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Editor

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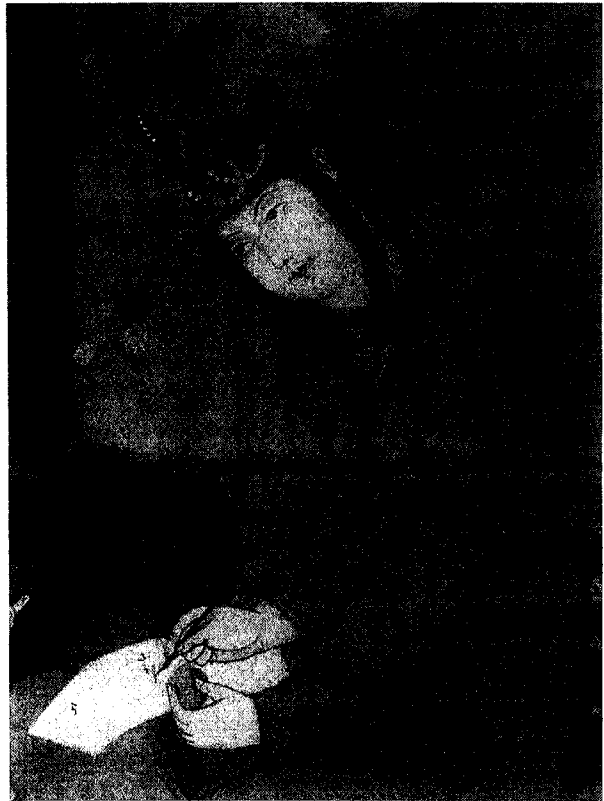
All patronage can be viewed as a reification of family and especially dynastic identity; however, because women and men played distinctly different roles within the family structure, their motivations for commissioning art and architecture differed accordingly.

D. FAIRCHILD RUGGLES

See also **Family; Women, Muslim; Women Rulers**

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Woman writing. Courtier of Abbas I during a picnic. Sufavid mural, 1640s. Credit: SEF/Art Resource, NY. Chihil Sutun (Pavilion of 40 Columns), Isfahan, Iran

WOMEN POETS

Women poets of classical times were far fewer in number than their male counterparts, and their poetic domain was relatively restricted. Women were largely excluded from the "high" poetic genres of panegyric and satire, probably because of their social roles: mandatory seclusion in the case of freeborn women, and the providing of entertainment in the case of slave girls. The majority of extant women's poems are in the genres of elegy (*ritha'*) by the former group and of erotic love song (*ghazal*) by the latter. In addition, there are some Sufi poems composed by women and sporadic compositions of nostalgia verses, wisdom verses, and children's lullabies; these last are often in the rajaz meter, which is generally not considered suitable for true poetry. The restriction of genre simultaneously denotes a restriction of form, whereby women's poetic production has usually been in the form of the more informal monothematic *qit'a* (short piece) generally used in elegies and love songs rather than the long, formal, polythematic *qasida* (ode) that is reserved mostly for the panegyric. It also denotes simplicity of language, which is a hallmark of the genres of elegy and love song.

The poetry composed by pre-Islamic women was almost wholly limited to *marathi* (sing. marthiya; elegy). Suzanne Stetkevych (1993, 161–6) argues that

this limitation of poetic domain reflects the limitation of the role played by women in the public (which is equated with male) ritual life of the tribe, of which it was the function of poetry to record; this meant that there was limited occasion—the death of a warrior kinsman—upon which free women were allowed public voice. Indeed, at these occasions, it was their obligation to lament their fallen warriors and incite their remaining kinsmen to vengeance (*tahrid*); it was their duty to shed ritual, poetic tears to redeem their fallen menfolk, just as it was the men's duty to redeem the death of kin by shedding blood.

