

Abu al-'Atahiyah and al-Buhturi Between Optimism and Pessimism

Muhammad Izharul-Haq
Assist. Professor
Dept. of Is. Studies
Gomal University, DIKhan.

Introduction:

In this paper, I have chosen two qasidas, one for Abu al-'Atahiyah and the other for al-Buhturi. I have tried to shed light on the themes of the these two qasidas. My basic aim is to show the psychological conditions of the two poets in which I concluded that one has an optimistic tone, whereas the other has a pessimistic one. Both poets alluded to and described the old palaces (Khawarnaq and Sadir, and Iwan Kisra), but Abu al-'Atahiyah looked to his future as being spent under the shadow of palaces like Khawarnaq and Sadir while al-Buhturi seemed distressed and instead of looking in to the future saw the past and counterbalanced himself with memories from that time.

I have translated, explained, and analyzed the qasida by Abu al-'Atahiyah and thus tried to expose his high hopes in the future. I have also alluded briefly to the history of Khawarnaq and Sadir to facilitate the understanding the genre of the qasida.

As for al-Buhturi, I avoided the translation of his long qasida, but mentioned all those verses of different sections of which were relevant to the study, as well as giving a historical background of the described old palace i.e. Iwan Kisra.

The paper is divided into the following:

- 1.a. Biography of Abu al-'Atahiyah,
- b. translation of his qasida,
- c. its description and analysis
2. General description and analysis of the qasida of al-Buhturi,
3. Conclusion

1.a. Abu al-'Atahiyah:

Abu al-'Atahiyah's full name was Abu Ishaq Ismail ibn Qasim ibn Suwayd ibn Kaisan al-'Ayni. Born in 130 AH/ 748 AD in 'Ayn al-Tamr, a suburb of al-Anbar,¹ he became one of the famous Abbasid's court poets. In Kufa where he used to sell jars, he was brought up but later migrated to Baghdad. However, because of his poetry, he had already been popular in Kufa where he used to have close connections with a famous singer by the name of Ibrahim al-Mawsili. But he soon left for Hira. There his poetry flourished and Khalifa al-Mahdi (158-169 AH) heard about him and called for him.

Among his first experiences which ignited his poetic ability, is his love for a very beautiful maiden, slave-girl of Bani Ma'n ibn Za'ida by the name of Su'ad whose master warned and later severely beat him.²

After his first unsuccessful passionate love encounter he turned to Utba, another slave girl of al-Mahdi or his wife Khayzaran, about whom he composed the greater part of his poetry. However, he was punished one hundred lashes and imprisoned by al-Mahdi,³ but soon was forgiven by intercession of Yazid ibn Mansur al-Himyari⁴.

Of the incidents that might indicate his fame among renowned poets of that era is that al-Mahdi, once called upon a group of poets together among whom was Abu al-Atahiya, Bashshar, and Ashja'.