²

Attachment to such a void life reflects a lack of confidence in God whose bountifulness is unlimited.³ Many social ills arose from this weakness. The intensity of this poet's sentiments were a natural reaction to the indulgence of his Baṣrī community in worldly pursuits. When the poet passed by al-Farazdaq and heard him reciting an encomium, he told him:-

O you who praise the servants [of God] to be given
favours, to God belongs all that their hands possess,
So ask of God what you have demanded of them, and await
the favour of Him who distributes [favours] and
repeats his gifts,
Do not credit the generous man with things that are not
his due, nor give the miserly the title of a generous
man.[295]⁴

1. Ibid., 16-17; Mub., Kāmil, vii, 82-83.

2. Agh., xvi, 151; Khaw., 28, No.51; cf. P.28 No.52;
PP.30-31, No.57.

3. cf. the lines of 'Urwa ibn-'Udhayna, P. 278 No.319 below.

4. Agh., xvi, 156-7; Mub., Kāmil, v, 185.

But al-Farazdaq was not alone in hankering after other people's wealth. The same attitude was taken by soldiers who gained their livelihood from the state in return for killing others. 'Imrān overheard some soldiers saying, "Why should we not fight the Khārijīs? Are we not receiving our stipends regularly?" He reflected cynically:-

If some Jews or Christians were sent forth to lead them,
They would have said, "We are content as long as you
maintain our pensions, and continue to provide us
with our share of the wheat of Kaskar.[296]¹

The intense piety and devotion of the Khārijīs was also shared by a number of the qurrā' and quṣṣās, whose activities played an important role in counteracting the militancy and highhandedness of Bedouin elements. Although poetry did not preserve a record of many of their activities, their influence on some poets was remarkable.² The influence of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī on al-Farazdaq is attested by the anecdote related by Ibn-Sallām,³ the gist of which was that the poet came to al-Ḥasan and requested him to listen to a satire he had composed on Satan. When al-Ḥasan rebuffed him by telling him that he had no intention of listening to what he had to say, al-Farazdaq retorted menacingly, "You will listen, otherwise I shall go out and tell people that al-Ḥasan forbids people to castigate Satan." Al-Ḥasan had to listen to the satire which ran as follows:-

1. Khaw., 20, No.35; cf. Yāq., Buldān, s.v. "Kaskar".

2. This point will be elaborated in Chapter VI.

3. Ṭabaqāt, 284; cf. Agh., xix, 14, 33.

I have obeyed you, O Devil, for seventy years, but now
that my entire hair has become grey, and my life
has neared its end,
I took flight to my Lord, confident that I shall
eventually encounter my death,
And when the head of that which I feared, drew nearer -
and this I considered an unavoidable encounter,
I swore to exert myself in all conditions whether of
perfect health or sickness,
How often has the parent of jinnis, the Devil, given
free rein to the she-camels [of my desires],
Constantly does he lure me with desires, as he rests his
thigh on the saddle, sometimes in front of me,
sometimes behind,
Conveying to me the good news that I will not die, and
that he will make me immortal in paradise,
enjoying peace,
And I told him, "Was it not more becoming that your
right hand should have rescued your minor brother
(i.e. Pharaoh) from swollen green seas?[297]¹

Then he proceeds to describe how Satan had lured Pharaoh and
how, after plunging him into the Red Sea, he betrayed him;
how he persuaded the people of Thamūd to hamstring the she-
camel, Adam and Eve to leave Paradise, concluding:-

How many generations, who had obeyed you - living, as
it were, under the shadow of thin clouds - were
reduced to mere tales,
O Devil, you are not the person whose pleasure I seek to
secure, nor the one who will lead me by the reins.
[298]²

The immense influence exerted by al-Ḥasan, and the wu‘‘āz in
general, on al-Farazdaq is further demonstrated by the story
related about their meeting at the burial ceremony of either
the poet's wife or a Baṣrī learned man. After the burial
al-Ḥasan exhorted people and warned them, and when he sat
down, al-Farazdaq is reported to have stood up and recited

1. Far., ii, 213.

2. Ibid., 214.

the lines:-

A failure indeed is such of Adam's offsprings as walks
to Fire fettered by the neck, blue of complexion,
I fear beyond the tomb - if He does not forgive me - what
is hotter and more oppressive than the grave,
When a merciless leader shall approach me on the Day of
Resurrection, a driver to drive off al-Farazdaq.[299]¹

The influence of the quṣṣāṣ is also very potent on the
rajaz poets, as we shall see in the following chapter. It is
sufficient to indicate here that in addition to the various
religious themes which impregnated their works, we perceive
in some of their compositions the beginnings of didactic
poetry, which is obviously the result of their contact with
the quṣṣāṣ. This is very marked in al-'Ajjāj, especially in
the poem where he describes vividly his conception of the Day
of Resurrection:-²

Is not the day entitled 'the Day of Resurrection' the
greatest day of rumbling and bustling?
[It is] the day when you behold every nursing mother
deny her baby the breast, and every pregnant woman
miscarry,
And every sober person drunk and boisterous, disregarding
the sanctuary frequented by pilgrims,
[When] the firmaments and constellations are rent, so
that their surface can be seen split,
And He commands the seas to swell, and it is that day
which causes Gog to come forth,
And drives Magog to come out of its rubble; and
[people] are reduced into two parties:
Those who enter a blissful paradise and drink honey
mixed,
With ice-cold rain-water, and those who scream with
intense clamour,
The fire being heard to blaze as it approaches them.
[300]³

1. Agh., xix, 47; cf. Far., ii, 39.

2. The same theme is treated in a similar manner by 'Imrān
ibn-Ḥiṭṭān, the Kharijī poet in an effective poem of
16 lines; cf. Khaw., 30 No.57.

3. 'Ajj., 11, No.6.

Al-'Ajjāj is said to have recited another poem, in which he also described the Day of Resurrection, to Abū-Hurayra, the Prophet's Companion and Traditionist who told him: 'I bear witness that you believe in the Day of Reckoning.'¹ But the impression made by these groups was not always a good one. The experience of Dhū-'r-Rumma with some of the qurra' seemed not to have been a happy one, judging from the lines of bitter satire he composed on them:-

As for the beverage of dates (i.e. wine) be not
horrified by those who drink it, but beware of
those who drink mere water,
They are a people who conceal what is in their hearts,
so that when they get the upper hand, they become the
real ailment,
Tucking up their clothes to reveal half their legs, they
are the real thieves, yet they are called reciters
(qurra').[301]²

ii. OTHER SOCIAL ASPECTS

While the strife between the two ideals of the Jāhiliyya and Islam continued unabated in both its revolutionary and evolutionary forms the mundane business of society had to be conducted in a manner that would allow the maximum social stability possible under such conditions of political and social unrest as prevailed in Baṣrī community. The rapid urbanization of the miṣr and the tremendous flow of wealth from the newly conquered territories all helped to put the foundation of civilized life on a sound footing, which was

1. Agh., xxi, 85.

2. Rumma, 661.

not easily shaken by the incessant Khārijī raids or the endemic tribal wars.¹ This urban development with its attendant problems regarding the distribution of power and wealth imposed its own codes and dictated certain patterns of behaviour, if not fully documented in poetry, at least their general features are reflected.

The most important single factor here was the growth of state power into an elaborate machine of enforcement, coercion and also a source of immense wealth. The Arabs readily recognized that "while glory and nobility (su'dad) rested on chieftainship in the Jāhiliyya, in Islam they rested on investiture of office."² The power and respect which office bestowed on individuals - scarcely known before - was pointed out by Ibn-Mufarrigh when he satirized 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād:-

Reason with yourself - and you will discover a warning
there - whether you have ever acquired any honour
except through assuming the office of emir,
Sumayya has lived all her long life in ignorance of the
fact that her own son is one of the multitudes of
Quraysh.[302]³

An index of the power of the state was the terror that the sight of a policeman excited in a man's heart, as demonstrated by the case of al-Farazdaq when two policemen of his own tribe played a practical joke on him.⁴ Jarīr experienced a similar fright on another occasion.⁵ An ordinary individual

1. cf. Chapter I, social development, p.26 ff.

2. Mub., Kāmil, iii, 6.

3. Agh., xvii, 67.

4. Ibid., xix, 25.

5. cf. Naq., 32.

as ad-Dahnā', the wife of al-'Ajjāj put her case in a nutshell when she tried to justify her reluctant tolerance of her aged husband:-

By God had it not been for fear of the emir, the policeman and [my concern for my] son,
I would have rambled with the shaykh, [carrying him]₁
from al-Baqīr like an intractable she-camel.[303]

The Company of the emir ensured many benefits and people sought access to him. Nearness to those in authority became an object of boasting. Jarīr said:-

I have become the poet surest of favour with those in command over people, the one who shoots furthest when arrows are shot. [304]₂

The more powerful the patron the better for the poet. Dhū-'r-Rumma made this clear when he satirized Marwān ibn-Abī-Ḥafṣa:-

[Mine] are the gifts of the commander of believers,
and not a medley of scattered shares offered by different benefactors,
Whereas you never acquired any gift - until your hair became grey - but that which you tie to your cloak when you get up.[305]₃

The prestige of an individual is measured by the accessibility of the emir to him, as in the lines of Dhū-'r-Rumma:-

To many an emir in whose presence people remain silent with eyes cast down like male bustards before a falcon,
I gained admittance once my name was [announced] to him, my virtues being of immense dimensions.[306]₄

In praising his father al-'Ajjāj, Ru'ba said:-

-
1. 'Ajj., 77.
 2. Jar., 277.
 3. 'Umda, i, 84-85.
 4. Rumma, 57.

Al-'Ajjāj has established a [great] reputation, so call me by a name which - when genealogies become long - suffices for me,
How excellent as a successful seeker of admittance is my father when the monarch's gate become difficult to penetrate.[307]¹

But the frequent succession of caliphs and emirs resulted in drastic changes in the positions of those favoured by their predecessors, as Jarīr implied when he asked one of those enjoying the caliph's favour to intercede on his behalf:-

O you man who is loosening his turban! This is your time, mine has passed away,
Tell our caliph if you ever meet him that I am [waiting] at the door like a camel tied to another.[308]²

The benefits of emirs were in most cases confined to kinsmen and close associates. Nepotism was common, and poets alluded to the practice quite often. Thus when Ibn-'Abbās expelled Ibn-Faswa from Baṣra, the poet, referring to the Baṣrī family of Zahrān whose daughter Ibn-'Abbās married, said:-

Had I been a member of the Zahrān family I would have satisfied my need, but, alas, I am only the client of Jamil ibn-Ma'mar.[309]³

The same idea was expressed by al-Farazdaq in a satire on Khālīd al-Qasrī.⁴ Yet the emir who controlled financial matters and especially stipends and pensions ('aṭā') could exert considerable pressure and inflict hardships on his opponents.⁵ Jarīr experienced this hardship when his pension was withdrawn by Ibn-Sa'd at the time of 'Umar II:-

1. Ru'b., 160.

2. Jar., 486.

3. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 330; cf. 76, 248-249 above.

4. cf. Chapter IV, p.193 verse No.149.

5. cf. Chapter I, 32 above.

You have deprived [of my allowance] children who possess
no fruit whereas Ibn-Sa'd enjoys sugar and raisins,
And I used to think that Ibn-Sa'd would offer me
happiness, but then conjectures are liable to err,
If you restore my allowance to me, it will be only a
few nights' enjoyment which will be soon paid back
[to the treasury].[310]¹

But more often than not emirs used the 'aṭā' as an instrument
of persuasion. Ziyād used it to lure back al-Farazdaq when
the poet fled from him:-

Ziyād has invited me to [receive] a pension, but never
will I draw nearer to him as long as noble men
continue to pay abundant [dowries],
If indeed he is willing to make grants, then there are
many in Ziyād's company much reduced by poverty.[311]²

Some emirs used it in an irregular manner to favour some of
their intimate associates.³ But the practice did not always
go unchallenged. When Ziyād transferred the Dīwān of his
friend Ḥāritha ibn-Badr, the Tamīmī poet to that of Quraysh,
securing thereby for him the maximum stipend, the incident did
not pass unnoticed, and a poet of Banū-Kulayb alluded to the
malpractice in an indirect and sarcastic manner by commenting
on the side-issue of Ḥāritha's origin, in these lines:-

I bear witness that Ḥāritha ibn-Badr is a Ghudānī in
shape and speech,
Sajāḥ is nearer to him - in the Book of God - than
Nawfal and the sons of Hisham.[312]⁴

Ways and means were employed to influence those in authority
to increase the 'aṭā'. The same Ḥāritha ibn-Badr whose 'aṭā'

1. Iqd., vii, 305; Mub., Kāmil, vi, 46.

2. Far., i, 187; cf. i, 199 for another case with Yazīd ibn-
al-Muhallab; also cf. Ibn-Sall., 286.

3. Earlier Mu'āwiya used the device to promote one of his
generals to the highest rank, but the candidate's calibre
seemed to have merited the promotion; cf. Jāḥiẓ, Taj, 57.

4. Agh., xxi, 22.

was 1600 dirhams seized the opportunity of Walīd I's horse winning a race, and after congratulating him he proceeded to say:-

There is only a short step to [achieve] the pension of two thousand [dirhams], an increase of four hundred still remaining,

If ever I should die they would be yours, meanwhile they will be a source of enjoyment to us for some years.

[313]¹

The caliph agreed to the increment on condition that it should be shared between them, so his 'aṭā' was raised to 1800. When another horse of the caliph won the race, the poet repeated the performance, saying:-

The two thousands have been precluded only by a minor hitch, but they are now nearer than before,

So grant them to me as a favour, may my soul be your ransom, for my hopes are pinned to some of your bonds.[314]²

The caliph ratified the increase making his stipend, 2,000 dirhams.³ The dependence of a large number of people, especially those in the military service on the 'aṭā' was recognized and jeered at by 'Imrān as we have seen earlier.⁴ Increase in stipends was also used as an incentive to soldiers to exert greater effort in fighting. Thus in the Battle of Dūlāb (65/684), when Baṣrīs were fighting against the Khawārij, Ḥāritha ibn-Badr, who was put in command over Baṣrī troops shouted, "Any of the mawālī who joins us shall receive the stipend of an Arab, and any Bedouin who joins us shall receive

1. Ibid., 27.

2. Agh., xxi, 27.

3. Ibid.

4. cf. p. 266 No. 296 above.

the stipend of an emigrant." But when he saw the suffering of his men at the hands of the Khawārij, and the futility of their endeavour, he said:-

The penis of an ass is the allowance fit for your youth,
while the testicles are the portion of Bedouins,
As for the mawālī - may they bite their father's penis -
they are the ones doomed to disappointment.[315]¹

The central role that the Dīwān system played in maintaining the livelihood of many Baṣrīs is demonstrated, if only negatively, by the practice of Abū-'l-Aswad ad-Du'alī who refused to join it. A friend of his - al-Ḥārith ibn-Khulayd, who drew the maximum pension rebuked him in the words, "What is it that prevents you from seeking the Dīwān wherein lies much wealth and many benefits?"² His antipathy to the Umayyads together with his Shī'ite leanings influenced his decision to reject the official subsidy. The result was penury and destitution from which he suffered throughout his life as we shall see presently.

The administrative power and the powerful Dīwān system helped the growth of a thriving economy based on commerce and agriculture. Soon this reflected itself in the stratification of society into categories of the rich and the poor. People's appetites for acquiring riches were whetted by the spectacle of riches pouring into the pockets and treasures of rich Baṣrīs. Poets exerted themselves in covering long distances to secure wealth:-

1. Agh., xxi, 40; cf. vi, 3-5.
2. Agh., xi, 114; Aswad, 133-4.

The daughter of the Ghawthī says, "Why are you here whereas you are a Tamimī whose territory lies in the east?" And I told her that desires, in addition to overwhelming anxiety besetting me, cause the youth to traverse distances.[316]¹

To acquire wealth became the major concern of people:-

I have written to you seeking wealth either at your hands or at the hands of your father, al-Haytham.[317]²

Jarīr, in satirizing al-Farazdaq, jeered at him for following a course he should not have followed had he been true to his convictions. When the latter approached the Qaysī al-Muhājir, Jarīr said:-

I can see that when God withheld riches from you, you returned to Qays, humiliated.[318]³

But wealth is a scarce commodity, and only the lucky few could hope to acquire it. The masses whose hopes are inevitably dashed in pursuit of better standards often bear their sufferings with fortitude and patience, though some might direct their energies to anti-social activities to secure what has escaped them through lawful pursuits. The poverty and degradation of these people often featured in poetry addressed to caliphs and their governors as we have seen in the previous chapter. But this discrepancy in wealth, wide as it was, did not leave a clear impression on poetry. Although much poetry dwelt at great length on depicting poverty and suffering, scarcely any poetry, not even that of Khārijīs, dwells on exposing the defects of the wealthy and the resentment of the poor against them.⁴ It seemed that the poor had no real cause

1. Far., i, 84.

2. Ibid., ii, 201.

3. Naq., 691; Ibn-Sall., 355.

4. cf. Chapter I, pp.50-51.

for complaint as far as the rich members of their respective groups were concerned. The many cases in which an individual as al-Farazdaq could rely on the liberality of his rich kinsmen¹ are evidence of the co-operative spirit that informed their relations. Outsiders, too, were sometimes apt to give a helping hand in adversity. Asmā' ibn-Khārija of Fazāra passed by al-Farazdaq, and saw him smearing his camel with tar, and said, "O Farazdaq, your poetry has become unsaleable, and sovereigns have thrown you away to the extent that you have been reduced to treating your camels! I offer you a hundred camels." The poet sang his praise in gratitude.² The prominence of al-Farazdaq ensured the survival of this anecdote for us, but there is no cause for doubting the recurrence of similar acts with many other individuals of whom we have no record. The liberality of dignitaries like Yazīd ibn-al-Muhallab, Mālik ibn-Misma', 'Umar ibn-'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ma'mar, Bilāl ibn-Abī-Burda and many others is almost legendary.³

But the nature of such a diversified and competitive community is such that it evokes a variety of responses ranging from apathy and resignation to bitterness and frustration. The philosophizing attitude which is informed by religion, bordering on absolute resignation is represented by the attitude of 'Urwa ibn-Udhayna who said:-

1. cf. Mub., Kāmil, iv, 242-243; Naq., 381; Ibn-Sall., 262-263.

2. Agh., xix, 35.

3. cf. 'Iqd, i, 224, 231, 233-236.

