AN ARABIC HARGA IN AN ANONYMOUS HEBREW MUWAŞSAHA

Y. Schirmann’s collection of anonymous Hebrew muwaššabät¹ is extremely important for the study of the entire field of strophic poetry in Al-Andalus, and particularly for the understanding of the development of the hargā-element, i.e. the final verse-lines of the muwašṣaba with common rhymes.² We know from Arabic sources³ that the hargā is considered a significant part of the muwašṣaba, inasmuch as it constitutes the “essence”, literally and metrically, being, in Ibn Sanā’ al-Mulk’s words, the seal, and at the same time the beginning, of the muwašṣaba.⁴ There is reason to believe that these anonymous Hebrew muwaššabät⁵ represent a link between the oral, unwritten stage of the strophic forms, which according to Ibn Bassām,⁶ were “invented” in Cabra in Al-Andalus, and the literary stage, which culminated in the 11th and 12th centuries.

In his various studies of Mozarabic lyrics, S. M. Stern has shown the close relationship between the Arabic and the Hebrew muwaššabät through the art of “imitation”, widely practised by the Jews, as well as by the Arabs themselves, during the period when strophic poetry had acquired literary status.⁷ Less, however, is known about the practice of imitation in the preceding 9th and 10th centuries.

Through application of the “fixed terminology” patterns, suggested by S. M. Stern,⁸ as they appear in the baraḡāt in the strophic poetry of both periods, a fuller understanding of the mu’āraḍa technique as regards the baraḡāt and of the “invention” of strophic poetry as a whole may be obtained.

The following hargā from Schirmann’s collection, no. 167, is an interesting example of a type in which elements of Spanish, Arabic and Hebrew influences coincide. It is truly “Mozarabic” in tone, and reads: (in Schirmann’s transcription)

¹ Y. Schirmann, New Hebrew Poems from the Geniza, Jerusalem 1965.
² simt, pl. asmāt.
⁴ Ibid., p. 32.
⁵ Hebrew: šir 'ezor.
⁸ S. M. Stern, “Four famous Muwaššahait from Ibn Bušra’s Anthology”, Al-Andalus, 1958, p. 356.
The opening line complies with the ḥarga rules as they are stipulated by Ibn Sanā al-Mulk. The speaker expresses inquietude, which is usually done in Romance ḥaraqāt through a question or sudden exclamation, rhetorically:

“What is the matter with me, and what has happened to me?”

The second line is puzzling as it stands, owing to the quality of the manuscript. We may, according to the “rules”, expect one of two conventional themes:

1. Lament over separation from the beloved.
2. Allusion to a pungent theme or subject.

(The possibility of its being a panegyric need not be considered in this case.) Y. Schirmann has refrained from attempting to restore the second line of the ḥarga.

By applying the above-mentioned fixed terminology from other ḥarga patterns, the second theme, however, suggests itself. The following ḥarga from an anonymous Arabic muwaššaha belongs to a series of erotic ḥaraqāt, some of which S. M. Stern has referred to elsewhere:

\[
\text{mā (dā) bī wa mā dā ḥarā lī}
\]

The words nabūd, dalāl and šafa signify the breast, the locks and the lips of the girl, and ‘amda l-nakāl may allude either to the physical subjugation or to the inner affliction, ‘amda being probably an error for ‘inda and nakāl having the double signification of “torment” and “subjugation”.

This theme appears in an elaborated arrangement in a muwaššaha by Ibn Labbāna and one by Abū Bakr Yahyā al-Šayrafi. The almost identical phrasing in these two ḥaraqāt points towards a written transmission.

We have, moreover, two samples of a ḥarga from the culmination of strophic poetry in the “literary stage”, in a ṭalīl by Ibn Quzmān and a muwaššaba by Ibn Bāqī. These two ḥaraqāt correspond with the ḥarga of the anonymous Hebrew muwaššaha:

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