Imitation and Originality in Four Poems by al-Ḥājj ʿUmar ibn Abī Bakr ibn ʿUthmān Krachi (ca 1856–1934)

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts

By
Jibril Abubakr Gabid

Under the supervision of Dr. Adam Talib

June/ 2016
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Jibril Nuhu, Muhammed Salisu, and others too numerous to mention. To all I register my gratitude for their friendship, encouragement, prayers, and thoughtfulness.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to look at the concepts of imitation and originality in the works of al-Ḥājj Ūmar ibn Abī Bakr ibn Ūthmān Krachi (ca 1856–1934) through the analysis of his four poems. These poems are based on the three main genres of Arabic poetry: panegyric (madiḥ), satire (hijāʾ), and eulogy (rīthāʾ). My analysis of these poems is limited to structure, theme and content in order to explore the various ways in which our author imitates the classical mode of poetic composition and at the same time provides his readers with a picture of a different cultural component. The thesis also includes an appendix of critical editions and translations of the four poems. I have edited the poems and suggested emendations where relevant.
NOTE ON TRANSLITERATIONS, TRANSLATIONS, AND DATES

I have used the system of the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) for the transliteration of Arabic and Hausa names and words. Spellings of other non-English names are written in Latin letters, for example, Kumasi and Ashanti. In line with the IJMES system, names of individual authors’ name are spelled according to their preferred English spelling. For example, Abdul-Samad Abdullah. Also the spelling of common Romanized Arabic words are in American English; for instance, Amir, not Emir, Shaykh, not sheik, except for words containing ʿayn (ʾ) and hamza (ʾ), for example, Qurʾan, not Quran, Kaʿba, not Kaba. Also, Romanized Arabic name that has a definite article is written as such: al-Marzubānī, not Marzubānī. The inseparable prepositions, conjunctions, and other prefixes are connected by a hyphen: bi-, wa-, li-.

Also the tāʾ marbūṭa is written a not ah.

All translations in this work are mine unless otherwise noted. I have attempted in most cases to provide the Arabic text before the English translation. In translating both prose and verse, I have attempted to add self-evident interpolations within
brackets to render the text comprehensible. In doing so, I tried to remain as faithful as possible to the structure, content, and imagery of the original.

Dates are given with the Hijrī figure first, followed by its equivalent common era (A.D) date which is separated by a slash.

Below is an illustration of the IJMES Transliteration System

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Vowels

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|--------|---|---|---|-----|------|======|
| ء | ā | ū | ɪ | iyy (final form ī) | iyy (final form ʊ) |
| د | au or aw | ai or ay | a | u | i |

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During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, West Africa witnessed a massive production of works in Arabic both in prose and verse. Among the locations that experienced this vibrant literary activity is what was known as Central Sudanic Africa (now defined as Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon) and the Greater-Voltaic region (now Ghana, much of Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso). Scholars from these regions used poetic forms to discuss matters of varied significance including the social, political, and religious, and they were also used to express personal feelings. Many historians and researchers have taken an interest in the poetry of this period, an interest driven in part, by the need to establish the African narrative in the historiography of Africa and the contribution of Muslim scholars to our understanding of African history. A more subjective appeal was
the need to showcase the literary and artistic ability of these people who were bent on establishing their love and affinity for Arabic and Islamic poetry.¹

One scholar whose poetic work has caught the attention of scholars is al-Ḥājj ʿUmar ibn Abī Bakr ibn ʿUthmān al-Kabbāwī al-Kanwī al-Ṣalghawī (1856–1934)² popularly referred to as Imam Imoru or Umaru Krakye (Karki).³ His great-grandfather Sharīf Ḥusayn, is said to have settled in Gobir and to have been an associate of ʿUthmān Dan Fodio (1754–1817), reformer and founder of the Sokoto Sultanate in northern Nigeria.⁴ ʿUmar started his education in Kano and he is said to have committed the entire Qurʾān into memory by the age of 12. He later studied under scholars in Kebbi and Gobir in pursuit of higher

³John O. Hunwick, comp., *Arabic Literature of Africa*, vol. 4, *The Writings of Western Sudanic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 583. Other scholars have spelt the name Krakye differently. In *Muslims and Chiefs in West African and in A Structural-functional Analysis of the Poetics of Arabic qaṣīdah*, the name was spelt: Krachi. The authors of *Gonja in Colonial Times* gave the spelling as: Kratchi while Abass Umar in the title of his thesis wrote it as Krachie. However, I have chosen to use the spelling (Krachi) throughout this wor because this is the current common spelling.
education. After completing his education, ʿUmar was issued ījāza (licence) by his teacher ʿUthmān which read: “You are a very learned man and it is time you went and taught.” His father Abū Bakr, was a kola merchant and as a young man, ʿUmar used to accompany him on his trading journeys. This allowed him to travel extensively and to come into contact with other people. He decided to settle in Salaga, the capital of East Gonja district in the northern region of Ghana. This was a place ʿUmar was already familiar with from his commercial journeys with his father. Salaga was a vibrant commercial center and a center of rich literary activity, particularly associated with the commanding presence of ʿUmar. Other scholar who were also associated with Salaga include al-Ḥassan ibn ʿUmar Alfa Kiri (d. 1934), who wrote mainly in Hausa but also wrote letters in Arabic. Another scholar was Yusuf Hārūn Bamba, a merchant and a teacher in Salaga and he wrote verses in Arabic. ʿUmar established a school in Salaga