I have known - extravagance not being one of my qualities -
that what has been [destined] as my sustenance would
come to me,
I endeavour to [obtain] it, but the endeavour irks me,
and had I sat [waiting for it], it would have come to
me without trouble,
How much property and manifest amounts of unstinted
sustenance have I acquired and consumed,
And neither have I become insolent in consequence of
affluence, nor has my soul been humbled because of a
hardship afflicting me,
I am noble of character, and my soul never tells me that
God will ever leave me without sustenance.[319]¹

The effect of fatalist ideas, rife at the time, on some
individuals was complete resignation, as in the case of Abū-Ḥarb,
the son of Abū-'l-Aswad ad-Du'alī who was said to have refused
to leave his father's house and to engage in any profitable
work, dismissing his father's misgivings by saying, "If I am
entitled to any sustenance it will come to me."² Whether
such attitude was a direct result of indoctrination by the
theological schools who asserted the prevalence of God's decrees
- immensely utilized by Umayyads to break resistance to their
regime - is an open question. Abū-'l-Aswad told him:-

Livelihood is not earned by wishing, but by sending your
bucket down with others,
An act securing for you on one day a bucketful of pure
water and on another mud and scanty water.[320]³

Nevertheless the arbitrariness of the apportionment worried
people. Abū-'l-Aswad saw in it the finger of fate:-

I marvel at this world and the covetousness of those
inhabiting it, seeing that sustenance is apportioned
between them,
But what excites my wonder most is [the paradox resulting
in] the fool receiving sustenance in plenty and the
prudent deprived of livelihood,

1. Agh., xxi, 164; Murtaḍā, Amālī, ii, 69.

2. Agh., xi, 117; Aswad, 186.

3. Aswad, 187; Irshād, iv, 281; Agh., xi, 122.

And only then was my wonder dispelled, having realized that the matter is one of sustenance dispensed according to a stipulated schedule.[321]¹

Others were inclined to dismiss it, recognizing that wealth by itself, could not transform a man completely, as in the line of al-Farazdaq on al-Muhallab:-

Do not imagine that a few dirhams you have amassed, will efface your shameful record at Oman [‘Umān]. [322]²

But in any case, wealth brings with it a code of behaviour not always congenial to the taste of old acquaintances. Ṣakhr ibn-Ḥabnā’ once rebuked his richer brother, al-Mughīra, saying:-

I see that when you have acquired some wealth, and noticed the straits in which a ferocious time has landed us, You persisted in charging me falsely with committing crimes, please desist and do not make your wealth a reproach to us. [323]³

Abū-’l-Aswad told an old friend of his:-

Is it because of a good [fortune], your acquiring of which pleased me, that you changed your attitude towards me, so that I mistook you for a ferocious lion? [324]⁴

The vices of a commercial community are obvious. People tend to cheat to obtain easy money. Ru’ba is said to have called the banking quarter of Baṣra, ‘dār aḡ-ḏālimīn’, (the abode of the unjust), and the name stuck for a long time.⁵ Abū-’l-Aswad preserved for us many instances of the behaviour

1. Aswad, 236.

2. Agh., xix, 28.

3. Mub., Kāmil, iii, 12.

4. Aswad, 125; cf. also, Aswad, 248-245; Sīrāfī, Akhbār, 92-93; ‘Ajj., 39-40; Ru’b., 99-100.

5. Agh., xxi, 89.

of traders in this respect. He revealed the trick of the trader Withāq:-

Withāq desires [to acquire] my she-camel, and [at the same time] he exposes its faults, seeking to beguile me in respect of it,
And I told him, "Know well, O Withāq, that it is an inviolate enclosure forbidden to you for ever.[325]¹

Of Aws ibn-‘Āmir, another camel dealer, he said:-

Aws ibn-‘Āmir approached me concerning my she-camel entitled at-Ṭayfā’, at the time of its training, so that he might beguile me with respect to it,
And he made a desperately small offer, for which even the money was not ready, bringing forth with him a soul wholeheartedly given to fraud,
And I retorted by swearing, "Had I been given double your price, you would not have led it by the head - keen as you are to acquire it." [326]²

The dishonesty of Nāfi‘, the poet's servant and trading agent, is conveyed to us in realistic terms:-

If you are ever in search of someone who would honour trust, leave Nāfi‘ aside, and look for someone else, capable of undertaking it,
For the lad is a deceitful liar whose evil soul is detested by its closest friend,
Whenever he finds himself alone with something in his trust, the whole or part of it is misappropriated,
If he fails to get it in the morning, he will eventually declare his bankruptcy regarding it or [pretend] that demand for it has slackened,
And he will waste it away until it is reduced to an insignificant size, assailed by all kinds of subterfuge,
Yet he is the most enduring of men with regards to fatness, as it is the case with dogs, the fattest among them being most given to stealing.[327]³

The existence of widespread poverty amidst modest wealth entailed the adoption of begging as a means of obtaining livelihood on a large scale. The practice of major Baṣrī

1. Aswad, 111-112; Agh., xi, 115.

2. Aswad, 113; Agh., xi, 115; cf. also Aswad, 146-147; 172-173.

3. Aswad, 166-167; Agh., xi, 121; cf. also Aswad, 224.

poets in this respect needs no further mention here. The predominance of the practice is further attested by the involvement of poets representing other groups. Thus the Khārijī poet, 'Imrān ibn-Ḥiṭṭān, whose poetry on asceticism has been treated elsewhere, employed a unique religious argument to achieve the object of his request:-

I have felt a need which, I presume, will be satisfied if
I approach you regarding it,
If there is profit for me in accepting the gift, yet is
the profit greater for you in giving it,
For you will ultimately secure absolute [divine] rewards,
together with my thanks in this world; thus is your
portion the heavier [in the scales].[328]¹

The poetry of Abū-'l-Aswad, despite his exhortations to the contrary,² abounds in requests and in invectives against those who failed to respond favourably to his demands.³ In one of his long poems he gives advice on how to approach patrons of different characters. He starts with the line:-

Whenever you approach a generous man seeking to satisfy
a need, your meeting and greeting him should be
sufficient.[329]⁴

He proceeds to advise caution in overtaking him with requests if he delays his response. But in the case of the avaricious he advises a different approach:-

When you request a base man to satisfy a need, falter not
in persistence, using gentleness,
And make the front of his door your residence, holding to
it tightly as the creditor holds a debtor.[330]⁵

1. Khaw., 27, No.49.

2. cf. Aswad, 212-214; Agh., xi, 107-108.

3. cf. Aswad, 109, 122, 124, 127, 136, 140, 142, 149, 157, 164-165, 193, 199-200, 214-215, 219, 240, 248-249, 250.

4. Aswad, 235.

5. Ibid., 236.

Abū-'l-Aswad, further, furnishes an apt example of another social phenomenon arising from inadequacy of resources in a competitive community. His proverbial stinginess is frequently quoted by chroniclers.¹ He told his detractors once:-

They blame me regarding stinginess out of ignorance and misguidance, whereas being stingy is better than being reduced to begging from a stingy man.[331]²

He explained his strict philosophy on financial transactions to a friend who wanted to give him a carpet as a present, but the poet refused to accept it as such, insisting on paying a price for it, saying:-

Sell me, O Nasīb, and do not give me [anything] as a reward, for I never ask a reward [from anyone], or recompense the one offering it,
For the gift is best when you put it in the right place, when you consider praise and reward rightly due,
And there is a kind of gift which turns out to be a source of loss, enduring blame, and false reproach,
I have fathomed men's chronicles and deeds, achieving thereby immense knowledge and experience,
So when I give a promise I act as a debtor who recognizes the debt he contracted and invites a scribe [to record it],
Until I fulfil it according to my promise, though none but me need call for the fulfilment,
And whenever I act I act without [expecting] reckoning, your Lord being sufficient in rewarding and reckoning,
And when I deny [somebody a gift] my denial is categorical, relieving the supplicant of much importunity,
I never purchase short-lived praise at a price of ever enduring blame.[332]³

Poverty drove others to break the law and adopt highway robbery and larceny as a means of obtaining livelihood. A poet of this category, Fur'ān ibn-al-'Araf of Tamīm, left us his impressions in three lines, in which he tried to justify his conduct:-

1. cf. Agh., xi, 108-109, 114, 116.

2. 'Iqd., vii, 220.

3. Aswad, 212-213; Agh., xi, 111.

Some men say that Fur'ān is a transgressor, whereas it
is surely God who has apportioned to me my children,
and my property,
Four of them males like vultures, and four females, still
feeding from the breast, making their total eight
dishevelled human beings,
Who, when food is prepared - spare none for the absent and
care nothing for him who is away.[333]¹

The upshot of all these tendencies was the eventual growth of social relationships based - in contradistinction to the traditional tribal bonds - on an individual rather than a communal basis. The drive to seek power and wealth in the company of the emir or caliph, heightened the growth of personal relationships. Prominent figures such as Ḥāritha ibn-Badr, a chieftain of Tamīm, Anas ibn-Zunaym, ibn-Mufarrigh and others came to be known more through their personal friendships with emirs than through their tribal records. Their competition to secure the favour of the patron created a remarkable category of literature running parallel to that evoked by the rivalry between tribal poets, and in most cases utilizing the same form of munāqaḍa. The emphasis here, however, is on the individual and his personal merits and defects. The intense rivalry between Ḥāritha and Anas - close associates of 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād, who seemed to have enjoyed instigating them - revolved mainly round this central theme of betrayal of friends. When Ḥāritha composed the two lines on Anas:-

I have changed heart regarding Anas, whose friendship is
all deceit and treachery,
I perceive him to be versed in harming friends - the
worst of friends being those given to mischief.[334]²

1. Ibn-Qut., Sh., ii, 627.

2. Agh., xxi, 23.

Anas readily replied:-

Of treachery and ungratefulness, O most evil of friends,
you hold the [full] register,
I have known him as such in older times [as intimately]
as the eye is known to its pupil.[335]¹

The intense personal relationship between patron and protégé
comes out clearly in the lines of Anas addressed to 'Ubaydallāh:-

Ask my emir what caused him to change heart about his
relation with me which he has forsaken,
Do not humiliate me after your honouring me - for it is
hard to discontinue a habit.[336]²

It is not amiss to mention here that ideological
differences as well as partisan leanings also tended somewhat
to weaken the traditional communal solidarity and to encourage
individualism. The case of Abū-'l-Aswad is also instructive
here. As a dedicated Shī'ī he found himself amidst a
community that did not share his views and was openly hostile
to him. His 'Uthmānī neighbours of Banū-Qushayr used to
stone his house at night and claim that it was God who did it.³
Such intense hostility, and the concomitant feeling of
alienation, invariably generate intense feelings of friendship
among members of alienated communities. The obsession of
Abū-'l-Aswad with friendship is attested by the numerous
references to it in his dīwān - itself an autobiographical plea
for friendship.⁴ The remonstrances and reproofs he

1. Ibid.; cf. also 24; Aswad, 126, 127, 127-129, 130 for
a series of similar interchanges.

2. Agh., xxi, 25.

3. Aswad, 176-180; Agh., xi, 116; cf. E.I.², article by
Fück.

4. cf. Aswad, 109, 122, 124-143, 153-156, 158, 164-165, 171-
173, 185-186, 193, 194, 198, 199, 202-203, 206-208, 214-215,
216-217, 219, 224, 241, 245, 246-249, 250.

addressed to his friends underline his acute sensitiveness to matters of loyalty and betrayal in friendly relations.

After indicating his long suffering in his lines:-

I have become so much accustomed to affliction that
it has become a habit of mine, prolonged suffering
having caused me to resign myself to patience,
Too much suffering has increased my capacity to endure
injury, and how often has my patience worn thin about
it in the past,
Unless I accept as a matter of course all that Time
brings against me, my reproach of Time will be end-
less.[337]¹

He records a number of failures in his attempt to forge friendly relations,² and advocates caution in one's handling of friends:-

Whenever you love, exercise moderation in your passion,
since you don't know when it will change,
And whenever you hate, sever not all bonds, for you
don't know when friendship will be restored.[338]³

But once friendship is created, forbearance is essential:-

If you do not forgive a friend who has erred, but
punish him whenever he slips,
You will be friendless; so be easy-going, and accept
his apologies whenever he offers one.[339]⁴

Abū-'l-Aswad's poetry on friendship is in direct contrast to his poetry on tribal and communal relations. He did in one line boast of his people's valour:-

I belong to a people who - when they wage a war against
an enemy - mount the attack with youths who dash
forward like meteorites.[340]⁵

But elsewhere his attitude is different. His intense feeling of the Islamic bond is evident despite a line in which he

1. Aswad, 227-228; Yaq., Irshād, iv, 282.

2. cf. Aswad, 122, 202, 248.

3. Ibid., 138-139; Agh., xi, 116.

4. Aswad, 241.

5. Ibid., 134.

mentioned Islam alongside ancestral glory.¹ In adducing the reasons preventing him from slandering his kinsmen he said:-

Deterring me from foolishness, obscenity and slandering
of kinsmen are four traits:
My reserve, my being a Muslim, my mildness and my nobility
- the like of me being capable of causing harm and
good.[341]²

But the dissolution of communal solidarity is made clear in another poem where he declares his independence of his people:-

Though my people be the owners of sheep and camels and
numerous herds, the grazing grounds of which cannot
be numbered,
Yet have I no need of their wealth or their glory so
long as the returning traveller races his shadow,
Your relationship to me was like drizzle, whoever grazes
beyond it is restricted, and whoever seeks fertile
land [therein] finds barrenness.[342]³

Once the communal bond is weakened or disrupted, other bonds had to be sought to replace it, and hence the ceaseless endeavour of Abū-'l-Aswad to seek friends outside his tribal group. The same attitude can also be seen among the Kharijī poets whose poetry seethes with sentiments regarding the fallen friends as we have seen earlier in the case of 'Imrān ibn-Ḥiṭṭān and his reaction to the death of his friend Abū-Bilāl Mirdās ibn-Udayya.⁴

1. Ibid., 165; cf. p. 262 above, verse No.287.

2. Ibid., 149-150; Agh., xi, 117.

3. Aswad, 249.

4. cf. Khaw., Nos. 5, 13, 20, 27, 50, 62, 70, 73, 77, 84, 93, 95, etc.

iii. THE MAWĀLĪ

The settlement of Arabs in the miṣr brought them into direct contact with the local population - called Anbāṭ (Nabataeans) - who tilled the agricultural lands in their vicinity, as well as with Persian prisoners of war who were brought into the area in their thousands.¹ But the conquest only brought to a head a process which had been going on - if only on a very limited scale - for a long time before Islam. The eastern tribes of Arabia were in close proximity to Persians, and some of them as in the case of Banū-'l-'Amī (or al-'Amm) became Persianized,² a state inviting against them the invectives of Jarīr at a later date.³ Reports about Arab chiefs married to Persian women are current as in the case of al-Midhabba, the mother of Qufayra, the great grandmother of al-Farazdaq who was said to have been given by Chosroes to Zurāra ibn-'Udus of Dārim,⁴ an incident providing Jarīr with his main argument against his rival al-Farazdaq. The conquest made it commonplace for Arabs to take Persian slave girls for wives, a practice resulting in a huge class of half-breeds entitled hujanā (sing. hajīn, i.e. one born of non-Arab mother). Traditionally such individuals were deemed inferior and the Jāhilīs denied them the right of inheritance.⁵ The policy of Umayyads was said to have been against their appointment as

1. cf. Chapter I, 39-48.

2. cf. Ṭab., i, 2535-2538.

3. cf. Chapter III, 131, No.31 above.

4. Naq., 211.

5. 'Iqd., vii, 143.

caliphs, the argument being that Arabs would not pay allegiance to them.¹ Yet many of them,² being sons of outstanding Arab fathers, secured high positions in the state, and this in turn exposed them to the virulent attacks of satirists. The sensitivity of their position in society is born out by the encounter of the family of Ziyād who ruled Baṣra from 45/665 to 64/683 with Yazīd ibn-Mufarrigh, himself a mawlā, claiming a Ḥimyarī lineage.³ His main line of attack rested on the charge that they were of foreign origin. He started by questioning the fictitious device by which Mu'āwiya, the first Umayyad caliph claimed the brotherhood of Ziyād ibn-Abīhī. He told Mu'āwiya:-

Now convey to Mu'āwiya, son of Ḥarb, an urgent message from the Yemenī man:
Would you be angry when told that your father was chaste and feel content when told that he was an adulterer?
I bear witness that your relationship to Ziyād is similar to that of the elephant to the offspring of a she-ass,
And that she (i.e. Sumayya) conceived of Ziyād while Ṣakhr was away from her.[343]⁴

The poet also puzzled over the social status of each of the three sons of this Sumayya thus underlining the complexity of the social system under which the three sons of one mother enjoy three different positions:-

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1. Ibid., vii, 144; thus Maslama ibn-'Abd-al-Malik (63-120/682-738) forfeited his right of accession because his mother was non-Arab. It was only in 126/744 that Yazīd III whose mother was a Sughdī slave acceded to the throne following a revolution.
 2. cf. Chapter I, p.48 n.4.
 3. cf. Ibn-Khall., Waf., ii, 289; Agh., xvii, 52; Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 319.
 4. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 322; 'Iqd, vii, 147; cf. Ṭab., ii, 191.

Ziyād, Nāfi' and Abū-Bakra¹ strike me as being the wonder of wonders,
In the sense that the three of them were fashioned in the womb of a single female with three different lineages,
One of them claims to be a Qurashī, the other a mawla,
while the third claims his cousin to be an Arab.[344]²

He then rebutted the claim of Ziyād that his mother Sumayya was from Tamīm:-

I swear that neither Ziyād belonged to Quraysh nor Sumayya to Tamīm,
But, rather they are the progeny of a slave deeply rooted in baseness, and of a harlot.[345]³

And he told 'Abbād and 'Ubaydallāh, the sons of Ziyād:-

O 'Abbād, baseness is ever attached to you, and you have neither a mother nor a father among Quraysh,
And tell 'Ubaydallāh: You have no real father and nobody knows your pedigree.[346]⁴

He claims that their origin was Nabataean and tells them so:-

Now inform 'Ubaydallāh, the 'Ubayd (i.e. minor slave) of baseness, the slave of Banū-'ilaj, on my behalf:
You have claimed descent from the noble lords of Quraysh, leaving, after your act, no room for disputation in matters of faith,
Show me whether Yathrib (i.e. Medina) encompasses a Zandward - a village of your vile Nabataean ancestors.[347]⁵

He demands that they return to where they belong and engage in the menial work of tilling the land in their village of Zandward:-

Certainly the 'Ubayd (i.e. minor slave) and what his wife produced belong to slaves begotten of adulterous mothers who perform no prayers,
At Zandward, where you should take your hoes, replacing the waist-wrappers with Persian breeches.[348]⁶

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1. Ziyād was son of Abū-Sufyān; Nāfi' was said to be the son of al-Ḥārith ibn-Kalada of Thaqīf, while Abū-Bakra was the son of Nufay' ibn-Masruḥ, an Abyssinian slave.
 2. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 323.
 3. Agh., xvii, 67; Sumayya was a Persian slave; cf. E.I.¹, "Abū Bakra", by Houtsma.
 4. Agh., xvii, 59.
 5. Ibid., 65; cf. also 64, 65, 66, 67, 68.
 6. Ibn-Sall., 556-557.

