

Preface

This book may be regarded as the third in the series that begins with the published proceedings of the conferences on Arabic and Jewish strophic poetry held in Exeter (1988) and Madrid (1989).¹ The long hiatus that followed those conferences was the motive that spurred me into something of a personal mission – the organisation of the SOAS conference in London in October 2004, of which the present volume is the outcome.

The history of the debates in the area of Arabic and Jewish strophic poetry is mapped by Otto Zwartjes in the essay that opens our book. Casual visitors should be warned that they are entering something of a war zone. We have Corriente's characterisation of our discipline as "perhaps the most violent humanistic debate of the twentieth century".² And Ribera's succinct: "Trabajamos en zona polémica, ingrata para muchos, en materia que suscita violentas contradicciones".³ Perhaps this is where some of the fascination lies.

Insofar as the London conference can lay claim to novelty, the programme was designed to extend the critical discourse on *muwashshah* in two directions: on the one hand going beyond textual analysis to bring in the elements of music and performance; on the other, bringing in women's voice. Both aspects are well represented in the texts that follow.

On the thorny question of transliterations, in transcribing Arabic and Hebrew text contributors were encouraged to err on the side of simplicity, except in cases where this would lead to confusion. I have worked for broad but not necessarily complete uniformity of transliteration; the reader will find stylistic differences between articles.

I have edited these papers to the best of my ability. In some cases the editing simply involved matters of style. In other cases, where contributors are not native English-speakers, I have edited texts where necessary and the final versions have been submitted for authorial approval. If you find errors, you are requested to notify corrections to me for inclusion in subsequent printings.

Other than that I would only add, as a warning to unsuspecting neophytes, that editing a volume such as this involves quantities of work that you will find surprising, not to mention alarming.

With the exception of the introductory essay, papers are published here in alphabetical order of authors' names.

What you have in your hands is the first edition of this book. It has been published in 30 copies. Each of the authors has received a copy, and the

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remaining copies have been deposited with the National Libraries in the UK. The next step will be the publication of the hardback edition. Subscriptions are being raised for this purpose.

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Ed Emery
Cambridge, 15 August 2006

NOTES

1. F. Corriente and A. Sáenz-Badillos (eds.), *Poesía Estrófica. Actas del Primer Congreso Internacional sobre Poesía Estrófica Árabe y Hebrea y sus Paralelos Romances (Madrid, diciembre de 1989)*. Madrid, 1991; and A. Jones and R. Hitchcock (eds.), *Studies on the Muwaššah and the Kharja: Proceedings of the Exeter International Colloquium*. Oxford, 1991.
2. C. López-Morillas, review of F. Corriente, *Poesía dialectal árabe y romance en Alandalús*, Gredos, Madrid, 1997, in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. XXIX, 1998, p. 218.
3. J. Ribera, *La música andaluza medieval en las canciones de trovadores, troveros y minnesinger*, Madrid, 1925, p. 4.