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8 Ibid., 4:584–586.
9 Ibid., 4:594–595.
and many of his students who are widely dispersed throughout the Greater Voltaic Region.\textsuperscript{10} Among his students were ʿAlī ibn Muhammad al-Ṣalghawī (d.1956-7) who wrote a panegyric on ʿUmar Krachi. Muḥammad Tetemo, who also composed an elegy on ʿUmar Krachi.\textsuperscript{11} Most important was Ṣallaw, who was appointed chief of Kumasi Zongo by the British colonial administration. ʿUmar was also friends with the German explorer and Hausa language tutor Gottlob Adolf Krause and the German scholar-administrator Adam Mischlich. He taught Mischlich Hausa, history, and culture.\textsuperscript{12}

Following the 1892 civil war, ʿUmar was forced to abandon Salaga, not just because of the conflict but because he supported one of the parties contending for the powerful position of the Kpembewura (chief of Salaga).\textsuperscript{13} So when the Lepo forces whom he supported were defeated in the civil war, he had to leave.\textsuperscript{14} He, along with many others moved to Kete-Krachi, on the Volta River,

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 4:588.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 4:595–600.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 587.
\textsuperscript{13} The 1892 Salaga civil war occurred between the Kabachewura Isifa assisted by his Dagomba and Nanumba allies who overthrew the Kpembewura Napo.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 587.
a place he was later identified with and was appointed its imam. In one of his poems, ʿUmar Krachi spoke about the conflict and was able to show the extent of the destruction caused.

They tied up their belongings and fled,
they left their homes and went away.

They left behind their wealth and buried them,
and their enemies came in and settled.

They dug up what was in the ground

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15 *Tanbih al-ikhwān fi dhikr al-ahzān.* (IAS AR/27). This is a poem of 248 verses on the decline of morality and good government in Salaga, and the 1892 civil war.
and they corrupted the homes with destruction.

The people were dispersed on the day of flight

they were scattered [everywhere] and they said:

Woe [unto us].

They spread like locusts

in every direction and that was massive

The situation had changed and kindness had disappeared

and hostility had taken the place kindness.

In another poem, ʿUmar Krachi offered his opinion about Salaga and how he felt about a place that was once home.

Regarding your question about returning to Salaga,

[beware] we hold her dear to our heart.

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If she is better that is excellent,

if she is filled with goodness that is more deserving.

Salaga - had it not been [the conflict] – has things that are sweet [and] a place of splendor.

While in Kete-Krachi, ʿUmar twice went on pilgrimage in 1913 and 1918. During his first pilgrimage, he was initiated into the Tijāniyya sect. He also made frequent visits to Yendi and Kumasi. In the latter, it was at the invitation of Ṣallaw, ʿUmar’s student and the chief of Kumasi Zongo. Apart from teaching, ʿUmar devoted his life to writing in both prose and verse. His literary works are of considerable significance and touch on various aspects of life and events of his time. They include a wide range of topics: pedagogy, politics, religion, and history. He used both Arabic and Hausa in his writings and some of his Arabic verses contain Hausa words. His poem about the 1918–1919 influenza epidemic in Ghana rhymes with the word *tunkuyaw*, which is a Hausa word for

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17 Tijāniyyah is a Şūfi sect which was founded by Aḥmad al-Tajānī in Algeria in 1196/1781-82. The sect has followers from West Africa and other parts of the Maghrib.

18 For a list of his works see: Hunwick, *Arabic Literature of Africa*, 4:592–594.
influenza. According to Thomas Hodgkin, “al-Ḥajj ʿUmar’s writings would seem to be at least as significant for the understanding of the recent social history of Ghana as are the writings of Wells and Bennett for the social history of Britain.”

His poems are described as “vehicle of social commentary, social criticism, and reflections on the history of his time.”

This thesis looks at four poems by ʿUmar Krachi. The thesis is divided into four chapters and each chapter is devoted to one poem. The first chapter analyzes the rāʾiyya, a panegyric for Ṣallaw. It also discusses politics during the

19 MS: IAS AR/23. A poem of 64 verses. According to K. David Patterson, the influenza pandemic has been described as the worst outbreak of infectious disease in world history. It is believed that at least twenty million people died as a result of the global outbreak of influenza. The disease which is caused by a virus and transmitted from person to person spread over the entire Gold Coast (now Ghana) in about three months and by January 1919, almost every village in the Gold Coast was attacked by the disease. Between 3rd-23rd September 1918, about six-hundred and fifty-five deaths were reported. In Accra, about 13,000 people were attacked with a case of mortality rate 5.03% and an overall mortality rate of 2.62%. See: K. David Patterson, “The Influenza Epidemic of 1918-19 in the Gold Coast,” The Journal of African History 24, no. 4 (1983), 485-502.


21 Ibid., 454.

22 The poems are listed here with their MSS number and title as they appear in the thesis.

2. The Mīmiyya: Ghana/16.6/MSX.
3. The Lāmiyya: IAS AR/121.
twentieth century and the tensions that existed during his reign. The second chapter discusses another panegyric for the people of Tetemu (Kpong) Zongo for their generosity and hospitality towards the poet. Unlike the rāʾiyya, the mūmiyya highlights the social life of the people and most importantly, the concept of hospitality. The third chapter on the other hand looks at the lāmiyya, an elegy for the poet’s son who died at the age of 32. The poet laments the loss of his son and extolls him. The poem also discusses morality and moral decadence within the poet’s society. The last chapter analyzes the sīniyya, a hijāʾ poem in which the author lampoons an unnamed person for his objection to the author’s way of pronouncing the Arabic phrase al-ḥamdu li-llāhi taʿālā. The importance of this poem cannot be overstated as it highlights the issue of polemics in that society and the West African region at large.