Earlier (about 53/672) al-Farazdaq stressed the Persian origin of Ziyād when he rebuked Miskīn ad-Dārimī for lamenting the death of Ziyād, telling him:-

Would you mourn the death of an infidel from Maysān who behaved in his time like Chosroes or Caesar?[349]¹

The satirization of the family of Ziyād by Ibn-Mufarrigh became so widespread and damaging to their reputation that 'Abbād and 'Ubaydallāh arrested the poet and subjected him to all kinds of torture and persecution and only the intervention of the caliph (Mu'āwiya or Yazīd I) spared his life.²

The Arabs' consciousness of their race as distinct from their non-Arab subjects was heightened the closer they came into contact with the latter. The feeling of uneasiness, and sometimes of horror, at the adulteration of their pure race by foreigners is strongly reflected in satirical interchanges between poets. The device, noted earlier³ through which poets declared their opponents non-Arab, was not entirely without basis. As has been pointed out the great grandmother of al-Farazdaq was Persian, and the mother of al-Ba'īth was actually a slave-girl from Iṣfahān.⁴ The number of Persians

1. Far., i, 201.

2. cf. Ibn-Qut., Sh., 320-323; Ṭab., ii, 192-195; Yāq., Irshād, vii, 298; Ibn-Sall., 554-556; Agh., xvii, 54-57; cf. Pellat, 151; cf. also, Pellat, "Le Poète Ibn Mufarrigh et son oeuvre", Mélanges Louis Massignon, Damascus, 1957, iii, 195-232.

3. cf. Chapter III, P.135 above.

4. Naq., 40.

and half-breeds was immense, as appears from the plea of al-Aḥnaf on their behalf to Mu'āwiya.¹ This mixed breeding exposed many to invectives of dissatisfied poets. 'Amr ibn 'Afrā' of Ḍabba who incurred the displeasure of al-Farazdaq occasioned the lines:-

Had he been a Ḍabbī I would have forgiven him even though
his snakes and scorpions crawled over my foot,
But alas he is a Diyāfi (i.e. Syrian Nabataean) on the
side of both parents, his relatives currently pressing
oil at Ḥawran.[350]²

Ṣāliḥ ibn-Kudayr of Māzin who was rich but stingy was censured by the same poet:-

If you ask the elders of Māzin's family your lineage will
be traced back to an outsider of shameful record,
How many an outsider there is in the hamlets of Maysan -
rustic, his palms tattooed - who is a relative of
Ṣāliḥ's.[351]³

The proximity of some Arab tribes to these "Anbāṭ" laid them open to the charge of foreignness. This is apparent in the satire of al-Farazdaq on the tribe of Ṭayyi'. He once said:-

Ṭayyi' is nothing but tribes driven from all sides to
[settle] among the dwellers of 'Ayn at-Tamr,
No Ṭa'i woman would ever know who her father was, not
even if she asked every skilful genealogist about
her pedigree.[352]⁴

On another occasion he called them Nabataeans:-

I never feared that Ṭayyi' would slander me, seeing that
they were but Nabataeans, who never wrapped turbans
round their heads,

1. cf. Chapter I, p. 48 above.

2. Far., i, 46; Diyāf was a Syrian hamlet, cf. Naq., 29.

3. Ibid., i, 124; on others cf. ibid., i, 119, 172;

Agh., xix, 24.

4. Far., i, 41.

[They are] Nabataean villagers whose mothers never covered their faces with shawls or felt the touch of sharp razors [in circumcision],
And the Ṭa'i never knows the origin of his father even if he asks every learned man about Ṭayyi',
Nothing gives protection to a Ṭa'i but a piece of lead stamped by the government of the day,¹
Whenever a Ṭa'i comes down to a place with his body free from tattooing, he is fair game (i.e. enslaved) to whoever lays hand on him.[353]²

The same poet similarly derided the Azd when he called them 'the Nabataeans of Iraq'.³ Their acquaintance with these Nabataeans made parallels easy as in the lines of Jarīr on Ṣalīṭ:-

Ṣalīṭ as their name indicates are sharp-tongued, and were it not for the Banū-'Amr who are noble,
I would have said that they were Diyafis or Nabataeans.
[354]⁴

It is evident that the Arabs detested the fusion of foreign blood even from the mother's side as al-Farazdaq indicated in his praise of 'Abbād ibn-'Abbād ibn-'Alqama:-

Having a broad forehead, noble of root and sons, having never known the taste of [milk from] the breasts of a slave mother.[355]⁵

It seemed that such a slave wife or concubine did not enjoy a respectable social status as in the remark of al-Farazdaq concerning his daughter Makkiyya whose mother was a Negro:-

If you do not count her mother as one of your womenfolk, certainly her father is a father who does not discredit her.[356]⁶

1. See below, pp. 296-7.

2. Far., ii, 275; cf. also i, 114-115; ii, 117, 270, 288, 341; 'Umda, i, 109-110.

3. Far., ii, 270.

4. Naq., 29.

5. Far., i, 170.

6. 'Iqd, vii, 104.

The marriage of a mawlā to an Arab girl (ḥarīra) was a rarity at the beginning and the practice was always hedged with difficulties.¹ But as the social standing of the mawālī improved through acquisition of wealth and Arab culture cases of such marriages are reported here and there. Yaḥyā ibn-Abī-Ḥafṣa was at the centre of an intense controversy for doing just this. His father Abū-Ḥafṣa was a Jewish mawlā of 'Uthmān, freed shortly before the caliph's assassination in 35/656.² Yaḥyā asked 'Amra, daughter of Ibrāhīm ibn-an-Nu'mān-ibn-Bashīr the Anṣarī in marriage from her father and paid a handsome dowry. The proposal aroused a violent storm of protests from his Arab contemporaries who attempted forcing the father to reject the offer, but the latter refused to give in to their pressure. The following lines, possibly by his detractors, were attributed to him:-

The twenty thousand [dirhams] left no room for idle talk,
and I do not bother about what slanderers say,
In giving [my daughter] in marriage to a mawlā I am
impelled by an established tradition, and by the love
of dirhams.[357]³

The marriage of the same Yaḥyā to another Tamīmī girl, Khawla daughter of Muqātil ibn-Ṭulba ibn-Qays ibn-'Āṣim engendered a greater wave of hostility and provoked many poets. The Baṣrī poet al-Qulākh al-'Anbarī reacted by saying:-

-
1. cf. Chapter I, p. 47 above.
 2. Ibn-Mu'tazz, Ṭabaqāt, 44.
 3. Ibid., 44; 'Iqd, vii, 145-146.

I was told that Khawla - when he gave her in marriage -
said: Long have I expected disgrace at your hands,
You have married [your daughters] to two slaves desiring
the benefits of their wealth - may you chew, for what
you have desired, dust and stone -,
How excellent are the noble horses (i.e. daughters) put
under your charge, which now you have debased despite
marks of nobility on their feet and foreheads.[358]¹

When the poet learnt that the dowry was paid in clothes he said:-

Peace be on the remnants of Qays ibn-‘Āṣim, decayed and
rotten as they are in the grave,
Would you waste away noble Arab horses (i.e. girls)
rendering them worthless so that they have none but
the mawālī for husbands?
Never have I seen clothes more inviting to disgrace, nor
a more debased wearer or a worse bestower of clothes.
[359]²

The incident prompted Jarīr to compose scabrous lines which
may be more discreetly translated:-

I perceive that Muqātil, son of the noble Ṭulba, allowed
the mawālī to fornicate his daughters,
You have married [your daughters] to a slave, progeny of
a slave, of those redhaired ones with disfigured beards,
Do not boast of Qays, for you have disgraced his memory.
[360]³

The hostility of Arabs in general to marrying their daughters
to mawālī is corroborated by the testimony of a half-breed
(hajīn) late in the Umayyad era praising the Ibādīs, a Khārijī
sect, who advocated equality:-

We have found our Dastawānīs, who are steadfast in
fasting and piety,
Better than you in glory and faith, may God disgrace the
haughty ones,
Is there among you one who marries [his daughter] to one
born of a slave-girl?[361]⁴

1. Ibn-Qut., Sh., ii, 739-740; Mub., Kāmil, iv, 213; ‘Iqd,
vii, 146; Ibn-Mu‘tazz, op.cit., 44.

2. Mub., Kāmil, iv, 214.

3. Ibid., 215.

4. Bayān, i, 43.

Nor was it in connection with marriage alone that hostility was manifested. Arabs did not conceal their disdain of the mawālī or entertain any doubt as to their inferiority. Jarīr said:-

The fore-feathers of the wing are not fashioned in the same way as the bird's tail, nor are the mawālī like those of pure descent.[362]¹

Their social inferiority is pointed out by Dhū-'r-Rumma in praising Bilāl ibn-Abī-Burda:-

[You are] seas [of bounty], rulers, judges and chiefs when other people become mawālī. [363]²

The glaring disregard for their feelings as human beings in comparison with Arabs appear in the line of Jarīr on Ṭu'ma ibn-Qurṭ who demanded a price for entertaining him when he had come to him as a guest:-

They said: Purchase from us a she-camel for slaughter, and I told them: Sell [it] to the mawālī but feel ashamed of [displaying such niggardliness to] Arabs. [364]³

Sometimes such derogatory remarks infuriated them and drove some of them to reply. When Jarīr said:-

Do not seek a maternal relationship among Taghhib, for Negroes are nobler than they as maternal uncles. [365]⁴

a Negro, Riyāḥ ibn-Sunayḥ answered him, defending his people and attacking Jarīr.⁵

The ignominy to which al-Ḥajjāj subjected them when he returned them to their villages, stamping on their hands the

1. Jar., 433.

2. Rumma, 660.

3. Jar., 46; for their reaction to this depreciation, cf. Mub., Kāmil, iv, 193.

4. Jar., 363.

5. cf. Mub., Kāmil, vi, 82; on Negroes in Baṣra, cf. Ibn-Ath., Kāmil, iv, 314-315.

names of their hamlets, was expressed by a rājiz in his lines:-

A girl who did not know how to drive camels was by al-
Ḥajjāj caused to go out of a place of concealment and
shelter,
Were Badr and Ibn-Ḥamal present, your palms would not
have been marked without protest.[366]¹

This marking 'naqsh' continued to be a sign of humiliation to
the mawālī and poets exploited it in satire as did al-Farazdaq
earlier in his satire on Ṭayyi'.² Another poet satirized a
mawlā saying:-

You are the one whose palm was marked by the 'Ijlī,³
whereas your old father fled seeking refuge with
al-Ḥakam.⁴[367]⁵

A further mark of their degradation was the treatment they
received when they joined the army.⁶ The verses of Ḥāritha
ibn-Badr concerning them which we have noted earlier⁷ bear out
their inferior status. They suffered many other social
disabilities⁸ and certain social functions, not necessarily
mean in themselves, were deemed worthy of them such as giving
testimonies in courts⁹ and religious studies.¹⁰ The learning
of a mawlā was no guarantee of any social standing. When
'Abdallāh ibn-al-Ḥaḍramī¹¹ criticized the poetry of al-Farazdaq,

1. 'Iqd, iii, 368; Mub., Kāmil, v, 10.

2. cf. p. 292 above, verse No.353.

3. One of Banū-Sa'd of 'Ijl commissioned by al-Ḥajjāj to
deport the mawālī.

4. al-Ḥakam ibn-Ayyūb, the deputy of al-Ḥajjāj in Baṣra.

5. 'Iqd, iii, 367; cf. also 368.

6. cf. 'Iqd, v, 163 for practices of Mu'āwiya, 'Abd-al-Malik
and Hisham.

7. P. 275 No.315 above.

8. cf. Chapter I, pp. 45-48.

9. Mub., Kāmil, iv, 164; Naq., 369.

10. Mub., Kāmil, iv, 193.

11. cf. Chapter I, p. 64 above.

the poet dismissed him by saying:-

Had 'Abdallāh been a mawlā I would have censured him, but
'Abdallāh is only a mawla of some mawālī. [368]¹

He reacted in a similar way in his encounter with 'Anbasa al-Fīl, the grammarian who used to learn the poetry of Jarīr and to prefer him to al-Farazdaq. He found it sufficient to remind the mawlā scholar of his father, Ma'dān who was the tender of an elephant belonging to the emir of Baṣra 'Abdallāh ibn-'Āmir of Ziyād:-

There lay in Ma'dān and the elephant a sufficient
deterrent for 'Anbasa who is transmitting odes against
me. [369]²

The sensitivity of 'Anbasa to this satire was such that when he was asked about it he substituted "al-lu'm:baseness" for "elephant" an act prompting the enquirer to say, "Certainly an object from which you seek refuge in baseness is a grave thing."³

Yet the progress of the mawālī was spectacular and many Arabs could do nothing beside expressing their uneasy feelings in mere words. Abū-'l-Aswad and Ḥāritha ibn-Badr were sitting near a public road when they saw the dignitaries of Baṣra going to the public bath of Fīl, the mawlā of Ziyād, after a feast celebrating the completion of this mawlā's new house. The spectacle of such great men riding in the company of a rich mawlā grieved them immensely. Abū-'l-Aswad reflected:-

1. Nuzha, 11; Bughya, 282.

2. Sirāfī, Akhbār, 24; Nuzha, 7; Irshād, vi, 91;
Bughya, 368.

3. Ibid.

[I swear] by your father's life that the bath of Chosroes did not amount to two thirds of that of Fil.[370]¹

Ḥāritha finished the dialogue:-

And that our hurrying behind the mawālī was not our custom at the time of the Messenger [of God],[371]²

The preponderance of these foreign elements³ and their achievement in all walks of life, helped to minimize social friction between Arabs and mawālī in the miṣr. Despite the preceding remarks about Arab hostility to them, the general picture in Baṣra was one of tolerance. An index of this general amity was that such a large community of mawālī who produced the major philologists, grammarians, traditionists, qurrā' and others who set Baṣra firmly on the path of cultural achievement, failed to produce a single poet to voice their grievances, except Bashshār whose mature development belongs rather to the 'Abbāsīd period.⁴ It is true that certain philologists such as 'Abdallāh ibn-al-Ḥaḍramī and 'Īsā ibn-'Umar were regarded by contemporaries as anti-Arab,⁵ and that 'Ubaydallāh ibn-Ziyād was the first to order the collection of anecdotes disparaging Arabs,⁶ but on the whole the tone of both sides seemed to have been tolerant. Poets in their sober moods did recognize the glories and merits of Persians. The term 'banū-'l-Aḥrār' (offsprings of free men)⁷ recurs

1. Agh., xxi, 43; Bal., Futūḥ, 494.

2. Ibid.; cf. E.I.¹, "Abū-'l-Aswad", by Reckendorf.

3. cf. Chapter I, 48, 61.

4. cf. Chapter I, 60.

5. Nuzha, 11; Bughya, 282; Muwash., 41.

6. cf. Chapter III, p.122 above.

7. cf. Suhaylī, ar-Rawḍ al-Unuf (Cairo, 1914), i, 55; Ibn-Shajarī, Amālī, i, 174.

frequently in poetry referring to ancient Persians,¹ a theme exploited by Bashshār at a later date.² The emotional bonds that bound many Arabs to them through marriage and the like were destined to leave their mark on their attitudes. Al-Farazdaq said regarding his daughter whose mother seemed to have been Persian:-

What if her maternal uncle was of the folk of Chosroes?
Chosroes was better than 'Iqāl,
[In that] he received more capitation fees, and in being
more steadfast when spears cross [in battle]. [372]³

Jarīr said of his personal experience with his Persian wife:-

You have increased my affection for the people of Rayy
and have endeared the mawālī manyfold to me.[373]⁴

In praising his son from her, Bilāl, he said:-

Bilāl is not disgraced by his mother, his maternal and
paternal uncles being different,
His sweat smells like musk, it is unlawful to Muslims to
slander him.[374]⁵

It was not long before Bilāl himself boasted of his maternal uncles in an interchange with a half-brother of his who used to jeer at him:-

Many a maternal uncle of mine, white-faced and bright,
from the family of Chosroes, was crowned,
Unlike a maternal uncle of yours called 'Ashnaj.[375]⁶

The rajaz poet Abū-Nukhayla, despite his endeavours to acquire an Arab lineage among the Banū-Tamīm⁷ which invited against him

1. cf. Far., i, 269, 307; ii, 111.

2. Agh., iii, 33.

3. Ibid., xix, 21; Far., ii, 95.

4. Jar., 496; Mub., Kāmil, v, 53.

5. Jar., 437.

6. Mub., Kāmil, v, 51.

7. Agh., xviii, 145.

the sarcasm of Ru'ba¹ and al-Farazdaq,² could equally boast of his Persian blood when he said:-

I am the son of Sa'd but I occupy a good position among
Persians thus securing the best of maternal and
paternal uncles.[376]³

The influence of the mawālī in the Umayyad court and their contribution to the success of their policies impelled Jarīr to praise them, and to go out of his way to declare their equality with Arabs, basing his claims on the fiction that the Arabs and Persians derive their origin from Abraham.⁴ He said about 102/720:-

The offspring of Isaac are lions when they put on the
sword-belts of death, cladding themselves in armour,
One day they are clad in armour, the other in silk and
finely woven garments,
When they boast they count among their dignitaries
Ṣabahbadh, Chosroes, the family of Hurmuzan and Caesar,
You perceive among them those who are steadfast in
guidance, and the one crowned among them could assume
the gait of a powerful satrap,
White-faced as an excellent stallion-camel when he puts
on buttoned coat of mail over Coptic linen,
They used to have a Book and a Prophecy among them, and
they were monarchs at Iṣṭakhr and Tustar,
Al-Waḍḍah,⁵ marked in battle, has exerted his utmost,
bequeathing thereby to the people of Barbar a lasting
glory,
Our father, the father of Isaac, binds us together - a
father who was a rightly guided and purified Prophet,
From us was Solomon, the Prophet who invoked [God], and
was given an edifice and a subservient domain,

1. Ru'b., 87; cf. Ibn-Qut., Sh., ii, 584.

2. cf. Agh., xviii, 142.

3. Mub., Kāmil, v, 54; Ibn-Qut., Sh., ii, 583.

4. cf. Ṭab., i, 433.

5. He was a Barbarī mawla of Banū-Umayya who excelled in suppressing the revolt of Yazīd ibn-al-Muhallab in 102/720.

And also Moses, Jesus and that one who fell prostrate,
his tears causing green growth to sprout,
And Jacob whom God increased in wisdom, while the son of
Jacob was fashioned an honest man,
Thus what binds us together with the noble progeny of
Sarah is a forefather after whom we need not trouble
with any who were obscure,
Our father is the companion of God (i.e. Abraham), and
God is our Lord, and we are content with what He
gave and decreed.[377]¹

A report mentions that when Jarīr composed this poem he was
greatly honoured by the mawālī and received more than a
hundred set of clothes (ḥulal).²

1. Jar., 186-187; Naq., 991.

2. Agh., vii, 65; Ibn-Sall., 347-348.

CHAPTER VI

POETRY AND CULTURAL CHANGE

The central position of poetry in the evolution of the various genres of culture for which Baṣra became famous cannot be overstated. Being the most significant product of Arab genius it dominated - in Islam as well as in the Jāhiliyya - the Arab mind and decisively influenced the course of many an intellectual trend. The high regard in which it came to be held by the Umayyads restored to it the respectability which early Islam attempted to tarnish.¹ Theological, philosophical, philological and related disciplines which were developing at the same time were obviously deemed - by comparison - of inferior status in official estimation. One gets the impression that those who engaged themselves in such sciences were regarded with suspicion and in many cases their loyalty to the regime was questioned. Thus most of the philologists with the exception of Abū-'Amr ibn-al-'Alā,² were suspected of being either Khārijīs,³ Shī'īs,⁴ of doubtful faith⁵ or wilfully anti-Arab.⁶ The caliphs and their emirs did not much encourage scholars who were bent on laying the foundations of sciences, and these achieved maturity only after the downfall of the dynasty. A learned man such as Qatāda ibn-Di'āma as-

1. cf. Chapter II.

