

ARBC0210-s14
Middlebury College

Homework Assignment for Thursday, March 13

Please visit *The Mahri Poetry Archive* at this address: <http://sites.middlebury.edu/mahripoetry/> and be prepared to answer the following questions in class on Thursday.

1. Take a look under “Classification of Poems.” You’ll find information regarding the formal characteristics of Mahri poetry and the various modes of its performance. How does the formal distinction between tristich and hemistich poems (i.e. their respective line lengths) correspond to differences in their content and the social esteem accorded to each? What genres of Mahri poetry correspond most closely to the types of poem that we’ve read in class so far?

2. Listen to and read the following poems (Index of Poems -> Title) and answer the questions below.

- a) Exchanged *Reğzīt*: The Waning Years of the °Afrārī Sultānate
- b) Tribal Ode: Atop the Peak of Ṭarbūt
- c) Tribal Ode: Gunfight in Niṣṭawn
- d) Tea With Milk
- e) Hays and the Saudi Prince
- f) Jamīla and the Sultān
- g) The Dog Days of Summer

Which of these poems most resemble those poems that we’ve read in class?

How are politics addressed in Mahri poetry?

How are lyric and sentimental topics addressed in these poems (particularly in poems *d* through *g*)?

Which of these poems do you think are the most socially prestigious? Which ones do you think are the least so?

3. Take a look at the following poems from *The Dīwān of Ḥājj Dākōn* (Published Poems -> *The Dīwān of Ḥājj Dākōn*): #6, #9 and #13. Ḥājj is a contemporary Mahri poet who is unique amongst his peers since he writes his poems using a variant of the Arabic script. Take the poem “Tea with Milk” (*d* above) as the baseline of traditional, orally composed, sentimental poetry. How do you think that the fact of Ḥājj’s writing down his poems distinguishes them topically and thematically from traditional, orally composed, sentimental poetry?

4. Take a look at the two “Collective *Reğzīt*” poems (Index of Poems -> Title). What exactly happens during a performance of collective *reğzīt*? What social meanings do these performances impart?