Each chapter begins with an introduction and a brief discussion of the genres of Arabic poetry: madīḥ (praise), rithāʾ (elegy), and hijāʾ (satire). In doing so, I explain the features of each genre and how it was used by pre-Islamic and Islamic-era poets. In addition, the first part of chapter one is devoted to studying
the life of the mamdūḥ, Ṣallaw, as well as politics in Kumasi during the twentieth century.

Readers of West African Arabic poetry can find many features in these poems that are similar to pre-Islamic and Islamic-era poetry. This may be partly due to the fact that the study of the dawāwīn (collected poems) of some of the pre-Islamic poets formed part of the educational system in West Africa. The aim of this thesis is to examine the concepts of imitation and originality which are important and not mutually exclusive. West African poets followed the pre-Islamic mode of poetic composition, by copying themes, topoi, and tropes, while others went as far as imitating lines through intertextuality. Abdul-Samad Abdullah has shown how, for instance, some West African Arabic poets used intertextuality to imitate the muʿallaqāt of Imruʾ al-Qays and al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī. He was able to demonstrate how the famous lines of Imruʾ al-Qays were imitated through intertextuality.23 This notwithstanding, West African

Arabic poetry still has its unique features and reflects the poets’ perception of their social reality and unique world view. While originality is highly regarded in works of art, certain conventions cannot be overlooked if poets “want to write something recognizable as poetry.”24

The thesis also includes an appendix of critical editions and translations of the four poems. These poems form part of what has been designated as IAS/AR (Institute of African Studies/Arabic) and/or Ghana/MSX (Northwestern University, Africana Collection) documents. All four manuscripts are written in the Maghribi script. The poems have been edited with suggested emendations where relevant.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Thomas Hodgkin and Ivor Wilks laid the groundwork for later researchers who would focus not only on the historical, social, and political significance of ʿUmar Krachi’s work, but also its literary aesthetics. Both Hodgkin and Wilks were responsible for the collection and compilation of ʿUmar Krachi’s works that are currently held at the University of Ghana’s Institute of African Studies. They also studied ʿUmar Krachi in the context of the development of the tradition of Muslim historiography in Ghana. Other works on ʿUmar Krachi include B.G Martin’s translation of two poems by ʿUmar Krachi. The first is Mashraʿ māʾ al-khabar li-wārid wāriduhā, a poem on the coming of Europeans and Christianity. The second is Naẓm al-laʿālī bi-ikhbār wa-tanbīḥ al-kirām, which develops the same theme of the arrival of Europeans. According to Martin, “these poems are important as literary evidence of the feelings and views of West African Muslims towards Europeans in the colonial period.”

The following lines from Naẓm al-laʿālī bi-ikhbār wa-tanbīḥ al-kirām show ʿUmar Krachi’s sentiment and feeling towards the European colonizers and their Christian faith:

وَمَمْنَىٰ بِكَ عَقْلًا يَصِينَعُ إِلَيْهِ وَيَفْهَمُ مَمْنُونًا فَيْ فَيْ الكَلَام

وَشَمَسَ مُصْبِيًّا طَلَغَتْ بِغَزْرِ بِعَمْشَةِ الكَلَامَةَ وَغَلَاوَام

Whoever is wise will pay attention

and understand what we intend to say.

The sun of calamity has risen in the West,

and aims for the eminent and ordinary.

The atrocities of Christians I wish to compose,

their atrocities arrived like cloud.
In the beginning they came with peace,

   with gentle words as pleasant as poetry.

They said: We came for trade,

   and to fix the muddy roads.

To prevent injustice in the world and theft,

   [to ensure] kindness and bring down evil.

But none of us knew their true intentions,

   we became like riffraff to them.

They deceived us with their meager gifts,

   they gave us delicious food.

Little did we know they had come

   to rule like kings in tents.

Soon they changed what they said,

   as the Lord had stated [in the Quʾan?]

They spread flags in all cities,

   and the people became like slaves.

The freeman is for them like a slave,

   and the slave for them like a guard.

We said: this is not what you brought us,

   are you going to breach the contract of [your] speech?

Truly! I haven’t seen anything similar to their rule,

   the noble is like the ignoble with guilt.
Mustapha Talatu also translated and analyzed four poems by ʿUmar Krachi. They include the two poems translated by Martin, in addition to a poem on ʿUmar Kachi’s residence in Gambaga and his quarrel with the chief of Kete-Krachi. This poem begins with the line Ā-mayya ṣhāqatka ḥattā ṣirta khayranā. The fourth poem: Lābārin Naṣārā (the chronicle of Christians) was written in Hausa. The aim of the study as Talatu informs us is “to understand the forms of literary expressions used by the author to present historical facts.”