2. cf. Yāq., Irshād, vii, 164-165.

3. Ibid., vi, 140; Nuzha, 8.

4. 'Iqd, ii, 47; Irshād, vii, 297.

5. Nuzha, 17, 84.

6. Muwash., 41.

Sadūsī (d.117/735) who, in posterity, achieved his reputation as an authority in Tradition,¹ received what favours the Umayyad caliphs showered on him on the strength of his encyclopaedic knowledge of poetry and Arab lore.² Already immense, the popularity of poetry was heightened by official policy and by the resultant desire of Arab tribes to revive their past glories and ^{this} gave poets a voice of authority that none could fail to recognize. Jāhili poetry, being the authentic voice of pure Arabs, gradually became the hallmark by which chasteness of speech could be gauged.³ The Qur'ān and the utterances of the Prophet which were - and still are - considered the models of linguistic purity were ultimately subjected to the same test. Evidence was elaborately sought in pre-Islamic poetry to prove the purity of many words and expressions in the Qur'ān and Hadīth, and if the search proved fruitless resort was made to forgery. The point to be made here is that scholars who were engaged in other disciplines came increasingly under the influence of the dominant trend. Even the mawālī some of whom were decidedly anti-Arabs could not break the grip of Jāhili or pseudo-Jāhili poetry on their minds. Perhaps the fact that the vast majority of those who were engaged in such fields of research were non-Arabs who were at pains to master the Arabic language in order to outdo the Arabs in their own tongue,⁴ explains why they took for granted

1. cf. Ibn-Sa'd, vii, part 2, 1-3; Bayān, i, 204-205.

2. Ibn-Sall., 51-52; Irshād, vi, 202-203.

3. cf. Chapter I, p.67.

4. Ibid., 34-35, 47-48.

in their social and cultural life the standard which their Arab contemporaries regarded as ultimate. The gradual decline of linguistic purity among urbanized Arabs which was heightened by the influx of non-Arabs is an important factor contributing to the general veneration accorded to ancient poetry as the repository of chaste Arabic.

The eagerness with which this poetry came to be sought and recorded and the relish with which certain philologists viewed it inevitably influenced the relations between the emerging class of scholars and their contemporary poets.¹ The fact that Baṣra was the earliest home of this general renaissance in literary and philological themes is significant in indicating that all the major Baṣrī poets with whom we are concerned in this study composed their poetry at a time when the Baṣrī scholars were emerging as an important force in society which poets, at least, could not easily ignore. In actual fact the ramification of this Umayyad renaissance extended beyond the mere establishment of the diverse branches of learning that bloomed in that period and affected in many respects the ways many poets conceived and composed their poetry. By the same token the contribution of poets to this intellectual activity was real and significant. To assess their role in this connection it is important to keep in mind the fact that such scholars as existed in Umayyad Baṣra were restricted by their specialization to the systematization of philological disciplines, and that the matter of collecting

1. cf. Chapter I, pp.65-66.

and studying poetry was not their monopoly since many other groups, including poets, were by far more active. The insatiable desire to collect and learn ancient poetry was, as we have repeatedly indicated, closely associated with the general pattern of social, political and religious development in Umayyad Society. The activity was in a sense a popular one, and distinct groups emerged in the form of ruwāh (transmitters) who busied themselves with collecting what poetry they could find to satisfy the general demand. Many such ruwāh were not interested so much in studying poetry as in entertaining assemblies and courts.¹ Poets were interested in poetry not only to provide them with historical and tribal material which went into the structure of their compositions, but they also viewed it as providing the fundamental background necessary to any poetic excellence. The practice of transmitting poetry in general was regarded as the hallmark of the accomplished poet. Ru'ba ibn-al-'Ajjāj when asked what the distinguished poet (fahl) was answered that it was the poet who was also a rāwiya.² His judgement is corroborated by the career of such a poet as al-Farazdaq whose activities in this connection throw significant light on the cultural background which went into the formation of poetic tradition in Baṣra. Al-Jāhīz called him 'the people's rāwiya, their poet and the custodian of their chronicles',³ and Ibn-Qutayba credited him with being the best transmitter of the poetry of

1. cf. Ibn-Sall., 50.

2. 'Umda, i, 197.

3. Bayān, i, 256.

Imrū'-'l-Qays.¹ His transmission of Ḥuṭay'a's poetry was especially noted by chroniclers.² The poet himself indicated to us the mainsprings of his poetic culture when he boasted of the ancient bards whose poetry he claimed to have inherited:-

Odes were bestowed upon me by the Nābighas (of Banū-Dhubyan and Ja'd) when they passed away, and by Abū-Yazīd (i.e. Mukhabbal), the ulcerated one (i.e. Imrū-'l-Qays) and Jarwal (i.e. Ḥuṭay'a),
And the stallion, 'Alqama who possessed kings' robes and whose words are not falsely attributed to him,
The member of Banū-Qays (i.e. Tarafa ibn-al-'Abd) whom they had killed, and the early Muhalhil among poets,
The two A'shas (of Qays and Bahila), Muraqqish, the member of Quḍa'a (i.e. aṭ-Ṭamaḥan) whose verses have passed into proverbs,
And by 'Abid (ibn-al-Abras), the member of Banū-Asad when he passed away, And Abū-Du'ad whose poetry is often plagiarized,
By the two descendants of Abū-Sulmā, Zuhayr and his son (Ka'b), together with the son of Furay'a (i.e. Ḥassan ibn-Thābit) when the tongue becomes serious,
The Ja'fari (i.e. Labid ibn-Rabi'a), and before him Bishr (ibn-Abi-Khazim) whose poems I have in an exhaustive book,
And I have inherited from the family of 'Aws (ibn-Ḥajar) an expressive [tongue] sharp as poison stained on both sides of which with colocynth,
And from the Ḥarīthi, the member of al-Ḥimās (i.e. an-Najāshī) I have inherited an accuracy that splits [ideas] as the axe splits a soft stone,
They (i.e. odes) split the outer part of stone from its heart, and yet they are heavier than the two mountains of 'Amaya,
They (i.e. poets) bequeathed their book to me and I inherited them (i.e. odes) as solid rocks.[378]³

His intense awareness of the achievement of his Jāhili predecessors is demonstrated by the anecdote related by Abū-

1. Sh., i, 70; 'Iqd, viii, 109; Agh., xix, 27.

2. 'Umda, i, 198.

3. Far., ii, 159-160; cf. ii, 142 for his defiance of eight other ancient poets to compose like him; cf. also Jar., 94.

'Ubayda according to which when a Tamīmī youth asked his opinion on some poetry of his, al-Farazdaq listened to what the youth had to declaim then said, "O my nephew, poetry used to be an enormous mature camel the head of which was acquired by Imrū'-'l-Qays, the hump by 'Amr ibn-Kulthūm, the thigh by 'Abīd ibn-al-Abrāṣ, the back by al-A'shā, the shoulder by Zuhayr, the breast by Ṭarafa, the two flanks by the two Nābighas, and when we approached there was nothing left but its legs and belly which we have distributed among us. The butcher then said, 'Nothing has remained but the contents of the stomach and blood which should be my reward for my services to you', and we granted him that. He then cooked that stuff, ate it and relieved his bowels. Your poetry is of this butcher's excrement".¹ It might well be that the whole story was a mere fabrication but its significance - underlined by the poet's own lines quoted above - lies in the general belief that the poet was well versed in ancient poetry.² Established poets as Dhū-'r-Rumma³ and 'Umar ibn-Abī-Rabī'a⁴ sought his opinion on their poetry. Yet al-Farazdaq was only one of many who shared in the same tradition, as he mentioned in one of his poems.⁵ The able criticism by al-Ba'īth of his contemporary fellow poets before Walīd I⁶ bears out this view. The fact that poets in general were versed in poetry

1. Muwash., 363.

2. Muzhir, ii, 298.

3. Muwash., 362; Khiz., i, 107.

4. Muwash., 206.

5. Far., ii, 160.

6. 'Iqd, vi, 205-210.

made them best qualified to judge each other. Most of the hostilities between them, though largely intensified by tribal considerations¹ arose initially either from the criticism of one poet by another or - in the protracted duel between Jarīr and al-Farazdaq - from an expression of partisanship by a third party for one poet against another. But the social undertones which accompanied much of this critical activity rendered poets sensitive to any charges levelled at their compositions and their reaction was often fierce and devastating. The hectic atmosphere in which tribal feelings were closely welded to poetic expression made the distinction between the two elements a difficult task.² This, perhaps, explains why most of those who ventured opinions on poetry were poets who could retaliate in kind if satirized by the poet criticized. The majority of those who were in a position to pass judgment feared the consequences of their stand and were consequently reluctant to voice their opinions as we have noted in the case of al-Muhallab.³ The early literary scholars were furthermore at a greater disadvantage since most of them were mawālī and were thus more exposed to invective as we have seen in the case of 'Anbasa al-Fīl and

1. cf. Chapter II, p. 106.

2. Ibid. An example of this is provided by the report that ar-Rā'ī and Akhṭal met at the court of Bishr ibn-Marwān, governor of Iraq who asked: Which of you is the better poet? Ar-Rā'ī snapped, "As for poetry the emir is more knowledgeable about it, but by God no Taghlibī woman has born the like of you". [Ibn-Sall., 442-3]. Bishr's mother like ar-Rā'ī belonged to Qays.

3. cf. Chapter II, p. 91.

'Abdallāh ibn-al-Ḥaḍramī with al-Farazdaq.¹ Although 'Anbasa seemed to have appreciated the literary value of Jarīr's poetry, and 'Abdallāh criticized what he considered to be grammatical faults in the poetry of al-Farazdaq,² the latter brushed aside their genuine motives, and in line with the general spirit, attacked their base origin as we have seen earlier. The same al-Farazdaq censured Abū-'Amr ibn-al-'Alā' for a reason unspecified in the available sources. He attempted to rectify this by praising the learned man in his line:-

I have not ceased to open doors and close them [behind me]
until I approached Abū-'Amr son of 'Ammar.[379]³

But Abū-'Amr rebuffed him by telling him:-

You have censured Zibbān (i.e. Abū-'Amr) then came
apologizing for that, [it is as if] you had neither
censured nor cursed.[380]⁴

It seems that the narrow specialization of those early scholars and their marginal interest in poetry as a means of supporting their grammatical systems restricted their criticism to elements in poetry which poets naturally considered peripheral. Most of the critical remarks made by Ibn-al-Ḥaḍramī were grammatical in nature, and the one literary remark attributed to him - that Kuthaiyir was the best of Islamic poets - was contested by almost all other critics.⁵ But the rapidly developing cultural milieu was creating facilities for scholars who took a lively interest

1. cf. Chapter V, verses No.368, 369, p.297.

2. cf. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 35-36; Muwash., 99, 100-102.

3. Bayān, i, 256.

4. Nuzha, 15

5. Ibn-Sall., 44; Muzhir, ii, 299.

in poetry as such. It was stated that Abū-Nawfal ibn-Abī-‘Aqrab was the teacher of Abū-‘Amr and Shu‘ba ibn-al-Ḥajjāj¹ (85-160/705-779). Abū-‘Amr used to ask him about poetry and language while Shu‘ba enquired about Traditions, and neither of them recorded what was said to the other.² This Abū-‘Amr became the most distinguished authority on poetry and its criticism. With the passage of time antagonism gave way to mutual appreciation. Although in the final analysis the balance was heavily weighted in favour of scholars who greatly influenced the course of poetry as we shall see presently, the general atmosphere was such that both poets and scholars leaned on each other and were equally moulded by the same dominant modes of cultural standards. The arrogant attitude of al-Farazdaq who lampooned Ibn-al-Ḥaḍramī and defiantly told him and his fellow grammarians, "I have only to compose [poetry] and the onus of providing arguments falls on you,"³ did not dissuade him from asking the expert advice of Ibn-al-Ḥaḍramī when a defect in his poetic composition had been pointed out to him by some critics.⁴ Scholars, too, recognized the immense wealth the production of contemporary poets contained which satisfied their philological interests. Yūnus ibn-Ḥabīb (90-182/710-800) used to say: "Had it not been for the poetry of al-Farazdaq a third of the Arab language would have been

1. cf. Ibn-Sa‘d, vii, part 2, 38; Bayān, ii, 86.

2. Muzhir, ii, 194; cf. Chapter I, p. 68.

3. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 35.

4. Muwash., 100.

lost,"¹ and perhaps that was one of the main reasons that endeared this poet's production to scholars in contrast with that of Jarīr.² In fact there are many indications to show that the relative 'difficulty' of diction encountered in the poetry of al-Farazdaq in contrast with that of Jarīr's, though at bottom the natural result of emotional and intellectual aptitudes, was accentuated by considerations arising from his contacts with scholars and grammarians. Ibn-Sallām said, "He used to riddle his expressions with confusing structures which appealed to grammarians."³ Ibn-al-Athīr, noting the poet's fondness of such practice, remarked, "It is as though he did that intentionally, because such things do not come about without deliberation and intention."⁴ The effort undertaken by al-Farazdaq in this direction was expressed in the well known critical dictum that "al-Farazdaq hews [his poetry] from rocks whereas Jarīr takes his from the sea."⁵ His many critical pronouncements⁶ and his immense knowledge as a transmitter of language and poetry brought him nearer to the company of contemporary scholars than any other poet with the exception of Ru'ba. It is not by chance that these two

1. Irshād, vii, 259; cf. Bayān, i, 256.

2. Agh., vii, 72; cf. Chapter II, p. 96 above.

3. Ibn-Sall., 308; cf. 309-312 for examples; Agh., xix, 15-16.

4. al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr, 114; cf. Muwash., 104.

5. Ibn-Sall., 387.

6. cf. Ibn-Sall., 44, Muzhir, ii, 299 on Imrū'u-'l-Qays; Ibn-Sall., 105 on Nābigha; ibid., 468; Muwash., 172, 362, 363, Khiz., i, 107 on Dhū-'r-Rumma; Muwash., 206 on 'Umar ibn-Abī-Rabī'a.

poets were praised by Abū-'Amr when he said, "I have never seen any Bedouin who settled in an urban centre whose tongue was not corrupted except Ru'ba and al-Farazdaq."¹ In fact the achievements of poets on the cultural level forced scholars to change their inflexible attitudes to contemporary poetry in many respects. The unsparing approach of Abū-'Amr to language which impelled him to base all his testimonies on pre-Islamic poetry² was relaxed when he confronted the excellence of 'Umar ibn-Abī-Rabī'a whom he regarded as an authority in language (ḥujja).³ The excellence of the contemporary poets of his native town forced him to say, "This modern (muḥdath) poetry has become so accomplished that I almost wanted to transmit it."⁴ In practice, however, he was not hostile to what was composed in his own day despite his dogmatic approach which held pre-Islamic poetry to be pre-eminent. His excessive preference for the poetry of al-Akḥṭal about whom he said, "Had al-Akḥṭal lived only one day in the Jāhiliyya I would not have preferred anyone to him,"⁵ and his fondness of Bashshār's poetry⁶ indicated that he was not wholly given to appreciating the old to the exclusion of the modern. He even paired the poets of his day with what he considered their Jāhili counterparts. He used to liken Jarīr to al-A'shā,

1. Khiz., i, 204.

2. Muzhir, ii, 304; cf. Chapter I, p.68.

3. Muwash., 201, 202; Fuḥūla, 499.

4. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 7; Muzhir, ii, 304.

5. Agh., vii, 172, 173-174, 177-178.

6. Ibid., iii, 26.

Farazdaq to Zuhayr and Akhṭal to an-Nābigha.¹ His famous verdict that "poetry was concluded by Dhū-'r-Rumma and the rajaz by Ru'ba",² underlines further his appreciation of what his contemporaries were doing in the field of poetry. His shrewd observation about the ephemeral nature of Dhū-'r-Rumma's poetry³ did not detract from his high opinion of him even in the court of such an imposing emir as Bilāl ibn-Abī-Burda (d.120/738) who was versed in poetry and language and much given to arguing.⁴ At the end of a heated controversy between the emir and the poet about the correct reading of an ancient verse he steered a middle course by declaring both readings correct. On being asked by Bilāl whether he honestly drew on Dhū-'r-Rumma as a genuine source of usage, Abū-'Amr said, "His language is chaste (faṣīḥ), but we draw on him sparingly." When they went out Dhū-'r-Rumma told Abū-'Amr, "Had I not known that you sided with him [only to avert his wrath] I would have lampooned you in such a manner that no two persons would dare to keep your company after it."⁵ On another occasion when Abū-'Amr pointed out to him the correct way of rebutting a critical remark by Bilāl on one of the poet's qaṣīdas, the latter said, "O Abū-'Amr, you are unique in your learning, but in my learning and poetry I have many counterparts (ashbāh)."⁶ Such congenial relations between

1. Ibid., vii, 38; cf. also i, 94, 120; Sh., i, 448; Ibn-Sall., 55.

2. Agh., xvi, 11; Muzhir, ii, 301; cf. Ibn-Khall., Waf., i, 513.

3. Agh., xvi, 115; Ibn-Sall., 467; Muwash., 171.

4. cf. Ibn-Sall., 483.

5. Agh., xvi, 122; Ibn-Sall., 483-4.

6. Muwash., 180.

poets and scholars were the outcome of similar circumstances in which both groups found themselves. Their frequent meetings with each other in the courts of caliphs and emirs, and their reliance on more or less the same source for livelihood not infrequently gave them some sense of belonging together. 'Īsā ibn-'Umar¹ related that when once Dhū-'r-Rumma visited him he offered to give the poet a portion of what he had earned but the latter rejected the offer saying, "You and I take and do not give out."² The relations between them seemed to have developed so much that 'Īsā committed the poetry of Dhū-'r-Rumma to writing.³ The way Jarīr enjoyed the recital of 'Abū-'Amr of the poetry of al-Majnūn when he alighted at the scholar's house on his way from Damascus⁴ indicates his admiration for Abū-'Amr.

This close relationship between poets and scholars not only brought them nearer to each other on the personal level, but was also of great consequence on the development of Baṣrī poetry. The interest taken by scholars in the words and expressions of pure Arabs and their conviction that the real source of such material was the desert affected the career of poets in many respects. The growing prestige and importance of those systematic scholars sharpened the poets' awareness of the demands of philologists and grammarians. The desert

1. cf. Chapter I, p.64 above; Chapter II, p.102.

2. 'Iqd, ii, 347; Irshād, vi, 102.