Al-Khansa' (d. 24/645) was a preeminent mukhadrama poetess (one who straddled the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods) who excelled in the genre of elegy. She composed more than a hundred short or medium-length elegies in which she elegized her brothers Sakhr and Mu'awiya and incited her tribesmen to take blood vengeance. A large number of her opening lines, and, indeed, the opening lines of most elegies by women, contain the "eyes shedding tears" motif, often in an exhortation by the poetess to herself to weep. The medieval anthologist Ibn Sallam al-Jumahi placed al-Khansa' second within the four great poets of *ritha'*; she was the only woman to

make it into his ranks of 110 outstanding poets of pre-Islam and early Islam.

Layla al-Akhyaliyya (d. ca. AH 85/704 CE) was an Umayyad poetess whom critics often ranked close to al-Khansa'. Layla composed almost fifty short poems, particularly elegies for her slain kinsman and her lover, Tawba ibn Humayyir. She also composed an elegy for 'Uthman ibn 'Affan. However, "challenging gender-prescribed literary norms" (al-Sajdi, 143), Layla also exchanged some lewd satires with the poet al-Nabigha al-Ja'di and composed a few panegyrics for the Umayyad governor al-Hajjaj and the Umayyad Caliphs Marwan I and 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Her panegyric about 'Abd al-Malik is particularly noteworthy for its tripartite *nasib-rahil-madih* qasida form, traditionally a form that was squarely in the male poetic domain but that was reworked by her into a female version.

The other important genre of women's poetry was the love lyric. During the Umayyad and 'Abbasid periods, there were large numbers of professional singing slave girls (*qiyān*; sing. *qayna*) who often composed the love songs that they sang to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The line between musical and sexual entertainment was not always clearly drawn—singing girls were courtesans—and many eventually became concubines of the ruling elite. In his treatise about singing girls entitled *Risalat al-Qiyān (Epistle of the Singing-Girls)*, al-Jahiz (d. 255/868–869) stated, without referring to composition of poetry, that an accomplished singing girl had a repertoire of more than four thousand songs. Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani (d. ca. 363/972) composed a different kind of treatise about singing girls entitled *al-Ima' al-Shawa'ir (Slave-girl Poets)*, in which he focused on their poetry. On the basis of this text, Hilary Kilpatrick (1991, 175) explains that three genres of poetry were preeminent among singing girls: (1) love poetry (*ghazal*); (2) verse-capping competition with fellow poets, particularly other singing girls; and (3) short, informal panegyric verse for their masters. Three early 'Abbasid singing girls were particularly famous for their poetry: 'Inan (paramour of al-Rashid, r. 786–809), al-'Arib (concubine of al-Ma'mun, r. 813–817), and Fa'dl (concubine of al-Mutawakkil, r. 847–861). Additionally, literary anthologies attribute some courtly love poetry (most likely spuriously so) to Layla, who was the beloved of Majnun.

The 'Abbasid princess 'Ulayya (d. 210/825), daughter of al-Mahdi and half-sister of Harun al-Rashid, was also a singer-poet, although her social status was far above that of the singing girls. Her poetry and songs dealt mostly with the themes of courtly love and wine. She was trained by her mother, Maknuna, who, before being purchased by al-Mahdi,

had been a professional singing girl. 'Ulayya, in turn, trained singing girls for al-Rashid's palace.

Also said to have had her origins in the world of the singing girl was the famous mystic and poet of Basra, Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 185/801). She transmuted the love poetry of the singing girls to Sufi love poetry. Rabi'a is believed to have secured her freedom through her sanctity and, from that point on, to have lived an ascetic and teaching-oriented life. Several short pieces of Sufi love poetry are attributed to her.

Almost eight centuries later in the Mamluk period flourished another female Sufi master and poet named 'A'isha al-Ba'uniiyya (d. 922/1517). A'isha, who lived in Syria and Egypt, belonged to the 'Urmawi branch of the Qadiriyya order and came from the distinguished Ba'uni family of judges and scholars. She composed more than a dozen books in prose and poetry, and was, according to Emil Homerin, the most prolific woman author before the twentieth century. More than 300 of her long poems have been collected in a yet unpublished anthology entitled *Fayd al-Fadl wa Jam' al-Shaml*. In them, she described mystical states and praised variously the Prophet Muhammad, the founder of her order 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani, and her own Sufi shaykhs. She used technical Sufi terminology and typical Sufi poetic motifs such as wine and love in her poems, sometimes in the strophic form and once in an eminent *badi'iyya* (long poem in which each verse uses a different rhetorical trope to praise Muhammad).