In another study, Idriss Abdul-Razak discussed the cultural and social relevance of ʿUmar Krachi’s poems. The study “Al-Haj Umar of Kete-Krachi: A Muslim Leader A Teacher A Poet and A Social Commentator of His Time” was written in the aftermath of the 1994 Muslim conflict in Ghana. The study sought among other things to draw lessons of unity and peaceful coexistence among Muslims in Ghana, by way of “adhering to Alhaj Umar’s advice he gave in his writings.” Thus, the study analyzed the themes of Muslim unity, colonialism, and the outbreak of influenza in northern Ghana. If this study is anything to go by, it only goes to reaffirm Hodgkin’s assertion that ʿUmar

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27 Poplarly known as the Guinea Fowl conflict, the 1994 war was fought between the Nanumbas and the Konkombas in the Northern region. The conflict is believed to have claimed at least 2000 lives, 178,000 internally displaced and more than 400 villages destroyed.

Krachi’s poetry was a “vehicle of social commentary, social criticism, and reflections on the history of his time.”

Two studies by Abass Umar Muhammed and Muhammed A. Gibrill are important for this thesis. Muhammed’s work is relevant in its attempt to analyze ʿUmar Krachi’s work through the eyes of a literary critic. His study looked at the style and literary techniques used by ʿUmar Krachi, including themes and general structure of the poems. He also compiled an anthology of ʿUmar Krachi’s poems, some of which may need to be revised due to common errors. Also, his study did not undertake a close content analysis of the poems, and did not apply contemporary literary theory to make sense of the poetic structure. The second study performs this function. Gibrill applied van Gennep and Victor Turner’s theoretical formulation regarding the ritual, transformational tripartite process of the rite of passage in order to understand the poet’s psychological transformation.


My analysis is limited to structure, theme and content in the four poems by our author. The themes of these poems are based on the three main genres of Arabic poetry: panegyric (madīḥ), satire (ḥiğāʾ), and eulogy (rithāʾ). These poems provide a picture of a different cultural component in which the poet is able to express his originality, despite the conventional structure he imitates. In other words, despite the imitation, our author is able to produce poems deeply rooted in the social and political realities of his time.
CHAPTER ONE

THE RĀʾIYYA: PANEGYRIC FOR ṢALLAW

Introduction:

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses politics in nineteenth and twentieth century Kumasi and the role played by Muslims in this period. The second section presents an analysis of the rāʾiyya by ʿUmar Krachi. The political and historical implications cannot be ignored if we are to appreciate and understand the context and content of the rāʾiyya. Hence the necessity of discussing the historical and political situation especially when Ṣallaw was leader of Kumasi Zongo from 1919–1934. This exercise is relevant to our purpose because it not only illustrates the occasion for which the rāʾiyya was composed but sets the stage for its analysis.
Section One: Şallaw and Politics in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Kumasi.\textsuperscript{32}

Little is known about Şallaw prior to his appointment as Sarkin Zongo of Kumasi by the British colonial administration in the year 1919. Information regarding his early childhood and young adult life is very limited. In light of this challenge, discussion of his life is based on two sources, both of which look at his late adult life when he became the Sarkin Zongo (chief of Zongo). The first source consists of poems written by ʿUmar Krachi in which the author gives limited information about Şallaw, such as his name, title, ancestral lineage, and a vague description of his pre-adult life. The second are sources which include historical materials that document politics in Kumasi during British colonial rule. Here, Şallaw is cited for his role and contribution to politics in Kumasi, from 1919–1934, when he was leader of the Zongo community.

\textsuperscript{32} Kumasi is home to the Ashantis and the capital of Ashanti region. It was at the center of trading networks linking the Sahel in the north to the coast.
ʿUmar Krachi in his poem gives Ṣallaw’s name as Ḥusayn al-Kashnāwī ibn Yaʿqūb and according to him, the name Ṣallaw is a nickname (laqab) whose meaning denotes prayerfulness. Ṣallaw was born in Yendi to a Hausa father of Katsina descent who was also born in Salaga. He is also said to be a cousin to the Amir of Katsina. ʿUmar Krachi mentions the ancestral lineage of Ṣallaw and his royal pedigree in the following lines:

Grandson of the people of Kumāyaw,

Zay, Takūraw, and Ghawrū.

You have become a descendant of kings

[May] Allah increase your happiness.

33 IAS AR/133.
35 IAS AR/127, IAS AR/239, Ghana/16.13/MSX. According to the annotation in IAS AR/127 and IAS AR/239, these are names of places where the people of Katsina first settled.
36 IAS AR/133.
Ṣallaw’s mother was also of royal blood from the Dagomba tribe of what is now northern Ghana. He was a learned man and a student of ʿUmar Krachi. His knowledge of “Islamic law and divination is said to have gained him a high reputation as well as considerable wealth.” It is probably his knowledge and wealth that earned him the love and respect of his teacher, who composed at least three poems in praise of him. Ṣallaw moved to Kumasi as an adult after completing his studies and in 1919, he was appointed Sarkin Zongo by the British colonial administration. A position he held until 1934 when he resigned and returned to Katsina.