3. Jāhīz, Ḥayawān, i, 21; Muzhir, ii, 220. cf. Chapter II, p.102 above.

4. 'Iqd, vi, 217.

became the El Dorado of scholars. The fright experienced by Dhū-'r-Rumma when he realized that people had discovered his literacy - a mark of urbanization - and the flimsy pretexts he adduced in an attempt to dispel the charge¹ all point to his concern lest his credentials as a genuine Bedouin be suspected by scholars, some of whom deprecated his very stay in Baṣra and his eating vegetables and salted food.² Poets who settled in urban quarters were deemed inferior and ran the risk of having their poetry rejected as a testimony of standard usage as happened with al-Kumayt and aṭ-Ṭirimmāh³ who were accused by Ru'ba of having asked him about rare words which he subsequently found in their compositions.⁴ Abū-'Amr saw in the long residence of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq in the urban settlement a considerable drawback.⁵ This tendency among the scholars to welcome Bedouins as genuine transmitters of language was instrumental in drawing a number of Bedouin transmitters into the miṣr, providing the source upon which the scholars of Baṣra drew.⁶ It is estimated that the books in which Abū-'Amr had recorded material on the authority of such Bedouins filled a house of his up to the ceiling.⁷

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1. 'Askarī, Dīwān al-Ma'ānī, ii, 120; Muwash., 177-178; Muzhir, ii, 220; cf. Chapter II, p.102 above; cf. Khiz., i, 102 for a similar case involving Abū'n-Najm.
 2. Muwash., 180; Khafājī, Sirr al-Faṣāḥa, 150; cf. Chapter I, p. 69.
 3. Muwash., 208; Khafājī, op.cit., 335; Agh., ii, 18.
 4. Ibn-Qut., Sh., ii, 567; cf. Dīwān of Ṭirrimāh, ed. Krenkow, 1927, Introduction, xxiv ff.
 5. Agh., ii, 18; Muwash., 208; Khafājī, 335.
 6. The most important among them were Abū-'z-Za'ra' (cf. Agh., xi, 104), Abū-Khira (Nuzha, 16; Fihrist, 45), Abū-Firās, Abū-Sarīra, al-Aghṭash (cf. Muzhir, i, 109), Abū-Damḍam (cf. Sh., i, 5; 'Iqd, vi, 158). cf. also Pellat, Milieu, pp.137-138.
 7. cf. Chapter I, p. 68 above.

Perhaps it was this concern for Bedouin life that motivated the seemingly affected behaviour of a poet as Ru'ba who was by no means a permanent desert dweller, since he stayed for a long time in the miṣr and frequented princely courts. Nonetheless he continued to eat rats publicly in the town and when he was blamed for it he said, "By God it is cleaner than your domesticated animals and poultry which eat dirt; it eats only pure wheat and the choicest part of food."¹ The way he dressed seemed to have been designed to excite wonder and attract attention. It is reported that he once approached the market place wearing a green woollen garment (barnakān) and when children saw him they chased him, piercing his garment with palm thorns and jeering at his rags until he appealed for police protection against their foul play,² an anecdote indicating that his appearance was something quite amusing even for Baṣrīs whose market of Mirbad was frequented by Bedouins the different dresses of whom should have been a familiar sight even for naughty children. This Ru'ba who survived the Umayyad dynasty (d.154/772) became one of the most distinguished authorities in the transmission of language. "Celebrated philologists drew on him, took him as an example, considered his poetry evidence of unimpeachable authority, and made him a master to be followed (imām)."³ In point of fact he had a kind of salon which he used to hold every Friday in

1. Agh., xxi, 87; Ibn-Qut., Sh., ii, 576.

2. Ibid., 89.

3. Ibid., 84.

the quarter of Banū-Tamīm in Baṣra. It was attended by scholars who used to ask him about language, and the famous scholar Yūnus ibn-Ḥabīb frequently boasted of being the disciple (ghulam) of Ru'ba.¹ In fact the immense knowledge of Ru'ba in language and grammar which endeared him to Baṣrī scholars is unmistakable in his compositions. When his disciples, who included most Baṣrī philologists late in the Umayyad era, assembled one Friday and blocked the road, an old woman tried to pass through them but failed, thereupon Ru'ba said:-

Give way to the elderly woman when she comes on her way
back from the market.
Leave her alone, since grammarians are not reckoned
among her friends.[381]²

The authority of Ru'ba and his father al-'Ajjāj in language was such that they used, according to Ibn-Jinnī, to coin certain words they had never heard before.³ Their standing among philologists was unparalleled. Yūnus regarded them as the best poets he knew of,⁴ and when Ru'ba died, al-Khalīl ibn-Aḥmad remarked, "Today we have buried poetry, language and chasteness of speech (faṣāḥa)."⁵

The fact that poets such as al-Kumayt and aṭ-Ṭirimmāḥ used to ask Ru'ba about rare words and include them in their poetry as we have noted, and the bitter charge levelled by him at Dhū-'r-Rumma whom he accused of plagiarizing his

1. Agh., xxi, 85; Muzhir, i, 218.

2. Agh., xxi, 89.

3. Muzhir, i, 71.

4. Agh., xxi, 89; Muzhir, ii, 301.

5. Agh., xxi, 91.

poetry¹ all indicate the close relationship between the kind of poetry composed by these poets and the activities of scholars and philologists. This point was underlined by 'Uqba, son of Ru'ba when he challenged Bashshār saying, "My father and I have opened up for people the gates of poetry of unfamiliar diction (gharīb) and rajaz."² In view of this relationship it is not an overstatement to say that the resurgence of rajaz poetry in the form that it took in the compositions of al-'Ajjāj and Ru'ba was greatly influenced by the requirements of philologists and grammarians. Ru'ba realized this fact and his eyes were constantly focused, even in his panegyrics, on grammarians and scholars. Praising Naṣr ibn-Sayyār he said:-

When transmitters deliver what I offer, do not bother
about my being away,
For in my choice and exertion - when I pick out the best
of well-balanced poems,
In which the grammarian seeks to detect my intention - I
glorify Naṣr who is worthy of glory.[382]³

He indicated the diligence and scholarship employed in composing his poetry, in a panegyric on al-Qāsim ibn-Muḥammad of Thaḳīf:-

I am neither of short-lived reputation nor lost in
obscurity, I compose [my poetry] as a skilful
weaver of decorative cloth [handles his material]
You should see me leaning on the writing-book [bent] on
fashioning measured [verses] that diffuse [everywhere],

1. Ibn-Qut., Sh., ii, 516.

2. Agh., iii, 37.

3. Ru'b., 48.

No grammarian can ever apply his insight therein as I do, even if he twists both sides of his face with frustration,
Prudent master of knowledge and expression though he may be, so that they (i.e. verses) emerge accomplished in a smooth manner.[383]¹

The major justification for harassing his audience with antiquated and difficult words some of which seemed to have puzzled even some scholars,² was the lexical demand, judging by the frequency with which his verses and those of his father are quoted in philological and lexicographical sources.³ The intensity of the demand for this material is indicated by Ru'ba's exasperation at the insistence of Yūnus on bombarding him with questions and queries, inciting him to exclaim, "How long will you continue to ask me about these trifles (or falsehoods) (bawaṭīl) forcing me to embellish them for you?"⁴ How far Ru'ba and his father were reflecting a distinct Tamīmī dialect is an open question, since philologists, with very rare exceptions where a Tamīmī usage is indicated,⁵ quote their poetry as evidence of Arabic as a whole. It might also be observed that although there is no denying that most of the words and usages contained in their rajaz reflecting the austere conditions of desert life, formed a genuine part of the transmitted Arab heritage, the extent of this kind of usage

1. Ibid., 61; cf. Agh., xxi, 89 for the meticulous care Ru'ba took to satisfy grammarians in his compositions.

2. cf. Ibn-Qut., Kitāb al-Ma'ānī, i, 478.

3. cf. E.I.², s.v. "ʿAdjāḍ" by Pellat.

4. Ibn-Qut., Sh., ii, 576; Sīrafī, Akhbar, 35.

5. cf. Ibn-Sall., 65; Muwash., 217.

seems very limited indeed. Bedouins in general were not particularly given to the tongue-twisters with which much of this rajaz poetry teemed. Even in the case of a poetry of a lighter vein such as that of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq they appreciated that of Jarīr which was relatively simpler in diction than that of al-Farazdaq's.¹ This is not to question that the bādiya was the source of much of this heritage. What is questioned is the accessibility of this knowledge to all and sundry even in the desert. The point to be made here is that such poets did much research and learnt their craft in the same way as the systematic scholars had done. The wonder which the eloquence and rhetorical acumen of Abū-Muslim of Khurāsān excited in Ru'ba when he met him shortly after the downfall of the Umayyad dynasty is an index of this. Ru'ba remarked, "By God I have never seen a non-Arab who is more eloquent than he, and I have never thought that anyone other than my father and myself knew such expressions."² It is obvious that al-'Ajjāj, Ru'ba and most of the Bedouin transmitters were not ordinary Bedouins who could be taken at random to represent the average desert-dwellers. They were rather the product of the cultural activity in Baṣra and its impact on the desert. Such transmitters as later became the authorities in language and poetry knew what the philologists wanted and exerted themselves to master their craft and equip

1. Ibn-Sall., 316; Muwash., 115.

2. Agh., xxi, 87.

themselves with the kind of learning for which they became famous at a later date. Most of the poets who dwelt on depicting desert life had some kind of a link with that life at least for some time in their lives. Many of them learnt their craft not in the miṣr as such but in the desert which was activated by what was happening in the miṣr. The prospects of a better life to which they looked forward in urban settlements led to a comparable cultural activity in the bādiya itself based on the study of poetry and language. When Abū-Nukhayla quarrelled with his father as a young boy he left Baṣra and settled in the desert where he cultivated himself (ta'ddaba) and learnt to compose poetry in both forms of qaṣīd and rajaz, and soon his reputation grew.¹ He even became the teacher of Walīd II, the famous Umayyad caliph poet.² The same was true of Dhū-'r-Rumma who was himself originally a teacher in the bādiya,³ and whose reputation was carried to 'Abd-al-Malik ibn-Marwān through the testimony of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq.⁴

The ardent desire of these Bedouins to impress their urban audiences encouraged the tendency to rob others of their creations. Judging by the widespread practice of plagiarism in which most poets were involved⁵ it seems likely that much of the poetry composed by desert poets who remained

1. Agh., xviii, 139-140.

2. Ibn-Nu'tazz, Ṭabaqāt, 63.

3. Muwash., 170; Ibn-Sall., 467.

4. Muwash., 239.

5. cf. Chapter II, p. 104 for Farazdaq.

within the confines of the desert was carried over by those poets who moved to the miṣr and attributed it to themselves. The practice of Abū-Nukhayla in this connection even with the poetry of his contemporary Ru'ba who lived with him in the same town is notorious.¹ Ru'ba became so exasperated by his frequent and unashamed practice that he had to compromise with him and to plead with him to leave his poetry alone as long as he remained in Iraq but to plagiarize whatever he liked of it if he went to Syria.² The number of unknown poets whose poetry disappeared or was taken over by other poets could be underlined by the report of Ibn-Qutayba³ who mentioned the names of three poets of Banū-Sa'd of Tamīm who failed to visit the amṣār and so their rajaz disappeared. The best poem of Ru'ba⁴ is said to have been composed by one of them.⁵

Thus the desert which produced the transmitters upon whom the philologists relied was also the mainspring of poetry depicting desert life which was also in vogue in the same urban quarters as we shall see in the following chapter. In fact the desert continued for a long time to be the fertile source of raw material upon which the miṣr drew in this respect. Bedouin poets who backed their art with a deep knowledge of language under the impact of the cultural activity in Baṣra

1. Agh., xviii, 140, 145; Muwash., 219, 220.

2. Muwash., 219, 220.

3. Sh., i, 5.

4. Ru'b., 104, No.40.

5. Sh., i, 5.

such as Dhū-'r-Rumma and Ru'ba featured prominently in the works of grammarians and lexicographers.¹

The impact of cultural activities was, furthermore, positive on poetry in so far as it moulded the mentality of poets through their constant contact with the diverse exponents of ideas, philosophical, religious, political and the like with which Baṣra in general and al-Mirbad in particular teemed. In actual fact poets - especially those among them who attained in posterity the status of major poets, such as al-Farazdaq, Jarīr, Dhū-'r-Rumma, Ru'ba and later, Bashshār - were highly cultured individuals who kept abreast of the cultural movements of their day and some of them contributed to them. Thus al-Farazdaq used to frequent and participate in the circle of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, while Jarīr used to attend that of Ibn-Sīrīn.² The general spirit of these circles was a combative one deriving its vigour from debating and arguing. The heated encounters between exponents of divergent views such as the qadariyya (upholders of free-will) and the jabriyya (upholders of predestination) and the hectic atmosphere of controversy embracing the various politico-religious sects such as Shī'a, Khawārij and the like were all contributory in some measure to the cultivation of that brand of poetry based on argument and

1. For a further evidence of the close relationship between these poets and 'Ulema cf. the poem of Dhū-'r-Rumma entitled "uḥjiyyat al-'Arab", a kind of didactic poetry in riddle form where he described over twenty objects of desert life. (Rumma, 169-183). cf. E.I.², s.v. "Dhū-'l-Rumma" by Blachère.

2. 'Iqd, vi, 222; cf. Ibn-Sall., 285.

counter-argument. This prevailing spirit of disputation even among the members of the same group was bitterly expressed by an Azraqī poet, Zayd ibn-Jundab, when his party was undermined by the incessant attacks of al-Muhallab:-

Tell those who make free with their obligations: You
should be consoled by the dissension among the
[Azraqī] group, the rancour [they felt for each other]
and their flight,
We used to be a group that followed a single faith but
were eventually divided by heated debates and
confusion between seriousness and playing,
How unnecessary was it for some men, may their endeavours
be lost, to indulge in arguing and oratory.[384]¹

The same pattern was profitably utilized by poets and it reached its peak in the interchanges (naqā'id) between Jarīr and al-Farazdaq and the scores of poets who joined them. The result was that what was produced in the realm of poetry was closely allied - in technique if not always in spirit - to the kinds of debates and disputes that had frequently taken place in al-Mirbad between scholars and thinkers. This tendency was reflected not only in the field of tribal poetry or in controversy between individuals such as that between Ḥāritha ibn-Badr and Anas ibn-Zunaym,² but was also visible - though to a lesser extent - in the field of ideas. When al-Farazdaq composed the verse:-

I am Death which eventually takes your soul away, so
figure out a way of tackling it.[385],

he swore that Jarīr would never be able to compose a better line. When Jarīr heard the challenge he strained his faculties until he said:-

1. Khaw., 35, No.68.

2. cf. Chapter V, pp.283-284.

I am Time that lasts when Death perishes, so bring me
any comparable thing that vies with Time.[386]¹

The intellectual impact on poetry is discernible on different levels. The influence that the company^{of} al-Ḥasan and the other quṣṣāṣ and theologians had on the poetry of al-Farazdaq and the rajaz of al-‘Ajjāj has been alluded to earlier.² Their effect however goes beyond the didactic and exhortatory undertones already mentioned. Many ideas debated in these assemblies found their way into poetry. When the question of the obligatory nature of swearing by God in a light spirit was raised in the circle of al-Ḥasan, al-Farazdaq told the audience that he had resolved the whole question and put it in a nutshell in his line:-

You are not taken to task by any nonsense you utter
unless you intend binding resolutions.[387]³

The atmosphere of Baṣra which reflected a moderate political and social structure left its imprint on the general spirit of poetry. It has been stated that despite the insurrection and internal feuds Baṣra followed a moderate course in politics and accepted in general the de facto presence of Umayyads as the guardians of the Islamic community (jama‘a).⁴ This position was not merely one of political expediency. It sprang from a strong religious and

1. Agh., xix, 32; ‘Umda, i, 209.

2. Chapter V, pp. 266-269.

3. Far., ii, 307; Ibn-Sall., 283-284; the idea of oath was also employed by Jarīr, Dīwān, 454; Naq., 754, and Dhū-r-Rumma, Dīwān, 294.

4. cf. Chapter 1, p.60.

philosophical standpoint that the consensus of enlightened opinion in Baṣra generally came to uphold. The idea of qadar, fate, and the necessity of submitting to what God decreed all tended to reinforce the state authority which was equated with that of the jama'a. But it is important to note that many even of those who upheld the opposite view - free will - the qadariyya, were not always hostile to the Umayyads. Thus al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī refused to join insurrection against the Umayyads and even actively opposed the rebels,¹ a stand which brought against him the wrath of the Khawārij.² But as a matter of policy the Umayyads saw a danger in the doctrine and persecuted those who held it.³ Poetry in general, especially when addressed to Umayyads, reflected this moderate position. Poets who were known for their Shī'ī leanings such as Abū-'l-Aswad and al-Farazdaq rarely revealed their sentiments in the poetry extant. The fact that the antithesis of qadar-jabr was more of an intellectual approach than merely a vulgar dressing for political alignment is borne out by the discussion between Dhū-'r-Rumma, who was well known for his qadarite tendencies, and Ru'ba who represented the general trend in Baṣra,⁴ about the will of God to do harm.⁵ The point was made clearer when Dhū-'r-Rumma recited his line:-

Two eyes which God commanded to be and they were, acting
on hearts as wine acts on wits.[388]⁶ ...

1. Ibid.

2. Ibn-Sa'd, vii, part 1, 127.

3. cf. Ibid., 122 where al-Ḥasan was intimidated by the Sulṭān

4. cf. Ru'ba, 6 for an invective against the qadariyya.

5. Murtaḍā, Amālī, i, 14.

6. Rumma, 213.

When somebody suggested to him that it would have been more appropriate if he changed 'fa'ūlān' into 'fa'ūlayn' thus attributing the action of the eyes to God's command rather than to the eyes themselves as the upholder of the doctrine of free will would have it, the poet reacted sharply and snubbed the man.¹ The moderate view which stressed the idea of jamā'a was intellectually as well as politically dominant.² The lines of aṣ-Ṣalatān al-'Abdī indicated the revulsion of Baṣra to extremist sects which refused to accept the general position of Baṣrīs:-

I behold a people that have unsheathed their sword and to their whips was added the Aṣbaḥī brand,³ [Splintering] into Najdites, Ḥarurites and Azraqites calling upon [others] to follow an Azraqī [sect], Our creed is that we are [just] Muslims following the faith of our Ṣiddīq and Prophet.[389]⁴

1. Agh., xvi, 122.

2. cf. Ibn-Sall., 439 for ar-Rā'ī; Far., i, 12; ii, 89, 311.

3. The second hemistich may also be rendered as:
who had their Aṣbaḥī whip lengthened.

4. Mub., Kāmil, ii, 246; cf. Nuzha, 8 for the lines of Naṣr ibn-'Āṣim when he rejected the various Khārijī and other sects.

CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE STRUCTURE OF POETRY

Social forces which determine the structure of society also dictate its patterns of thought. Poetry, being one of the most potent intellectual vehicles of expressing the tempo and dimension of social change is necessarily influenced in form and content by what takes place in society as a whole. The form-content relationship in poetry is essentially an organic one and the futility of treating one element of it in isolation of the other is an obvious fact recognized by modern criticism. This contention is nowhere more true than in the question of style which is often treated separately as a purely literary activity unrelated to its social background. I propose, without indulging in purely literary matters which are not my concern here, to show that the structure of Baṣrī poetry is largely - though in a lesser degree than its content - the by-product of social forces which create certain conditions in society which demand a special way of expression.