In addition to the East, women poets also composed love lyrics in the Muslim West. One such Andalusian poet is the Umayyad princess, Wallada (d. 484/1091), daughter of al-Mustakfi (r. 1024–4) and lover of the renowned poet Ibn Zaydun. Wallada was a literary force in Cordoba and hosted an important literary salon. Her extant oeuvre is made up of two short love poems for her lover and several obscene verses of invective addressed to him that were composed after their relationship had ended. Her models are believed to be not Western but Eastern, particularly Abu Nuwas. Anthologies also contain several poems by other Andalusian women, such as the courtesan Nazhun bint al-Qala'i (fifth/eleventh century), the teacher Hafsa bint al-Hajj (d. 585/1191), and the Jewish lady Qasmuna bint Isma'il (sixth/twelfth century); these were written in a similarly popular love-lyrical and satirical vein.

The classical Arabic library features three (extant) anthologies of poetry dedicated to women that provide their biographies and cite their poetry: Abu al-Faraj's above mentioned *al-Ima' al-Shawa'ir*; al-Marzubani's (d. 384/994) *Ash'ar al-Nisa' (Verses by Women)*; this volume is partially extant, with works by thirty-eight mostly obscure ancient women); and

al-Suyuti's (d. 911/1505) *Nuzhat al-Julasa' fi Ash'ar al-Nisa'* (*Recreation for Boon-Companions a propos Poems by Women*, a collection of works by forty "modern" women). The citation of women's poetry in the general medieval anthologies is sporadic and sparse. The earliest anthologists either ignored women poets or made disparaging remarks about them (see Ibn Sallam's upbraiding of Ibn Ishaq for citing women's poetry in his *Sira—Tabaqat Fuhul al-Shu'ara'*, vol. 1, 8. Cairo, 1974.). However, most of the later anthologists—such as al-Jahiz, Abu Tammam, Ibn al-Mu'tazz, and Abu al-Faraj in the East and Ibn Bassam and al-Maqqari in the West—do cite some poetry by women. In addition, historians such as al-Tabari, Yaqut, and Ibn 'Asakir cite verses by women—such as elegies for the Prophet Muhammad by his daughter Fatima al-Zahra' and his aunt Safiyya bint 'Abd al-Muttalib—as part of their historical narratives. Most anthologies of classical women poets are modern compilations and rather short. In modern times, Arabic scholars have put together from the medieval sources several anthologies dedicated to women's poetry.

In his introduction to the *Nuzhat al-Julasa'*, al-Suyuti refers to a large (at least six-volume) anthology—now lost—of "ancient" women's poetry by an anthologist named Ibn al-Tarraḥ (d. 720/1320) and titled *Akhbar al-Nisa' al-Shawa'ir* (*Accounts of Women Poets*). It would seem from this that women poets may have formed a more dynamic part of the poetic landscape, at least in the earliest classical period, than is generally believed.

TAHERA QUTBUDDIN

See also Poetry, Arabic; Elegy; Love Poetry; Concubinage; Singing; Women Ascetics and Mystics; Sufism and Sufis; Mystical Poetry

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- See entries on al-Khansa, Layla al-Akhyaliyya, Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya, 'Ulayya, and Wallada in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., and the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*.

WOMEN WARRIORS

In pre-Islamic Arabia, women are said to have customarily taken part in warfare, infrequently as combatants themselves but more often as inciters of the men of their tribes and as providers of succor and aid to the wounded. This situation continued through the early period of Islam. Biographical works document the presence of women on the battlefield during the time of the Prophet, including some of his wives. Ibn Sa'd (d. AH 231/845 CE), in his famous *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra* (*The Great Generations*), records the activities