The term Zongo means ‘a camping place of caravans,’ or ‘a lodging place of travelers.’ It was applied to settlements of Muslim traders. According to Daniel F. McCall, “the Zongo is a colonial creation and the establishment of its

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37 Schildkrout, People of the Zongo, 198.
38 Ibid., 198.
39 These poems are: IAS AR/133, IAS AR/239 III, and IAS AR/127, IAS AR/239, Ghana/16.13/MSX.
political processes was in the context of British overrule”.\footnote{Daniel F. McCall, review of \textit{People of the Zongo: The Transformation of Ethnic Identities in Ghana}, by Enid Schildkrout, \textit{The International Journal of African Historical Studies} 12, no. 1 (1979), 106–108.} Kumasi is one of the places where Muslim merchants established their Zongo settlements. Prior to the coming of the British, Muslims served as court scribes and kept accounts and records in Arabic. They also acted as ambassadors for the king on foreign missions, advised the king on matters of trade and war, served in the army, and, most significantly, performed magical and religious services. Thomas Edward Bowdich (1791–1824) made the following observations regarding the magical service rendered by the Muslims:

\begin{quote}
The most surprising superstition of the Ashantees, is their confidence in the fetishes or saphies they purchase so extravagantly from the Moors, believing firmly that they make them invulnerable and invincible in war, paralyse the hand of the enemy, shiver their weapons, divert the course of balls, render both sexes prolific, and avert all evils but sickness, (which they can only assuage) and natural death.\footnote{T. E. Bowdich, \textit{Mission from Cape-Coast to Ashantee}, (London, 1819), 270–272, quoted in N. Levtzion, “Early Nineteenth Century Arabic Manuscripts from Kumasi,” \textit{Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana} 8, (1965), 99–119.}
\end{quote}
Joseph Dupuis (1789–1874), the British Consul who visited Kumasi in early 1820s also gave an account of the demand for Muslim charms in the Ashanti kingdom:

The talismanic charms fabricated by the Moslems, it is well known, are esteemed efficacious according to the various powers they are supposed to possess, and here is a source of great emolument, as the article is in public demand from the palace to the slave's hut; for every man ... wears them strung around the neck ... Some are accounted efficacious for the cure of gunshot wounds, others for the thrust or laceration of steel weapons, and the poisoned barbs of javelins, or arrows. Some, on the other hand, are esteemed to possess the virtue of rendering the wearer invulnerable in the field of battle, and hence are worn as a preservative against the casualties of war.

Besides this class of charms, they have other cabalistic scraps for averting the evils of natural life: these may be subdivided into separate classes; some, for instance, are specific nostrums in certain diseases of the human frame, some for their prevention, and some are calculated either to ward off any impending stroke of fortune, or to raise the proprietor to wealth, happiness and distinction.43

Even in the manuscript of ʿUmar Krachi, we find writings about the importance of some verses from the Qurʾan. On one of the pages, there is a note about the importance of sura al-Khaf 18:65. The verse when recited seven times on the forehead of a child is believed to help him memorize whatever he is taught.⁴⁴

Muslims were incorporated in Ashanti society and they used their knowledge to get close to the Ashanti palace. In 1860, an imam bilād (a personal imam to the king) was appointed. He would pray for the king during wars and provide him with charms. Muslims were tolerated as long as they proved useful to the kings. As traders they were “encouraged to come and tolerated when they stayed, but as believers in the Great God, keepers of the Strong Book, masters of literacy and magical powers, they were much respected, revered, and regarded with awe”.⁴⁵ The arrival of the British and their conquering of the Ashanti kingdom in the 1900s meant that the Muslims were now directly under British colonial authority and because they were considered strangers, they depended

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⁴⁴ Ghana/16.6/MSX.
on the British government for permission to remain in the town and to enjoy
certain rights and privileges. The government on the other hand gave headmen
of the Zongo community political patronage whereby headmen performed
certain services for the British government and they in turn, got limited
authority in the Zongo.

The system of patronage which characterized relations
between migrants, their headmen, and the British did not
obtain to the same extent between Asante and the British.
The stranger leaders were able to promise jobs and
housing to migrants and, in turn, they received services,
including voluntary labor, which they were then able to
offer the colonial authorities. British officials, in turn,
 accorded recognition to the headmen, protected their
positions, and permitted them to hold informal court to
deal with internal disputes within their particular ethnic
communities. This policy clearly encouraged the growth of
ethnic politics, in that it encouraged each migrant group
to develop a formal political structure, it set different
immigrant groups in relations of competition with each
other, and it encouraged Zongo leaders to use ethnicity in
mobilizing local support.46

46 Schildkrout, People of the Zongo, 196.
In 1905, the chief Commissioner of Ashanti, Sir Francis Fuller gave recognition to Mossi, Yoruba, and Wangara headmen. These headmen were selected by their communities and recognized by the Chief Commissioner. They enjoyed some level of autonomy but since their jurisdiction was not formally defined, ambitious leaders attempted to overstep their boundaries. The Yoruba headman for instance, complained that the Hausa headman was hearing Yoruba cases. Another complaint was brought against the Sarkin Zongo for hearing cases that did not fall under his jurisdiction. In 1919, Ṣallaw was appointed Sarkin Zongo succeeding the deceased Mālam ʿUthmān. He was the first Sarkin Zongo to gain a formal place in the Kumasi administration as a non-native African member of the Public Health Board which was founded in 1924. Ṣallaw’s appointment was opposed by some members of the Zongo community, notably, by certain Hausa, because he was not a pure Hausa man. He was also opposed by the Mossi and Yoruba who saw the position of the Sarkin Zongo as a sign of Hausa hegemony. Nevertheless, Ṣallaw was supported by the British and proved

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48 Ibid., 199.
very useful to the administration. He organized cleaning up exercises in the
Zongo during and in the aftermath of the plague epidemic that struck Kumasi
and more severely the Zongo community. He also built a new housing estate
(Sabon Zong). The power of the Sarkin Zongo was consolidated and in 1927
under the amendment to the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance, the office of the
Sarkin Zongo was granted a tribunal, the first court established for non-natives.
Consequently, the courts of other headmen became illegal and they were to
serve as juries on the Zongo tribunal. The new tribunal heard cases ranging from
civil to criminal to minor crimes such as theft, assault and defamation.
Punishments also ranged from fines, imprisonment or even banishment.