The variety of modes and styles in Baṣrī poetry was not always the outcome of inherited tradition. Factors instrumental in the diversification of cultural activities and resulting in specialized branches of knowledge were also at work in the field of poetry. Conditions obliged poets to specialize not only in the subject-matter of their poetry but also in the form of poetry composed. Thus the resurgence of rajaz poetry was the outcome of certain cultural and social factors and not all poets were fully integrated into this cultural trend that

they could master this form. In fact many of them encountered difficulties in composing in this metre which seemed to have been the speciality of a certain branch of Tamīm, Banū-Sa'd. Dhū-'r-Rumma was reported to have said, "I composed in rajaz, but when I recognized that I could not compete with the two men (i.e. 'Ajjāj and Ru'ba) I abandoned it and proceeded with the qaṣīd."¹ The main reason for this change was his fear that his inferior compositions in rajaz might damage his reputation and detract from him as an established poet.²

The same difficulty seemed to have been experienced by Jarīr who confessed that he used rajaz sparingly for fear that it might be intractable for him if he indulged in it.³ The heated competition between poets to master their medium and hence to enhance their chances of gaining greater favours seems to underlie this situation. Al-Farazdaq, appreciating the excellence of the Khārijī 'Imrān ibn-Ḥiṭṭān in poetry, said, "The son of Ḥiṭṭān has done us a good service when he did not pursue the line we took. Had he done that he would have defeated us."⁴ This realization was not limited to the small circle of poets; their audience was also fully aware of it. When Abū-Nukhayla, early in his career, composed a qaṣīda in praise of Maslama ibn-'Abd-al-Malik, the latter failed to appreciate it and remarked, "O Banū-Sa'd, what have

1. Muwash., 174.

2. Ibid.

3. Agh., vii, 55; cf. Bayān, i, 180; iii, 272 for lists of poets who excelled in rajaz and qaṣīd.

4. Agh., xx, 155; cf. Chapter II, p. 111-112.

you to do with the qaṣīd? Your real field is the rajaz." ¹

The rise of rajaz to respectability and its fusion with the mainstream of Arabic poetry were closely linked with developments in the two main urban centres in Iraq, Kūfa and Baṣra. Earlier it was considered inferior to the qaṣīd. Abū-'Ubayda declared that poets used to look down upon the rujjāz until Abū-'n-Najm, 'Ajjāj and Ru'ba composed long urjūzas and only then had the rujjāz risen to parity with other poets. ² The fact that this metre was originally a popular medium that satisfied the need for extemporization ³ explains the revulsion of poets to it until the major Umayyad rujjāz developed it into a respectable and recognized form that competed with the qaṣīd form of poetry. The stigma that attached to rajaz was expressed by al-La'īn of Miṅḡar when he censured Ru'ba in his line in the baṣīṭ metre:-

Would you, offspring of baseness, threaten me with rajaz verses when in them lies the source of baseness and disappointment?[390] ⁴

The limitations of rajaz in treating the traditional subjects, especially satire, were obvious. When Jarīr intimated to Hishām al-Mara'ī that Dhū-'r-Rumma had overpowered him in the feud that was raging between them, the former replied desperately, "What can I do? I am a rājiz and he composes qaṣīdas, and the rajaz does not stand up to the qaṣīd in

1. Ibid., xviii, 140.

2. Agh., ix, 78.

3. cf. Nallino, 146 ff.; Bakrī, Arājiz, 4; Pellat, Milieu, 158-160.

4. Mub., Kāmil, iii, 38; Ḥayawān, iv, 88.

satire, so will you help me?"¹ Perhaps that was the reason why Ru'ba and 'Ajjāj did not excel in satire² and had to put forward feeble arguments to defend their position in this connection.³ Al-'Ajjāj, in fact, avoided encounters with qaṣīd poets especially Jarīr who was notorious for his satire.⁴ Jarīr once threatened him, "By God, if I exert myself one night only [composing a satire against you] those pieces (muqaṭṭa'āt) of yours will be of no avail to you."⁵ When they were forced to engage in satire they usually engaged with other rajaz poets as in the case of al-'Ajjāj with Abū-'n-Najm,⁶ and Ru'ba with Abū-Nukhayla.⁷

It is plausible to suggest that the cultivation of rajaz and its development in the Umayyad period had much in common as suggested earlier with the cultural developments that were taking place at the same time in Baṣra. Its development was partly a response to the philological need. But more important is the fact that the rajaz poets, finding themselves unable to compete with poets who employed the traditional qaṣīd form, developed their art to express themes and ideas that appealed to town dwellers as well as to scholars. Their elaborate portrayal of landscapes and desert animals indicated the joy

1. Ibn-Sall., 473; cf. E.I.¹, s.v. "Dhū-'l-Rumma" by Schaade.

2. Agh., xxi, 88.

3. Ibn-Qut., Sh., i, 41, 573; 'Umda, i, 112.

4. cf. Chapter II, p.110 above.

5. Agh., xxi, 88.

6. Ḥayawān, vi, 70; Sh., ii, 582; Nallino, 153.

7. Ibn-Qut., Sh., ii, 583-584.

derived by urban dwellers in recounting a kind of life to which they were emotionally and culturally attached but which they no longer experienced. These were aware that the essence of their culture lay in the desert and the rajaz poets in common with other Bedouin poets who excelled in descriptions of desert life as Dhū-'r-Rumma, supplied this need. Soon the rajaz came to be identified with Arab lore and heritage. Al-Muntajī', one of those Bedouin transmitters asked a Baṣrī dignitary about the kind of education he offered his sons. When he told him that it was religious studies (farā'id), he said, "That is the learning of mawālī, may you lose your father; teach them the rajaz because it expands the sides of their mouths, i.e. it makes ^{them} fluent in Arabic."¹ The zeal with which poets attempted to meet this demand led at times to excesses and anachronisms. When al-'Ajjāj² or Ru'ba³ charged al-Kumayt and aṭ-Ṭirimmāḥ with misapplying in their poetry the gharīb which he had taught them, he correctly pointed out the reason when he said, "They did that because they were urban dwellers, describing what they had not seen, thus putting it in its wrong place, whereas I am a Bedouin who describes what he sees and thus puts it in its right place."⁴ Dhū-'r-Rumma who was a teacher in the desert but frequented Baṣra⁵ and was considered an authority (ḥujja)⁶ was embarrassed in al-Mirbad

1. Mub., Kāmil, iv, 193.

2. Agh., ii, 18.

3. Muwash., 192.

4. Agh., ii, 18.

5. Muwash., 191-192.

6. Ibid., 192; Fuhūla, 503.

by a tailor who pointed out to him his mistakes in his descriptions of Bedouin life and the report adds that the poet never recited any poem in al-Mirbad after that until the tailor died.¹ The career of Dhū-'r-Rumma in this connection underlines the appeal that the kind of desert poetry he composed had in the courts of emirs and circles of scholars. Despite the fact that Ru'ba often accused him of plagiarizing his poetry² and charged him openly in the presence of his patron Bilāl ibn-Abī-Burda,³ and despite the general opinion among his contemporaries that he was a poor panegyrist,⁴ his craft was appreciated by the patrons to whom he addressed his poems.⁵ His concern over his art overshadows the main subject of praise. Whole poems ostensibly composed as panegyrics are devoted to descriptions of journey and desert.⁶ Yet although his excellence in this brand of poetry excited the envy of such accomplished poets as Jarīr and al-Farazdaq,⁷ his general achievement was not highly rated since he limited himself to a relatively minor theme that appealed to a limited number of people. The poet himself noticed the modest position assigned

1. Agh., xvi, 118-119.

2. Ibid., xvi, 121.

3. Ibid., 123.

4. Ibid., 121; Muwash., 172, 176; 'Umda, i, 206.

5. cf. Agh., xvi, 123 for the opinion of Bilāl.

6. e.g. Rumma, 132-138 where the whole poem with the exception of a single line in which the name of the patron is mentioned, is devoted to desert life; cf. 184-192 on 'Umar ibn-Hubayra; 355-371 on Ibn-Bishr of 69 verses only 4 in his praise; 547-600 on 'Ubaydallah ibn-Ma'mar, out of 59 only 4 in his praise.

7. Agh., xvi, 112; Khiz., i, 106.

to him by his contemporaries and seized the opportunity of al-Farazdaq listening to one of his poems and when the latter expressed his appreciation of it he asked the great poet, "Why then am I not counted among the accomplished poets (fuḥūl)?" Al-Farazdaq simply said, "The description of deserts and of droppings of camels bar you from that."¹ This narrowness of scope, however, was not confined to Dhū-'r-Rumma who was said to be a quarter of a poet.² Ibn-Faswa was considered the best describer of riding camels, and he never failed to mention them in any poem he composed.³ This absorbing activity earned him the line by an enemy of his:-

Ibn-Faswa has perished save his description of camels.
[391]⁴

'Umar ibn-Laja' was deemed the best describer of milch-camels in rajaz,⁵ a speciality of which Jarīr made fun when he satirized him saying:-

Have you praised the camel, the daughters of which are
noble? Yet your father's daughters are not noble.
[392]⁶

Ar-Rā'ī received his nickname as a result of his indulgence in describing milch-camels.⁷ Jarīr, noting his satires against his own tribe Hawāzin and his indulgence in describing camels, told him:-

1. Ibn-Sall., 468; Muwash., 172; Khiz., i, 107.

2. Muwash., 172; cf. E.I.¹, "Dhū-'l-Rumma" by Schaade.

3. Agh., xix, 143.

4. Ibid.

5. Fuḥūla, 501.

6. Jar., 427.

7. Fuḥūla, 501; Agh., xx, 168; Ibn-Sall., 250.

Your endeavour to credit Hawāzin is most evil; you disgrace them and praise the milk-skin.[393]¹

The limitation of ar-Rā'ī's field, which seemed to have been self-imposed, was mainly due to his concern about originality and his reluctance to imitate other poets.² This position, more than the satire of Jarīr against him,³ seemed to have been the real cause of the reduction in status which he suffered⁴ after the emergence of poets such as Jarīr and al-Farazdaq whose scope was wider and who appealed to wider audiences. The discriminating taste and keen interest which patrons and others interested in poetry displayed on many occasions indicate that poets were motivated, in choosing their fields of speciality, by the desire to excel and to satisfy an increasingly demanding audience whose knowledge of poetry was progressively maturing. When Ru'ba described the legs of a horse:-

They hurl down separately and fall standing,[394]
the emir Salm ibn-Qutayba quickly remarked, "You have erred, O Abū-'l-Jaḥḥāf, you have described it as if shackled," and all that Ru'ba had to say was, "O emir, bring me nearer to the tail of a camel and I will describe it for you as it should be."⁵ In actual fact al-'Ajjāj and Ru'ba specialized not in

1. Agh., xx, 171.

2. Ibid.; Ibn-Sall., 434.

3. Ibn-Sall., 435; Jar., 58-65.

4. Ibn-Sall., 435.

5. Agh., xxi, 90-91; Sh., ii, 577; Ṣinā'atayn, 90.

the description of horses, but rather in that of camels.¹

Such difficulties as these poets encountered in composing their poetry throw a useful light on the transitional nature of the environment in which they lived. Bedouins who were lured into urban settlements by prospects of better living were losing touch with real desert life, but since they gained their living through taking it as the subject-matter of their poetry, they had to educate themselves and draw on ancient poetry as their model. The claim of al-'Ajjāj and Ru'ba noted earlier that they were Bedouins who saw things and described them from experience could not always be substantiated in view of the many mistakes they committed in describing familiar desert subjects. Thus when al-'Ajjāj described a lone wild ass another Bedouin reminded him that a wild ass usually kept the company of his females and went on to recite a more accurate description.² The mistakes and anachronisms of his son Ru'ba were by far more numerous and all indicated lack of knowledge of some simple facts of desert life and relevant Jāhili poetry. When he said:-

You were like him who inserted his hand in a hole
missing the viper (af'a) but meeting the large
snake (aswad), [395]

al-Aṣma'ī indicated that he had committed a blunder by implying that the af'a was less harmful than the aswad while in fact the reverse was true.³ In another case he described the ostrich

1. Ibn-Sall., 107.

2. Sh., ii, 573.

3. Sh., 579.

male in the company of numerous females thus likening him to a wild ass which was a gross misrepresentation since the former kept only one female.¹ Similar mistakes are recorded in the poetry of Dhū-'r-Rumma.² It is also worth while to note that their sometimes incomplete knowledge of the various aspects of their urban environment led them into committing some silly mistakes as when Ru'ba confused phosphorous and gold,³ or when al-'Ajjāj spoke of glass oozing,⁴ and Abū-Nukhayla took the word fustuq (baked bread) to be a kind of vegetable.⁵

The fact that the development of Umayyad poetry especially in Baṣra was heavily geared to traditional pre-Islamic poetry explains to a large extent the dominance of Bedouin elements not only in the content but also in the diction and metaphors of poets not excluding even those of urban backgrounds. But the pace of social change affected even this traditional poetry in varied ways as we have seen earlier. The impact of urban life and ideas on the structure of poetry was no less important. The influence of the quṣṣāṣ and preachers on poetry has already been hinted at. The fact that the most conservative brand of poetry - rajaz - should be the brand most exposed to this kind of religious influence reflects on the underlying motives behind the resurgence of this kind of poetry. It underlines

1. Ibid.; Ṣinā'atayn, 90; cf. many other mistakes on the authority of al-Aṣma'ī, Sh., 580-583.

2. e.g. on animals, cf. Sh., ii, 518; on women, ibid., 519; cf. also Agh., xvi, 118-9, 123; Muwash., 180, 183-185.

3. Ru'ba, 41; Muzhir, ii, 313.

4. Sh., ii, 574.

5. Ibid., 584.

the contention that this poetry though packed with ideas and pictures of desert life does not necessarily express real desert sentiments but rather that it was generally concocted to suit urban demands and more especially those of the learned classes. The religious factor did not affect only the theme and content of this poetry as we have seen earlier,¹ but it also affected its structure and imagery. This is most evident in the marked departure from the conventional prelude especially in the poetry of al-'Ajjāj and Ru'ba. In some of their poems the conventional theme of weeping over the ruined abode of the beloved is replaced by religious themes and invocations.² Other poets, too, felt the need to introduce Islamic elements into what had been expressed by old cliches. Instead of beseeching God to give his two fictitious companions water according to Jāhili convention, Dhū-'r-Rumma tells them at one time:-

May you two never cease to be in bliss as long as you
live, and ~~you~~ may^{you} accompany Muḥammad on the Day of
Reckoning.[396]³

At another he says:-

O my two companions! Look out, may you be housed in a
lofty stage [under] an extended shadow of
paradise.[397]⁴

Islamic institutions and notions were greatly utilized by poets and were often placed alongside the inherited traditions.

1. cf. Chapter V, 268-269.

2. cf. 'Ajj., p.14 No.9, p.15, No.11, p.24 No.13, p.40 No.24;
Ru'b., p.25 No.10.

3. Rumma, 121.

4. Ibid., 132; cf. 304.

Thus the ruined mosque conveniently found its place on an equal footing with the ancient encampment in the nasīb as in the line of Dhū-'r-Rumma:-

[Traces of abodes] were effaced but for a pole for fastening beasts, the sides of a mosque and black supports of a cooking pot.[398]¹

The mosque as a most conspicuous building featured also in the satire of Jarīr in a line considered by al-Farazdaq to be the severest satire upon him:

Sukayna wished that the pillars of her people's mosque were penises of mules.[399]²

The same institution was used by al-Farazdaq in his nasīb:-

She sways towards the mosque as though she is someone whose leg was broken anew walking along a rough road.[400]³

The muṣḥaf is likewise used by Jarīr in the conventional prelude to describe the effaced abode.⁴

The impact of Islam on the internal structure of poetry is even greater. Thus the idea of reward is employed by Dhū-'r-Rumma to describe the dedication of a wild ox charging the hunting dogs:-

He returned to the charge upon them piercing their chests as though, in his frontal assault, he is seeking heavenly reward.[401]⁵

When the same ox defeats the dogs and runs away a famous Qur'anic simile⁶ is employed to describe his speed:-

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1. Rumma, 502.
 2. Naq., 322, 1053.
 3. Far., i, 363; Naq., 517; cf. also Naq., 790.
 4. Naq., 579.
 5. Rumma, 25.
 6. Q., lxxii, 8-9.

As though he is a shooting star, moving with tremendous speed after a devil in a dark night.[402]¹

The familiar desert jerboa scorched by the sun is described by the same poet:-

As though the fore-legs of its (i.e. desert) jerboa scorching in the sun, were the two hands of a repenting sinner asking forgiveness of God. [403]²

Religious practices are employed to describe abstract notions.

In describing the sleep of a companion of his, Dhū-'r-Rumma said:-

Drowsiness has overwhelmed him while his head bowed to the religion of sleep late at night.[404]³

Similes were borrowed freely from the Qur'ān to produce a desired effect. In describing the error of al-Farazdaq's ways, Jarīr said:-

You have erred as did the Samaritan when he invited his people to worship the calf and they remained firmly attached to it.[405]⁴

In representing the humble origin of Jarīr, al-Farazdaq said:-

The spider has woven its cobweb over you, [a destiny] decreed upon you by the revealed Book.[406]⁵

Sometimes whole Qur'ānic verses were put into poetry with minor alterations as in the line of al-Farazdaq where two verses of the Qur'ān were employed:-

I have invoked the one whose power created heaven,⁶ and certainly God is nearer to me than my jugular vein⁷ and more gracious.[407]⁸

1. Rumma, 27.

2. Rumma, 59.

3. Ibid., 130; cf. 158, 159.

4. Naq., 165; cf. Q., xx, 87.

5. Ibid., 183; cf. Q., xxix, 41; cf. also Naq., 255, 796.

6. Q., li, 47.

7. Q., l, 15.

8. Naq., 553.

The impact of the urban scene is also visible where metaphors and similes were drawn from other urban features.

Jarīr draws on building in describing a huge she-camel:-

She has a waist plastered over the base of her neck as a lofty building is plastered by Persian craftsmen.[408]¹

A familiar town scene is borrowed by Dhū-'r-Rumma to describe the brandishing of a she-camel's tail:-

As a virgin gently whisks away town gnats from a Persian dignitary
With the tails of two peacocks tied together, standing erect in a bodice without sleeves and an elegant skirt.[409]²

Animals were vividly described by similar metaphors derived from the luxurious urban setting. Al-'Ajjāj often endowed the wild ox with the garb of the rich and the prosperous.

He described one of them returning to his covert:-

He came back to his covert as a Christian would come to celebrate the feast in a high-walled church.[410]³

The walk of another is represented as:-

He walks as a proud and a light-hearted man would walk,
Dressed in yellowish trousers beneath ample buttoned clothes,
Or rather as a drunken town satrap whose official position is indicated by the crown and bracelets.[411]⁴

The dignified posture of the emir is often used by the same poet in this theme:-

He (i.e. the ox) walks over the sands of Abū-Ḥibrīr as the emir or the emir's brother would walk,
Moving proudly as a mighty official or a grand town dignitary.[412]⁵

1. Ibid., 479; cf. 'Ajj., 27.

2. Rumma, 510-511.

3. 'Ajj., 69.

