

With the Name of Allah

IMAM AL-SHAFI'I'S POETRY

(from *Diwan al-Imam al-Shafi'i*)

Translation © Usama Hasan

The Overturned Scales

While lions die of hunger in their dens,
Wolves feast on the tender flesh of sheep.
While the slave lies on his soft and silken couch,
The prince has nowhere but the dust to sleep!

Sins Erode Knowledge

I complained to Waki' about my poor memory:
"Give up your sins!" was his advice to me;
"For knowledge is a light from Divinity,
and the Light of God is veiled by iniquity!"

Were it not ...

Were it not that poetry demeans those of knowledge,
I would this day be a better poet than Labid,
Be braver in crisis than every lion,
The kin of Muhallab, and the sons of Yazid.
Were it not for the fear of my Lord Most Merciful,
I would regard all men as my slaves, indeed!

Alternative translation:

Were it not that poetry demeans those of knowledge,
I would this day excel Labid in poetry,
Be braver in crisis than every lion,
Muhallab's kin, and Yazid's progeny.
Were it not for the fear of my Lord Most Merciful,
I would regard all men as mine in slavery!

Al-Shafi'i's Humility

I love the righteous, without being of them:
Thus hoping to gain their intercession;
I hate the one whose business is sinning;
Although we have the same profession!

Alternative version:

I love the righteous, without being of them:
Perhaps Allah will grant me righteousness.
I hate the one whose transactions are sin;
Although we have the same business!

***Kama tudinu tudanu* (As you treat others, so shall you be treated)**

“They judged, and were able to judge,
But soon the authority will be as though it never was.
Were they to be just, they would have been treated justly;
But they transgressed, so Time transgressed against them with sorrows and trials.
They awoke with their situation telling them:
This is for that – do not blame Fate!”