Noteworthy is the dōgāri (body guards) who acted as messengers and as a police
force.\textsuperscript{49} Interestingly, Ṣallaw wielded so much power that the appointment of the
other headmen was subject to his approval. He could reject the appointment of a
particular leader even if their community chose them. This soon led to tension
and conflict between Ṣallaw and the other headmen. The headmen were

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 199–200.
unsuccessful in their petitions against Šallaw’s abuse of power in a bid to
come autonomous and run their own tribunals. In 1932, the Mamprusi
headman was arrested by the Sarkin Zongo in an event which led to violent
protest:

Isaka, Chief of Mamprusi, took a woman from a Mamprusi
man. The woman had gone to the chief to ask for a
divorce, and the chief, being like her father, since they
were all from one country, took her from the man and
gave her to a different man to marry. The first man went
and reported to Isaka to Malam Salaw, and Salaw sent his
dogari to Isaka’s house to get rid of him [summons him?].
The people bailed Isaka and brought him to his own house
and then they began to make a campaign against Salaw.\textsuperscript{50}

The protest that followed this event led to the formulation of rules which
clarified the role of each headman on the tribunal. There were nine headmen on
the tribunal and each was given increased authority in cases involving members
of their own communities. The headmen, especially the Yoruba, Mossi,
Mamprusi, Grusi, and Kotokoli saw the position of the Sarkin Zongo as a sign of

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 201.
Hausa hegemony and therefore were opposed to any attempt by the Sarkin Zongo to have jurisdiction over their own communities which are distinct in terms of language and ethnic identity. The British government interpreted the protests as an expression of disloyalty or opposition to their authority, as represented by the Sarkin Zongo. They viewed the opposition as borne out of jealousy and opportunism. Ṣhallaw on the other hand saw the conflict not as interethnic but “a conflict between an educated and orthodox Islamic leadership and a backward, ignorant mass of illiterate semipagans.” The culmination of tensions and confrontations led to a three-month sentence of the headmen which saw an attack on Ṣhallaw’s house. The police responded by searching the Zongo for arms, leading to a number of casualties including one death and several arrests. The tribunal of the Sarkin Zongo was subsequently closed on the recommendation of the Chief Commissioner. Ṣhallaw was persuaded to resign and

51 Ibid., 202–203.
52 Ibid., 202.
returned to Katsina, and for the time being, the office of Sarkin Zongo was abolished.  

‘Umar Krachi was able to give limited information regarding the appointment of Šallaw by the British colonial administration and his political opponents:

Blessed is He the Creator, Possessor of Bounties,  
Lord of creation, Bestower of favors.

He distinguished our Šallaw with knowledge and piety  
and chose him to have authority over great men.

He gave him a crown in the English administration  
in spite of his enemies.

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53 Ibid., 205.  
54 IAS AR/239 iii.
In another poem, ʿUmar Krachi spoke about Ṣallaw’s predecessor, Mālam ʿUthmān, in what seems to be both an elegy and eulogy for Mālam ʿUthmān and Ṣallaw.

May Allah the Almighty have mercy on ʿUthmān [one who is] worthy of forgiveness.

ʿUthmān died but he was a man well remembered.

One star disappeared, [another] star appeared, this is sufficient happiness.

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55 IAS AR/133.
56 IAS AR/133.
A sun set before us

[another] sun has risen shining.

Severe sadness befell us,

happiness has come to replace it.

We lost a great man,

in his place comes Ṣallaw illuminating.

According to John Hunwick, ʿUmar Krachi made occasional visits to Kumasi at the invitation of Ṣallaw. It is not clear what ʿUmar Krachi’s role was in the court of Ṣallaw but from reading his panegyrics on the matter, there is reason to argue that he played the role of a political propagandist, defending his patron (I use this word with caution) and attacking political opponents. There is also good reason to believe that ʿUmar Krachi played an advisory role, the role of a counselor who would advise on matters related to leadership and what was expected of Ṣallaw as a leader. Most significantly is the spiritual obligation which he sought to fulfill. That is, the religious tone and the motif of waʿz

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58 IAS AR/133.
(exhortation) which appears frequently in his praise poetry echoes the religious
dimension of the conflict between Ṣallaw and his opponents.