4. Ibid., 29.

5. Ibid., 31.

The deep influence of the urban scene is nowhere more marked than in his subtle descriptions where colours and materials are blended in vivid forms, as in his portrait of the formation of mirage:-

The glittering heat has woven
Through the flickering of desert mirage, plaits like
pieces of silk-cloth.[413]¹

Delightful colours and bright clothings go into the descriptions of animals. An ox is described:-

So that when dawn shed light on him,
He appeared in the colour of a blossom as though he was
a crowned Roman,
Dressed in linen₂ robes, or as a crowned Ḥimyarite
monarch.[414]²

But urban life was not only a means to enliven Bedouin themes. It was also a life to be enjoyed for its own sake. The effect of life in Baṣra on Jarīr appears not only in his pleasant nasīb but also in his descriptions of real girls in the town. He said of one of them:-

A maiden of urban background fond of wearing thin gowns,
The most hateful to her of her two garments is the one
still remaining [on her]; she is fed from the purse
of a rich man,
She is sure of her subsistence [even] if he should die -
he himself she would find it easy to part from.
In laughing she reveals glittering sharp teeth [white]
as camomil-flowers swaying on a dark ground.[415]³

This picture of Jarīr confirms the conclusion of al-Farazdaq when he said:-

I say that white-skinned town girls are a source of death
when they twist [their bodies] beneath garments.[416]⁴

1. Ibid., 27.

2. 'Ajj., 70.

3. Jar., 310.

4. Far., i, 23; cf. i, 210-211 for an impressive portrait of another girl.

The commercial life of Baṣra left a faint imprint on the structure of poetry. Few lines could be detected where its influence is visible such as the line of Yazīd ibn-Mufarrigh:-

You have established a market for praise and never before
had a market been established for praise.[417]¹

Ru'ba employed commercial terms only in dealing with youth and the onslaught of old age:-

Would that the days of youth return, and would that youth
was a commodity brought from the merchant,
We would have given him the monopoly of sale before he
begins to haggle if only he could bring back bright
youth.[418]²

But the poet knows that:-

White hair is the worst commodity even if sold to a
merchant through a broker.[419]³

In fact it is unsaleable:-

For white hair there is no demand even if trade is
carried on it.[420]⁴

The professionalism which went into the creation of much of this poetry could not be overrated. The length to which a poet as al-Farazdaq usually went to compose his poetry⁵ justified his pride in his craft which he considered superior to that of the Jāhili masters.⁶ In the face of professionalism all round them poets had to become professional and to treat their art as an elaborate industry in which many skills are involved together with a good measure of inventiveness

1. Ibn-Khall., Waf., ii, 289.

2. Ru'b., 51.

3. Ibid., 57.

4. Ibid., 109; cf. 30.

5. cf. 'Askari, Diwān al-Ma'āni, i, 113; 'Umda, i, 204, 207.

6. Far., ii, 142.

and effort as the lines of Dhū-'r-Rumma indicate:-

Many an unfamiliar verse I spent upon sleepless nights
seeking to avert its defects and absurdities,
So I spent the night erecting it, fashioning thereof
rhymes to which I see no parallel,
Being unfamiliar, known everywhere, created from
scratch.[421]¹

With Ru'ba the craft of the poet matches in skill and
exertion that of the accomplished weaver:-

I, being the poet constantly called upon for recitation,
compose [my poems] as the skilful weaver decorates
the best quality of royal cloth.[422]²

He even depicts himself in the act of composing his poetry as
a real weaver handling his loom, manipulating its different
parts to get the desired result.³ This meticulous concern
with excellence and novelty reflects the high standard of the
audience to which this poetry was addressed. Most of the
caliphs, their emirs and the dignitaries around them were
discerning critics, and poets who sought their favours knew
full well the efforts they had to undergo before earning their
approval.⁴ The necessity to please the élite in society
which set the artistic and linguistic standards and provided
the material benefits, influenced poets immensely in their
approach to poetry which resulted in producing poetry of which
many poets boasted as being 'gharīb', not only in the sense
of 'antiquated' as much of rajaz certainly was, but also in

1. Rumma, 440-441; cf. 168-169.

2. Ru'b., 115.

3. Ibid., 61; cf. also 38; Ibn-Qut., Ma'ānī, ii, 814.

4. e.g. cf. Muwash., 215-216 for disapproval of Walīd I of
'Ajjāj's poetry; ibid., 178-9 for Bilāl's criticism of
Dhū-'r-Rumma; ibid., 239 for 'Abd-al-Malik's reaction to
Dhū-'r-Rumma's poem; cf. Agh., xviii, 140 for Maslama's
encounter with Abū-Nukhayla.

the sense of unfamiliar and contrived as the earlier lines of Dhū-'r-Rumma¹ indicated.

Other considerations, however, were affecting the course of poetic style in a different manner. We have already noted the tendency to group poets into those who appealed to the general public and those who appealed to men of learning.² The polarization of social classes into élite and unsophisticated masses who increasingly lost the traditional linguistic chasteness of an 'Arab' in addition to the other factors attending the urban growth of the miṣr accentuated this tendency and resulted by the end of the Umayyad era in forcing the same poet to adopt two different styles each addressed to the respective group he had in mind as we have noted in the poetry of Bashshār.³ This tendency, however, was not visible only in the poetry of Bashshār and as-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī, both of whom reached full stature early in the 'Abbāsīd era, but is also visible in the highly conventional rajaz poetry. Already under the impact of the quṣṣāṣ, rajaz was becoming once more a popular medium as it had been in the first place before its development in the Umayyad period. Under Abū-Nukhayla⁴ and al-'Umānī⁵ it was transformed into an easy medium depicting common experiences of everyday life.

1. cf. also Jar., 446.

2. cf. Chapter II, p.96.

3. cf. Chapter II, p.98.

4. cf. Agh., xviii, 143-150.

5. Ibid., xviii, 78-82; Ibn-Mu'tazz, Ṭabaqāt, 109-114; Bayān, i, 48, 131.

Another sign of the changing circumstances was the employment of Persian words in poetry. Major poets such as Jarīr and al-Farazdaq used some common Persian words,¹ but those who became famous for this practice were Ibn-Mufarrigh² and al-'Umānī.³

1. cf. Naq., 334, 787, 845, 868; Far., i, 83, 178, 281.

2. Bayān, i, 132.

3. Ibid.

A P P E N D I X

- 1 لَوْلَا جَرِيرٌ هَلَكْتَ بِحِيلَةٍ
نِعْمَ الْفَتَى وَبُسْتُ الْقَبِيلَةِ
- 2 أَتَيْتَاكَ لِأَعْنِ حَاجَةً عَرَضَتْ لَنَا
إِلَيْكَ وَلَا عَن قِلَّةٍ فِي مَجَاشِعِ
- 3 فَوَاللَّهِ لَا آتَى يَزِيدَ وَلَوْ حَوَتْ
أَنَامِلُهُ مَا بَيْنَ شَرْقٍ إِلَى غَرْبِ
لِأَنَّ يَزِيدًا غَيْرَ اللَّهِ مَا بِهِ
- 4 وَمَنْ يَكُ خَائِفًا لِأَذَاةِ شِعْرِي
جَنُوحٌ إِلَى السَّقَايِ مُضِرٌّ عَلَى الذَّنْبِ
مَمُّ قَادُوا سَفِيهِهُمْ وَخَافُوا
- 5 وَكَمْ مِنْ لَيْمٍ قَدْ رَفَعَتْ لَهُ اسْمَهُ
فَقَدْ أَمِنَ الْهِجَاءَ بِنُوحِ حَرَامِ
فَإِنْ تَهَنَّى عَنْهُ فَسَمِعًا وَطَاعَةً
- 6 وَإِلَّا فَإِنَّ عُرْضَةَ لِلسَّارِحِ
وَالْمَحْمَتُهُ بِأَسْمِي وَكَيْسِ بَطَاعِمِ
- 7 لَقَدْ أَصْبَحَتْ نُرُوجُ الْفَرَزْدَقِ نَاشِرًا
وَلَوْ رَضِيَتْ رَمَحَ أَسْتِهِ لَأَسْتَقَرَّتْ
- 8 لَقَدْ ضَلَّ جَاهِي فِي خُلَيْدَةَ ضَلَّةً
وَأَشْهَدُ - وَالْمُسْتَعْفَرُ اللَّهُ أَنِّي
كَلِمَتُهَا عَلَيْهَا وَالْهِجَاءُ كَذُوبُ
- 9 فَغَضَّ الطَّرْفَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ نُحَيْرِ
سَأَعْتَبُ قَوْمِي بَعْدَهَا وَأَتُوبُ
- 10 بَلَّغْنَ الشَّمْسَ حَيْثُ تَكُونُ شَرْقًا
فَلَا كَعْبًا بَلَّغْتَ وَلَا كِلَابًا
يَكُلُّ ثَنِيَّةً وَيَكُلُّ نَعْبًا
- 11 تَعْنِي يَا جَرِيرُ لِعَيْرِ شَيْءٍ
وَمَسْقَطُ قَرْنِهَا مِنْ حَيْثُ غَابَا
فَلَيْفَ تَرُدُّ مَا بَعَثَ مِنْهَا
- 12 وَجَهَّزْتُ فِي الْآفَاقِ كُلِّ قَصِيْدَةٍ
وَمَا جِبَالِ مِصْرَ مُشْهَرَاتٍ
يَجْتَنِبُ إِلَى جِبَانٍ مَنْ كَانَ دُونَهُ
- 13 وَإِنِّي لَقَوْلٍ لِكُلِّ غَرِيْبَةٍ
وَرُودِ إِذَا السَّارِي بِنَيْلِ تَرْتَمَا
حَرْجٍ بِأَفْوَاهِ الرُّوَاةِ كَأَنَّهَا
- 14 أَلَا إِنَّمَا تَحْطَى كَلِيْبُ بِشِعْرِهَا
وَرُودِ إِذَا السَّارِي بِنَيْلِ تَرْتَمَا
وَبِالْمَجْدِ تَحْطَى دَارِمٌ وَالْأَقَارِعُ

- 15 -

لَقَدْ ذُقْتُ مِثِّي طَعْمَ حَرْبٍ مَرِيرَةٍ وما انتِ إِنْ جَارَيْتِ قَيْسًا بِسَالِمٍ

- 16 -

عَطَفْتُ عَلَيْكَ الْحَرْبَ إِذْ بَدَأَ وَإِنِّي أَخُو الْحَرْبِ كَرَارٌ عَلَى الْقِرْنِ مَعْطَفٌ

- 17 -

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لِلشُّعْرَاءِ مِثِّي صَوَاعِقَ يَخْضَعُونَ لَهَا الرِّقَابَا

18

وَأَبَ الْوَفْدِ وَفَدُ بَنِي فُقَيْمٍ بِالْأُمِّ مَا تَوُوبُ بِهِ الْوَفُودُ
أَتُونَا بِالْقُدُورِ مَعَدَّ لِيَمَّا وَفَانِ الْجِدُّ بِالْجِدِّ السَّعِيدُ

- 19 -

يَا قَوْمُ إِنِّي لَمْ أُرِدْ لِأَسْبِكُمْ وَنَوَ الطَّنِيءِ مَحْفُوقٌ بِأَنْ يَتَعَذَّرَا
تَنَاهَوْا فَإِنِّي لَوَأْرَدْتِمْ هِبَاءَكُمْ بَدَأَ - وَهُوَ مَعْرُوفٌ - أَغْرَمَ مَشْهُلًا
إِذَا قَالَ غَاوٍ مِنْ مَعَدِّ قَصِيدَةٍ بِهَا جَرِبٌ كَأَنْتِ عَلَى بَرْزُورَا
أَيُنْطَقَا غَيْرِي وَأَمْرِي بِذَنْبَا وَهَذَا قَضَاءُ حَقِّهِ أَنْ يُعَيَّرَا

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يَجِلُّ اللَّؤْمُ مَا حَلَّتْ فُقَيْمٍ وَإِنْ سَارُوا بِأَقْصَى الْأَرْضِ سَارَا

21

لَعَمْرِي لَأَنْ قَلَّ الْحَصَى فِي بِيوتِكُمْ بِنِي نَهْشَلٍ مَا لَوْكُمْ بِقَلِيلٍ

22

غَضِبْتُمْ عَلَيْنَا أَنْ عَلَتِكُمْ مَجَاشِعُ وَكَانَ الَّذِي يَحْمِي ذِمَامَكُمْ عَبْدَا

23

أَلَسْتُ كَلْبِيًّا إِذَا سِيمَ فُطَّةً أَقْرَ كَأَقْرَابِ اللَّيْلَةِ لِلْبَعْلِ
وَكُلُّ كَلْبِيٍّ صَفِيحَةٌ وَجْهُهُ أَذَلُّ لِأَقْدَامِ الرِّجَالِ مِنَ النَّعْلِ
وَكُلُّ كَلْبِيٍّ يَسُوقُ أَتَانَهُ لَهُ حَاجَةٌ مِنْ حَيْثُ تَنْفَرُ بِالْحَبْلِ

24

لَعَمْرِي لَأَنْ أَلْهَى الْفَرَزْدَقَ قَيْدَهُ وَدُرُجَ نَوَارِ ذَوَالرَّهْمَانَ وَذَوَالْجَيْسَلِ
لِيَبْتَعَثَنَّ مِنْ عُدَاةِ مَجَاشِعِ بِدَيْهَةِ لَادَانِي الْجِرَاءِ وَلَا وَغْلِ

25

ثَلَاثِينَ عَامًا مَا أَمْرِي مِنْ عَمَايَةِ إِذَا بَرَّقَتْ إِلَّا شَدَدَتْ لَهَا رَحْلِي

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لَبِينٌ رَتَاجٌ قَائِمًا وَمَقَامٌ
وَلَا خَارِجًا مِّنْ فِي سَوْءِ كَلَامٍ
دُرُوءٌ مِّنَ الْإِسْلَامِ ذَاتِ حَرَامٍ

أَلَمْ تَرَفِي عَاهَدتُ رَزِي وَأَنْتِي
عَلَى قَسَمٍ لَا أَشْتَمُ الدَّهْرَ مُسْلِمًا
أَلَمْ تَرَفِي وَالشَّعْرُ أَصْبَحَ بَيْنَنَا

27

أَسِيرًا بُدَانِي خَطْوَهُ حَلَقُ الْحَجَلِ
إِلَى النَّارِ قَالَتْ لِي مَقَالَةٌ ذِي عَقْلِ
سَعَيْتُ وَأَوْضَعْتُ الْمَطِيَّةَ لِتُجْهِلَ
فَمَا بِي عَنْ أَحْسَابِ قَوْمِي مِنْ شُغْلٍ
يُدْفِعُ عَنْ أَمْثَالِهِمْ أَنَا أَوْ مِثْلِي

أَلَا أَسْتَضْرَأْتُ مِنِّْي هُنَيْدَةً أَنْ تَرَأَيْتِ
وَلَوْ عَلِمْتِ أَنَّ الْوِتَاقَ أَشَدَّهُ
لَعَمْرِي وَقَدْ قِيدَتْ نَفْسِي لَطَالِمَا
فَإِنْ يَكُ قَيْدِي كَانَ نَذْرًا نَذْرَتَهُ
أَنَا الضَّامِنُ الرَّاعِي عَلَيْهِمْ وَإِنَّمَا

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إِذَا نَفْتُ عَتَادٍ أُرْتَيْتَ جَلَّالُهُ
أَبُوجَهْضَمٍ تَغَالَى عَلَيَّ وَمَرَّاجِلُهُ
وَكُنْتُ ابْنُ أَخْتٍ لَا تَخَافُ غَوَائِلُهُ

أَمْ تَحْسَبُ قَلْبِي خَارِجًا مِنْ حِجَابِهِ
أَنْفِي قَمَلِي مِنْ كَلْبِي هَجْوَتُهُ
أَحَارِثُ دَارِي مَرَّتَيْنِ هَدَمْتَهَا

29

وَتَنَاجُ فِي الْفَائِئِمَا الْحَبَطَاتِ

بَنُو دَارِيْمٍ الْفَاؤُهُمْ آلُ مِسْمَعٍ

30

وَدَعْنَا نَفْسَ مَجْدًا تُعَدُّ فَوَاضِلُهُ
بِتَهْدِيمِ مَاخُورٍ خَبِيثٍ مَدَاخِلُهُ

أَحَارِثُ خُذْ مَنْ شِئْتِ مِنَّا وَمِنْهُمْ
فَمَا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ تَهْدِيمُ دَارِنَا

31

إِلَّا بَنُو الْعَمِّ فِي أَيْدِيهِمُ الْحَشَبُ
وَنَهْرُ تَيْرِكِي فَلَمْ تَعْرِفْكَ الْعَرَبُ

مَا لِلْفَرَزْدَقِ مِنْ عَزٍّ يَلُودُ بِهِ
سِيرُوا بَنِي الْعَمِّ فَالْأَهْوَاؤُ مِثْرُكُمْ

32

زُرِيادًا فَلَمْ تَقْدِرْ عَلَيَّ حَبَائِلُهُ
وَلَوْ نَشَرْتِ عَيْنَ الْقِبَاعِ وَكَاهِلُهُ

فَقَبْلَكَ مَا أَعْيَيْتِ كَأَسْرَعَيْنِهِ
فَأَقْسَمْتُ لَا آتِيهِ سَبْعِينَ حِجَّةً

33

وَلَمْ يَدُنْ مِنْ زُرَّ الْأَسْوَدِ الضَّرَانِمِ
وَلَمْ يَزْدَجِرْ طَيْرَ النُّحُوسِ الْأَشَائِمِ
فَلَا تَجْزَعَا وَاسْتَسْمَعَا لِلْمَرَاجِمِ

لَوْ دَجَرْتُ اللَّؤْمُ لَوْ كَانَ عَائِنًا
وَلَيْسَ ابْنُ حَمْرَاءِ الْعَوَانِ مُفْلِتِي
وَإِنَّمَا قَدْ هَجَمَانِي عَلَيْكُمَا

34

إِلَى آلِ قُرْطٍ بَعْدَ مَا كُنْتُ عَائِنَا

وَمَا أَنْتِ مِنَّا غَيْرَ أَنْكَ تَدْعِي

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بَنِي الْقَيْنَاتِ لِلْقَيْنِ الْيَمَافِ

