



BADĪHA-SARĀ'Ī

BADĪHA-SARĀ'Ī, composition and utterance of something improvised (*badīh*), usually in verse.

Among the Arabs, poetic improvisation (*ertejāl*, a term used in Persian also) was practiced and admired from pre-Islamic times (Nicholson, pp. 75, 418, 436). Among the Iranians, it has been a mark of poetical talent and skill. It has long been customary to declaim poems at official ceremonies, private celebrations such as wedding feasts, and in modern times school speech days and also mourning assemblies. For these occasions, appropriate poems are composed or improvised and pieces from the classics are recited. The custom has added excessive bulk to the *dīvāns* of many poets. Neẓāmī 'Arūzī in his *Čahār maqāla* (written ca. 550/1155) calls it the "highest pillar" (*rokn-e a'lā*) of poetical skill, which every poet should master (p. 57). He quotes *robā'īs* by 'Onsorī, Mo'ezzī and Azraqī, and a *qeṭ'a* by Rašīdī, which those poets extemporized, as well as five *bayts* which he himself wrote and uttered before the wine bowl had been passed around twice (pp. 57, 68-69, 71, 74, 85; Browne, *Lit. Hist. Persia* II, pp. 37-39, 336, 339-40). The epigrammatic *robā'ī* and the *qeṭ'a* in one of the *mosaddas* meters are most often used, but more difficult forms and meters are attempted. In the 1970s, the Shah 'Abbās Hotel at Isfahan employed a poet who could in minutes produce a *qaṣīda* for an occasion or guest. At the Eighth Congress of Iranian Studies at Kermān 25-30 Šahrīvar 1356/16-21 September 1977, a *mošā'ara* (poetic contest) was held in which the contestants improvised even quite long poems. Political and social verse, which in the twentieth century has sometimes swayed public opinion, was for



the most part written for newspapers and periodicals (notably the humorous *Tawfiq* 1317 Š./1938-1352 Š./1973), but was also improvised at meetings.

In both classical and folk music, singers have freedom to improvise the lyric (*taṣnīf*) and the melody within the appropriate *dastgāh* (musical mode), although in the past few decades they have generally chosen *taṣnīfs* composed by others. 'Āref Qazvīnī composed *taṣnīfs* which echo his own and his audience's feelings about topics of the day. These were either composed at short notice or improvised.

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