To summarize, this section is particularly important because it brings the
observations from the past into a contextual focus. First, this section reviews the
political situation in nineteenth and twentieth Century Kumasi and helps the
reader understand the dynamics of politics under British colonial rule. It
highlights the system of indirect rule in which the British colonial administration
ruled the people through their leaders. This is manifest in the British view that
their authority was represented by the Sarkin Zongo and any objection to the
latter was a rejection of their rule. This section also defines the nature and
limitations of the authority of Ṣallaw, so that when in our reading of the rāʾīyya
we find the poet’s strong emphasis on divine intervention, we should understand
that it is not a mere case of religiosity, but a realization of the limitations of the
powers that be.
Poetry was a vehicle through which West African Arabic scholars discussed political, social, and religious matters relevant to their societies. Most if not all, West African Arabic poets were raised on the *Jāhilī* and Islamic-era poetic tradition and each of them reacted to it according to his or her own taste and temperament. In other words, some West African poets followed the pre-Islamic mode of poetic composition, by copying themes, topoi, and tropes, while others went as far as imitating lines through intertextuality. Abdul-Samad Abdullah showed how, for instance, some West African Arabic poets used intertextuality to imitate the *muʿallaqāt* of Imruʾ al-Qays and al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī. He was able to demonstrate how Muḥammad b. Junayd b. Muḥammad al-Bukhārī

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59 The *rāʾiyya* has three versions with minor variations, specifically in the arrangement of some of the verses, the omission of some verses in one version or the other and some poetic dictions. The first two MSS: IAS AR/127 and IAS AR/239 are designations from the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana with page numbers: 1–15 and 2–14 respectively. Also, IAS AR/127 has 154 verses and IAS AR/239 has 156 verses. The third version is a microfilm copy designated Ghana/16.13/MSX. It is kept at the Herskovits Library of African Studies at Northwestern University. It has 158 verses and is written on 8 leaves (pp.125–139). The owner of this copy was Malam Baba Ibrahim, of Konongo. I used the three versions in my edition.
(Wazîr Junayd) was able to imitate the famous lines of the qaṣīda of Imruʾ al-Qays in the following verses:

وَلَيْيَلٍ بُوَادِيَهَا تَهَبُّ بِهِ الصَّمَّابَا عَلَى شَاطِئٍ وَسُتُّ الْكِتَبِ الْمُعَتَّقَلِ
وَلَا تَبْلَسَ حُمَامَهَا بِمِيْتَانِهَا الْأَلْفُ الْأَرْضِيُّ يُدْفَقُ مَاءَ سَحَاءٌ عَلَىْدُ مَحلة
وَرَفَّصَ رُجُالٌ فِي رُمَالٍ عَثَرَيْةٍ صَنُّفُوْا بِصَنُّفٍ أَيْلَيْنَاءٌ بِالْمَهلِ
وَكَمْ ذَكَرَتْ نِسَيَانَتِي وَلِيْتُ شَغْرُ خُيَامِهَا بِسَفْقُ الْأَلْبَوْيِ بِسِينَ أَلْدَخُوْلَ فَحُوْمَلِ
وَأَطْرُنَانِي فِيهَا غَنْئَاء حُمَامِهَا قَهْمَةٌ تَبْكَ مَنْ ذَكَرْهَا خَيْبَ وَمَنْزِل
وُغَوَّلَتْ مَعْتَمَّةَ عَلَى عَرْضَانِهَا وَهَلَّ عَنْدَ ذَسْمِ دَارِبِ مَنْ مُعْجَولَ
وَصَبْرُتْي صَنْحَبٍ وَقَامَوا جَمِيعُهُمْ يَفْوُلُونَ لا نَالَكُ أَسْنَى وَنَجَمَّلَ

Many a night, when the wind would blow on her plains

along the banks in the midst of the highly crowded sand dunes.

Forget not, a dove on her fertile muddy soil

whose fountain gushes out warm waters.

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Remember the men on her sands in the evening who

dance in an orderly pattern as the women clap their hands.

Many a time, a single line of a poem would remind me of her tents

on the edge of the sandy desert between “Dukhūli” and

“Ḥawmali”.

I was overjoyed by the dove there singing,

“Stop and bemoan with me the memories of my love and of the abodes”.

On her plain field, I had to wail sorrowfully,

“Of what use it is for one to cry over an effaced sketch?”

As I cried my friends stood by and consoled me,

saying, “Remain firm and die not of grief”.61

These verses immediately bring to mind the famous Qifā nabki min dhikrā ḥabībīn wa-manzilī. The attempt by Wazīr Junayd shows a “deliberate, well planned, and open intertextuality in both lexical and artistic terms.”62 The importance, however, is not the imitation of Imruʾ al-Qays, but the ability to endow his famous lines with the poet’s own taste and experience, thereby presenting a

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62 Ibid., 347.
unique worldview shaped by the poet's insight into reality and the world around him. I should like to reiterate here that the fact that there is an overwhelming propensity on the part of these West African poets to imitate the classical mode of poetic composition, either through intertextuality or through other means of imitation, does not rob their poems of their own unique and exceptional features and originality. My definition of originality is inspired by Carlos Baker's statement that:

Every poet draws to some degree upon his personal experience and his direct observations from the actual world around him as well as upon his reading, whether in poetry or prose. It is often, in fact, the admixture of the two types of experience that gives particular poems their uniqueness, the ingrained evidence of an alert imagination which has successfully combined traditional and more immediately empirical material.63

Although Baker was speaking about modern poetry, his comments are true for classical poetry because personal experience and social factors are constant variables in poetic composition. And while originality is something highly

valued in art, including poetry, complete originality does not exist. Every artwork has been influenced by a previous work, and poets in particular must follow certain conventions, like rhyme and meter “if they want to write something recognizable as poetry” as Paul Losensky says.\(^6^4\) In the paragraphs that follow, I shall present a structural and thematic analysis of the rāʾīyya and try to tease out the author’s use of imitation and originality.