تَنَاوَمْتُمْ لِأَعْيُنِ إِذْ كَعَاكُمْ

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عَاجُ كَاتٍ وَجُوهٌ مَقَالِ

وَلَدَ الْفَرَزْدَقِ وَالصَّعَاعِصِ كُلُّهُمْ

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عَرِينٌ مِنْ عَرِينَةٍ لَيْسَ مِنَّا
عَبِيدًا مُسْبَعِينَ لِعَبْدِ قَيْسٍ
عَرَفْنَا جَعْفَرًا وَبَنِي عَبِيدٍ
- 38
وَابْنُ الْمَرَاغَةِ يَدْعِي مِنْ دَارِهِ
لَيْسَ الْكِرَامُ بِأَجْلِيكَ أَبَاهُمْ
- 39
لَوْلَا بَنُو سَعْدِ بْنِ صَبِيحَةَ أَصَحَّتْ
لَقَدْ كُنْتُ عَنْ شَتْمِ الْعَشِيرَةِ مُحْرَمًا
- 40
أَنْشَتُمْ يَزْبُوعًا لِأَشْتَمَ مَا رَكَا
- 41
لِي الْفَضْلُ فِي أَفْنَاءِ عَمْرٍو وَمَالِكِ
- 42
بَنِي مَالِكٍ لِاصِدْقٍ عِنْدَ جَابِشِ
- 43
وَكُلُّ مَعَدٍّ قَدْ جَزَيْنَا قُرُوضَهُمْ
- 44
فَارْجِعْ إِلَى حَكَمِي قَدْ شِئِنَا بَنَهُمْ
- 45
فَمَا مِنْ مَعَدِّي كَفَاءَ نَعْدِهِ
- 46
وَيَوْمَ عَبِيدِ اللَّهِ خُضْنَا بِرَايَةٍ
- 47
وَأَلْفَيْتَانَا تَمِيمًا وَتَنْتَمِي
- 48
تَمَنَّى جَالٌ مِنْ تَمِيمٍ لِي الرَّدَى
كَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ مَوَاطِنِي
- 49
سَيَلْفِيكَ عَبَسُ أَخُو كَهْمَسٍ
وَيَلْفِيكَ عَمْرُؤُ وَأَشْيَاعُهَا
وَأَلْفِيكَ بَكْرًا إِذَا أَقْبَلَتْ
- 50
وَمَسْعُودُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو إِذْ أَنَا نَا
رَجَا التَّامِيرَ مَسْعُودُ فَأَضْحَى
سَيَجْمَعُ جَمْعُنَا لِبَنِي أَبِيْنَا
- بَرُّنْتُ إِلَى عَرِينَةٍ مِنْ عَرِينٍ
مَنْ الْقَيْنِ الْمَوْلِدِ وَالْقَطِينِ
وَأَنكَرْنَا زَعَانِفَ آخَرِينَ
- وَالْعَبْدُ غَيْرُ أَبِيهِ قَدْ يَتَّخِلُ
حَتَّى يُرَدَّ إِلَى عَطِيَّةٍ تُعْتَلُ
- بَنُو جَارِمٍ مِينِي عَلَى ظَهْرٍ أَجَزَلِ
وَلَكِنْ مَتَى تَسْتَعِجِلُ الشَّرَّ يَعْتَلِ
وَعَيْرِكَ مَوْلَى مَالِكٍ وَمَمِيمِهَا؟
- [وَمَا بَرُّنْتُ مَذْ جَارِيَّتِي أَجْرِي عَلَى مَهْلٍ]
- وَلَكِنْ حَطًّا مِنْ فَيَاشٍ عَلَى دَخَلِ
فَبُؤْسِي بُبُؤْسِي أَوْ بِنِعْمَاءِ أَنْعَمَا
- أَهْلُ النُّبُوءَةِ وَاللِّتَابِ الْمَنْزَلِ
لَنَا غَيْرَ بَيْتِي عَبْدِ شَمْسٍ وَهَاشِمِ
- وَزَاخِرَةَ تَمَّتْ إِلَيْنَا تَمِيمُهَا
إِلَيْنَا تَمِيمٌ بِالْفَوَارِسِ وَالرَّجُلِ
وَمَا زَادَ عَنْ أَحْسَابِهِمْ ذَائِدٌ مَثَلِي
وَقَدْ عَلِمُوا إِلَيَّ أَنَا السَّابِقُ الْمُبَلَى
- مُقَارَعَةَ الْأَمْرِدِ بِالْمَرْبِدِ
لَكَيْزِ بْنِ أَفْصَى وَمَا عَدَدُوا
بِطَعْنِ يَشِيْبٍ لَهُ الْأَمْرِدُ
- صَبَجْنَا حَدَّ مَهْرٍ وَسِينِيَا
صَرِيحًا قَدْ أَذَقْنَا الْمُنُونَا
كَمَا لَزُوا الْقَرِينَةَ وَالْقَرِينَا

وَتُعْنِي الرُّطُّ عَبْدَ الْقَيْسِ عَمَّا وَتَكْفِينَا الْأَسَاوِرَةَ الْمَرْوَنَا

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أَلَمْ تَكُنْ فِي قَتْلِ مَسْعُودٍ عَيْرٌ جَاءَ يُرِيدُ إِمْرَةً فَمَا أَمَرَ
حَتَّى ضَرَبْنَا رَأْسَ مَسْعُودٍ فَخَرَّ وَلَمْ يُوسِدْ خَدَّهُ حَيْثُ انْعَفَرَ
فَأَصْبَحَ الْعَبْدُ الْمَرْوَنِيُّ عَتْرٌ حَتَّى رَأَى الْمَوْتَ قَرِيبًا قَدْ حَضَرَ
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مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ فَمَا دَرَّ وَابْنُ الْمَهْرُ حَتَّى عَلَا السَّيْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ فَفَعِرُ

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وَابْنَ أَسِيدٍ قَائِدَ النِّفَاقِ بِلَا مَعُونَاتٍ وَلَا أُنْرَاقِ
إِلَّا بَقَايَا كَدَمِ الْأَعْرَاقِ لِشِدَّةِ الْخُشْيَةِ وَالْإِسْفَاقِ
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- 75 وَلَمْ أَرَ كَالْحَجَّاجِ عَوْنًا عَلَى التَّقَى
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- 83 اللَّهُ طَوْقَكَ الْخِلَافَةَ وَالْهُدَى
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- 87 تَوَارَثَهَا بَنُو مَرْوَانَ عَنْهُ
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- 92 رَأَيْتُ بَنِي مَرْوَانَ ثَبَّتَ مُلْكَهُمْ
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93 صَفْتُ لَكَ بَيْعَهُ سِبَاتٍ عَهْدٍ
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94 وَأَوْلَاهُ بِالْحَقِّ الَّذِي لَا يَكْذِبُ
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حَلَفْتُ بِأَيْدِي الْبَدَنِ ...
لَأُمُّ أُمَّتِنَا بِالْوَلِيدِ خَلِيفَةٌ

95 أَنْتَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ الْكِتَابَ لَنَا
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96 فَأَجَابَ دَعْوَتَنَا وَأَنْقَذَنَا
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97 فَلَا أُمَّ إِلَّا أُمَّ عَيْسَى عَلِمْتُهَا
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98 لَوْ صَاحَبْتَهُ الْأَنْبِيَاءُ ذُوو النَّهْيِ
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99 يَا خَيْرَ حَيٍّ وَقَدْ تَعَلَّ لَهُ قَدَمَا
وَمَيِّتٍ بَعْدَ رُسُلِ اللَّهِ مَقْبُورٍ

100 وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْدَ الْمُصْطَفَى مِنْ عِبَادِهِ
لَكُنْتُ الَّذِي يَخْتَارُهُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَهُ
نَبِيٌّ لَكُمْ مِنْكُمْ لِأَمْرِ الْعَرَائِمِ
لَتَعَلَّ الْأَمَانَاتِ الثَّقَالِ الْعَظَائِمِ

101 كُنْتُ النَّبِيَّ الَّذِي يَدْعُو إِلَى النُّورِ
مَعَ الشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصِّدِّيقِ فِي الشُّوْرِ
لَهُمْ هُنَاكَ يَسْتَعْنِي كَانَ مَشْكُورٍ
لَوْ لَمْ يُبَشِّرْ بِهِ عَيْسَى وَبَيْتُهُ
فَأَنْتَ إِنْ لَمْ تُكُنْ إِيَّاهُ صَاحِبُهُ
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102 فَأَمَّاكُمْ لَا تَسْمَعُوهَا بَلَّكُمْ
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إِذَا عَشَيْتَ مِنْ آخِرِ اللَّيْلِ دُخْنَةٌ
فَاتَّ عَقُوقَ الْوَالِدَاتِ كَبِيرُ
سَمِيعٌ بِمَا فَوْقَ الْفِرَاشِ بَصِيرُ
يَبِيتُ لَهُ فَوْقَ الْفِرَاشِ هَرِيرُ

103 مَن قَافِلٌ آدَى إِلَهُهُ رِكَابَهُ
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هَمَمْتُ وَلَمْ أَفْعَلْ وَكَلْتُ وَلَيْسَنِي
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يَسَائِلُنِي مَعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ هِنْدٍ:
فَقُلْتُ لَهُ رَأَيْتَ أَلَاكَ شَيْخًا
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وَخَافُوكَ حَتَّى الْقَوْمُ تَنَزُّو قُلُوبُهُمْ
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 لَقَدْ جَرَّدَ الْحَجَّاجُ لِلْحَقِّ سَنِيَّةُ

يَهَانُ وَيُسَيُّ كُلُّ مَنْ لَا يُقَاتِلُ
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قُلْ لِيَجْبَانَ إِذَا تَأَخَّرَ سَرَجُهُ
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 مَنْ سَدَّ مَطْلِعَ النِّفَاقِ عَلَيْهِمْ

هَلْ أَنْتَ مِنْ شَرِكِ الْمَنِيَّةِ نَاجٍ
 أَوْ بِالْبُحُورِ وَشِدَّةِ الْأَمْوَاجِ
 أَوْ مَنْ يَصُوكُ كَصَوْلَةِ الْحَجَّاجِ

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أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، وَقَدْ بَلَّوْنَا
 تَعَلَّمُوا إِنَّمَا الْحَجَّاجُ سَيْفُ
 هُوَ السَّيْفُ الَّذِي نَصَرَ ابْنَ أَرْوَى

أُمُورِكَ كُلَّهَا رُشْدًا صَوَابًا
 تُجَدُّ بِهِ الْجَمَاجِمَ وَالرَّقَابَا
 بِهِ مَرَّوَانُ عُثْمَانَ الْمُصَابَا

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هُوَ الشَّهَابُ الَّذِي يُرَى الْعَدُوَّ بِهِ
 أَحْيَا الْعِرَاقَ وَقَدْ ثَلَّتْ دَعَائِمُهُ

وَالْمَشْرِفِيُّ الَّذِي تَعَصَى بِهِ مُضَرُّ
 عَمِّيَاءُ صَمَاءُ لِأَثْبَتِي وَلَا تَنْدُرُ

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إِذَا أَوْعَدَ الْحَجَّاجُ أَوْ هَمَّ أَسْقَطَتْ
 لَهُ صَوْلَةٌ مَنْ يُوقِعُهَا أَنْ تُصِيبَهُ
 وَمَا أَصْبَحَ الْحَجَّاجُ يَتَلَوُّ رَعِيَّةُ
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 بِسَيْفٍ بِهِ لَيْتَهُ تَصْرَبُ مِنْ عَمِيٍّ
 شَفِيئَتْ مِنَ الدَّاءِ الْعِرَاقَ فَلَمْ تَدْعُ
 وَكَانُوا كَذِي دَاءٍ أَصَابَ شِفَاءَهُ
 كَوَى الدَّاءَ بِإِمْلَؤَةٍ حَتَّى جَلَّابَهَا

مَخَافَتُهُ مَا فِي الْبُطُونِ الْكَوَامِلِ
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لَيْتَنِي مِنْ جَبِيلَةِ اللُّؤْمِ حَتَّى
فَإِذَا عَامِلُ الْعِرَاقِيِّنِ وَوَلِيٌّ

يُبَغِّضُ فِيهَا شُرْطَةَ الْمِضْرَانِيِّ

أَلَمْ يَكُ قَتْلُ عَبْدِ الْقَيْسِ ظُلْمًا
قَتِيلُ عِدَاوَةٍ لَمْ يَجْنِ ذَنْبًا

فَإِنَّ نَبِيَّكَ لَأَنْبِيَا الْمُصِيبَاتِ إِذْ أَقَى
وَلَكِنَّا نَبِيَّكَ تَنْصَحُكَ خَالِدِ
قَتْلُ لَيْبَنِيِّ مَرْوَانَ: مَا بِالْذِمَّةِ
إِلَّا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ سَفَكَ دِمَانَا
وَنَارُ بَقْتُلِ ابْنِ الْمُهَلَّبِ خَالِدِ
أَرَى مُضَرَ الْمِضْرَانِيِّنَ قَدْ ذَلَّ نَصْرُهَا
كَمَنْ مُبْلِغٌ بِالنَّشَامِ قَيْسًا وَخَيْدًا
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ويورث في صدر المعيد له غمرا
نطاعتها حتى تدب لكم قسرا
وتدع تممًا ثم لا تطلب عذرا
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عليه مع الليل الذي هو أدهم
معي ساهر لي لا ينام ونوم
كما حملت رجلاي كادت تحطم
تكن مثل ذي نغمي لمن كان ينعم
وما كنت أدت حبه أتعلم
عري وحديد يجس الخطو أبهم
كما سرح دقاع الفرات المثلم

له كل نصر للمبارك الدر
سوابق لو يرمى بها لتفقر
له الراسيات الشم حتى تكورا
وحير عباد الله من كان أصبرا
لكنت من العصماء في الطود أحذرا
نصار وكان الله ماشاء قدرا

أتحسني بين المدينة والتي
يقلب رأسا لم يكن رأس سيد

أخالد! لولا الدين لم تعط طاعة
إذًا لوجدتم دون شد وثاقه
ألا يا بني مروان مثل بلائنا
جدير لأن ينسى ، إذا ما دعوتم
أفي الحق أنا لا تزال كتيبة
وإلا تناهوا تحط الخيل بالقنا
إيكم ، وتلقونا بني كل حرة
وإننا لقتالو الملوك إذا اعتدوا

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أبيت أقاسي الليل والقوم منهم
ولو أنها صم الجبال تحملت
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لن صبريت نفسي لقد أمرته
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مَا نَزَلْتُ بَعْدَكَ فِي دَارٍ تَعَرَّقَنِي
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أَوْ تَبَخَّ مِنْهَا فَقَدْ أَجْبَيْتَ مِنْ ضَرْدِ

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وَسَاعٍ مَعَ السُّلْطَانِ يَسْمَى عَلَيْهِمْ

وَمُحَارِسٍ مِنْ مِثْلِهِ وَهُوَ حَارِسُ

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وَلَا تَحْقَرْتِ يَا حَارِ شَيْئًا نَصِبُهُ
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تُحْكِنُ جُرْدًا فِيهَا تَحُونُ وَتَسْرِقُ
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وَمَا كُلُّ مَنْ يُدْعَى إِلَى الرَّزْقِ يَرْزُقُ
لِسَانًا بِهِ يَسْطُو الْعَيْيَ وَيَنْطِقُ

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جَرَاكَ مَلِكِ النَّاسِ خَيْرَ حِرَالِهِ
أَمَرْتُ حَجْرِي لَوْ أَمَرْتُ بغيرِهِ

فَقَدْ قُلْتَ مَعْرُوفًا وَأَوْصَيْتَ كَافِرًا
لَأَلْفَيْتَنِي فِيهِ لِرَأْيِكَ عَاصِمًا

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أَخْلِيْفَةَ الرَّحْمَنِ إِنَّا مَعْشَرُ
عَرَبٍ تَرَى لَيْتَهُ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا
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أَخَذُوا الْعَرِيفَ فَشَقَّقُوا حَبْرُومَهُ
هَتَّى إِذَا لَمْ يَبْقُوا لِعِظَامِهِ
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كَمَا يُطْرَقُ الْخَزَائِنُ مِنْ ذِي الْمَخَالِبِ
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شَهِدْتُ أَنَّ حَارِثَةَ بْنَ بَدْرٍ
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أَسْتَعَى لَهُ فَيُعِينُنِي تَطْلُبُهُ
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وأبو يزيد وذو القروح وجبرول
حلل الملوك كلامه لا يتخل
ومصلهل الشعراء ذاك الأول
وأخو قضاة قوله يتمثل
وأبو دؤاد قوله يتخل
وآبن الفرعية حين جد المقول
لى من قصائده الكتاب المجلد
كالسم خالط جانيبه المنطل
صدعا ، كما صدع الصفاة المعول
ولصن من جباة عمائة أثقل
فورثصن كأنصن الحنك

وهب القصاد لى النوايح إذ مضوا
والفحل علقمة الذى كانت له
وأخو بنى قيس ، وهن قتلته
والاعشيان كلاهما ، ومرقش
وأخو بنى أسد عبيد إذ مضى
وأبنا أبى سلمى زهير وأبنة
والجعفرى ، وكان بشر قبله
ولقد ورثت لىك أوس منطفا
والخارثى أخو الجاس ، ورثته
لصدعن ضاحية الصفاة عن ممتها
دفعوا إلى كتابصن وصية

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حتى أتيت أبا عمرو بن عمار

ما زلت أفتح أبوابا وأغلقها

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من هجو زيان ، لم تهج ولم تدع

هجوت زيان ثم جئت معتذرا

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إذا أقبلت راحة من سوقها
دعها ، فما النجوى من صديقها

تنح للعجون عن طريقها
دعها ، فما النجوى فيها قصدي

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فلا يغرنك منى بعدى
إذا تخلت جيار القد
تجدت نصرا وهو أهل المجد

إذا الرواة بلغوا ما أهدى
وأنا فى تحيرى وجدى
يلتمس النجوى فيها قصدي

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أنسج نسج الصنع المحير
على قضيب الذاهبات الشير
وإن لوى لحيته بالتخار
حتى استقامت بن على اليسر

ما أنا بالفانى ولا المخمر
كيف تراف أنتى فى الدقر
لا ينظر النجوى فيها نظرى
وهو دهى العلم والتعبير

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بفرقة الققم والبغضاء والصراب
قنع الكلام وخلط الجد باللعب
عن الجidal وأغناهم عن الخطب
بنفسك ، فانظر كيف أنت تحاوله

قل للمولين قد قررت عيونكم
كنا أناسا على دين ففرقنا
ما كان أغنى جالا صل سعيهم

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- 416 فَقُلْتُ إِنَّ الْخَوَارِيزِيَّاتِ مَعْطَبَةٌ إِذَا تَفَتَّلْنَ مِنْ تَحْتِ الْجَلَالِيِّبِ
- 417 وَأَقْتَمُوا سُوقَ الشَّنَاءِ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ سُوقَ الشَّنَاءِ تُقَامُ فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ
- 418 فَلَيْتَ أَيَّامُ الصَّبَا عَوَاكِرًا نَعِطِيهِ حُكْرًا قَبْلَ أَنْ يُحَاكِرَا وَلَيْتَ مَبْتَاعُ الشَّبَابِ التَّاجِرَا فِي الْبَيْعِ لَوَرَدَ الشَّبَابُ النَّاضِرَا
- 419 وَالشَّيْبُ لَوَيْبَاعُ بِالسَّمْسِرِ لِتَّاجِرِ الْمَبْتَاعِ شَرُّ مَتَجِرِ
- 420 الشَّيْبُ لَا سُوقَ لَهُ إِنْ سُوقَا
- 421 وَشَعْرٌ قَدْ أُرْقَتْ لَهُ غَرِيبٌ قَبِيْتُ أَقِيمَهُ وَأَقْدُ مِنْهُ غَرَائِبُ قَدْ عُرِفْنَ بِكُلِّ أَهْقٍ أَجْنِبُهُ الْمَسَانِدَ وَالْمَحَالَا قَوَائِي لَا أُعِدُّ لَهَا مِثَالَا مِنْ الْأَفَاقِ، تُفْتَعَلُ افْتِعَالَا
- 422 إِنِّي وَكُنْتُ الشَّاعِرَ الْمُسْتَنْطَقَا أَنَسِجُ نَسِجَ الصَّنْعِ الْمُحَقَّقَا تَحِيرَهُ وَالْحُسْرَوَانِ الْأَعْتَقَا

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