

IMAM SHĀFI'Ī'S POETRY

A Poetic Translation

by

IBRAHIM KHAN & MOUSTAFA ELQABBANY



THE ROYAL ISLAMIC
STRATEGIC STUDIES CENTRE



TURATH
PUBLISHING

© The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre & Turath Publishing, 2024

ENGLISH ISLAM SERIES • BOOK NUMBER 40

All rights reserved. Aside from fair use, meaning a few pages or less for non-profit educational purposes, review, or scholarly citation, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN 978-1-915265-53-1

Jointly published by

THE ROYAL ISLAMIC STRATEGIC STUDIES CENTRE
Amman, Jordan
rissc.jo

TURATH PUBLISHING
turath.co.uk
info@turath.co.uk

The publishers do not take responsibility for all of the author's personal opinions expressed herein.

Distributed in the UK by Azhar Academy Ltd. London
sales@azharacademy.com / Tel: +44 (208) 911 9797

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data. A catalogue record for this book is also available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in Turkey on premium acid-free paper. The paper used in this book meets the minimum requirement of ANSI/NIS O Z39.48-1992 (R 1997) (Permanence of Paper). The binding material has been chosen for strength and durability.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Introduction by Ibrahim Khan</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Introduction by Moustafa Elqabbany</i>	<i>xi</i>
I. Good Character	1
II. Pride and Self-Respect	19
III. The Diseases of the Soul	35
IV. Travel and its Benefits	43
V. Fluctuations of States	49
VI. The Ideal Requitul	59
VII. Manners of Speech	65
VIII. Turning to Allah The Most High	77
IX. Supplication	93
X. Knowledge	97
XI. Love for the Family of the Prophet ﷺ and the Leaders	115
XII. Complaints of Mankind and the Bitterness of Days	123
XIII. About Women	143
XIV. Death and the Hereafter	155

Acknowledgements

Praise be to Allah, and may He confer his blessings upon His Beloved, our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This work would not have been possible without the initial collection and translation by Ibrahim Khan. Furthermore, I am indebted to Jawaher Rafayah for her work in checking the accuracy and grammar of the Arabic verse. Much gratitude is also due to Sarah Moore for her work in checking the translation.

Finally, none of this work would have seen the light without the cooperation of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Turath Publications, UK.

Introduction
IBRAHIM KHAN

Translating poetry is a difficult task. One has the dual challenge of conveying both the meaning and the beauty of the language. *Dīwān al-Shāfiʿī* is no different in that regard; however there is the additional challenge of making sure one does not offend the sensibilities of so many Muslims for whom the great Imam is a revered figure.

Therefore, our approach has been one of balancing functionality and meaning against elegance and beauty where the two are in conflict, and to reconcile between them as far as possible. As such this translation is ideal for a student of the Arabic language who will be able to engage at a basic level with the Arabic text and use the translation as a crutch to aid his understanding.

However, engaging with the translations is still worthwhile even for those who do not read or understand Arabic well, simply because of the great lessons and wisdom shared by Shāfiʿī in them.

What began as an exercise to improve my Arabic skills in Egypt eight years ago is today finally finished in partnership with the excellent Moustafa Elqabbany who has elevated this work significantly with his expertise and insight, and I pray that all its readers benefit from it and gain the same love for Arabic poetry that I have through engaging with al-Shāfiʿī's work.

I am also incredibly grateful to my wife Sumayyah Mian,

Moemen Metwally and Mays Abbass for proofreading this manuscript and providing comments and thoughts on the translation.

IBRAHIM KHAN

Introduction

MOUSTAFA ELQABBANY

Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī (150–204 AH / 767–820 CE), Allah have mercy upon him, better known as Imam Shāfi‘ī, is the titular founder of one of the four mainstream schools of Islamic law. Born in Gaza and buried in Egypt, he hailed from Quraysh, the same tribe as the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Imam Shāfi‘ī’s focus on Qur’an, Hadith, the Arabic language, and few other essential principles, is what defines his legal methodology. He was the first imam to look beyond localized juristic differences, such as those in Mecca, Medina, Yemen, and Kufa, and formulate a methodology that depended purely on revealed sources (e.g., the Qur’an and Sunnah) and sound reasoning—something the Imam saw as an extension of the Arabic language itself. Imam Shāfi‘ī lived at a time when Greek thought had begun to permeate Islamic scholarly discourse. There are a number of statements attributed to him in which he criticizes such approaches and emphasizes the need for a native understanding of the language of Revelation. It is no coincidence that the word for speech and reason are related in both Arabic and Greek: *manṭiq* and *logos*. Language and logic are inseparable, and the Imam made it his mission to champion an Arabic methodology. To the exclusion of all other imams of Islamic law, Imam Shāfi‘ī was a quotable authority (*ḥujjah*) of the Arabic language.

This book is a collection and translation of some of his poetry. Such collections are all posthumous compilations of

his verse from various historical sources. Some attributions are questionable, as is the usual case with early poetry. However, most attributions are historically accurate. Finally, translating poetry into poetry is difficult, and while the intended meanings have been preserved in translation, a literal rendering into poetry is impossible.

MOUSTAFA ELQABBANY

*Director, The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre
Amman, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*

26th September 2024