‘Umar Krachi begins his rāʾīyya with an introduction that accentuates the poet’s awareness of pre-Islamic and Islamic-era poetic conventions but also highlights the discussion among medieval scholars on the semantic relationship between two important terminologies: nasīb (amatory prelude) and ghazal (elegy of love). The introduction reads as follows:

\[
وَكَانَ الْبِدَايَةُ أَلْفَقْصَانَدَ بِالْتَّسْبِيبِ أَوْ بَالْتَشْبِيبِ أَوْ بِالْغَزْلِ عَادَةٌ مَّعَهُ زِيَادَةٌ قَدِيمَةٌ عِنْدَ شَعَرَاءِ الْعَرَبِ جَاهِلِيَّةَ وَإِسْلَامًا وَعَلَى هَذَا الْمِنْطَقَةِ يَسْجُدُ كُلُّ شَاعِرُ أَدِيبٍ مُّاهِرٍ إِلَى الْتَّيْمُ وَلَذَاكَ حَتَّى هَذَا الْشَّاعِرُ حَدُوْهُمْ وَلَعْلَمْ مَا فِي مَطْلُعِ هَذِهِ أَلْفَقْصَائِدُ هُوَ الْغَزْلُ تَأْمَلٌ وَهِيَ طَنْثَاةٌ.\(^6^5\)
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Beginning a poem with the nasīb (amatory prelude), tashbīb (celebrating the qualities of the beloved) or ghazal

\(^6^4\) Losensky, *Welcoming Fīghāni*, 100.

\(^6^5\) Ghana/16.13/MSX; IAS AR/127 and IAS AR/239.
(elegy of love) is an old tradition among pre-Islamic and Islamic-era Arab poets, and so every learned and skillful poet follows this method until this day. This poet also follows their path and perhaps the beginning of this poem could be categorized as ghazal (elegy of love), think about it. The poem is famous.

Thus, philologists and linguists have attempted a definition of the semantic relationship between nasīb, ghazal, and tashbīb. Some of these critics used these terms synonymously while others attempted to draw a distinction between them. The twelfth-century lexicographer and author of the famous dictionary, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Ibn Manẓūr (630/1233–711/1311) drew a slight distinction between nasīb, ghazal, and tashbīb.66 According to him, nasīb is when a woman is mentioned in amatory language and ghazal is the talk and the amusement obtained. Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī (139/756–ca 231/845) and Abū al-Faraj al-ʾIṣfahānī (284/897–356/967) also used the three terminologies synonymously to refer to love poetry in general.67 Perhaps, the first critic to

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attempt a distinction between these terms was Qudāma ibn Jaʿfar (ca. 260/873–ca. 320/932). In his Naqd al-Shiʿr, Qudāma spoke of nasīb as the expression of ghazal and ghazal as the content itself.68 Later critics such as Ibn Rashīq (390/1000–ca 456/1063)69 and al-Tabrīzī (421/1030–502/1109) also concurred with Qudāma in his distinction but went further to argue that ghazal is the manifestation of affection towards the beloved and nasīb is the mentioning of that affection. As far as the rāʿīyya is concerned, ʿUmar Krachi begins with what Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Ḥūfī referred to as al-ghazal al-tamhīdī (introductory ghazal), which was common in pre-Islamic and Islamic-era poetics. The aim of this introductory ghazal is to prepare the listener for what is expected later in the poem.70 ʿAntara ibn Shaddād began his panegyric on Zuhayr al-ʿAbsī with eight verses of al-ghazal al-tamhīdī:

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This is the fire of ʿAblah O my companion
its flames light up the darkness of the darkest night.

It ignites a similar flame in my heart
a flame of yearning increased by burning flames.

It was lit by a white-skinned woman who shakes like a branch
when it is blown by the passing breeze.

Her breath adorns its breathe with a good smell of nadd (incense)

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and we spent the night enjoying her good smell.

A large-breasted one is sweeter than honey when it is mixed with wine.

Any time I tasted the cold on her lips

I feel like the inside of my mouth is the blaze of hell.

The moon stole her beauty and the antelope borrowed the charm of her eyelid.

My affection for her is permanent

my suffering from her love is enduring.

Ghazal as Prelude

The rāʾiyya follows the conventional bipartite structure of the qaṣīda. It begins with ghazal as a prelude to the main theme of mādīḥ (praise). We shall therefore take each of these structural compositions as our unit of analysis and examine how the author employed pre-Islamic and Islamic-era themes, topoi, and tropes.
I bring you glad tidings and wisdom from Hind.

From Sulaimā and Daʿd, from Lamīs [comes] a counsellor.

From Sumayyā and Laylā, from each of them [comes] a messenger.

My love for them is old, their amorous gestures are [like] burning flames.
I competed with the dove for melodious sounds, on her branch she flew not.

Their hearts are empty, their bodies full of energy.

They charmed my mind and heart and [their voice] was a melody of running water.

They left me in pain as if I were entombed.

They saw my gray beard and they said this is nakhūr.\(^\text{72}\)

He [continued] searching for them until night enshrouded.

And night was gradually stealing away until dawn merged into day.

He did not sleep all night as if he was seduced.

Listening [carefully] to their voices as the bird listens

To the voice of a flying falcon as if it were a mandolin.

He missed what he was desiring, sufficient is his loss.

He was emaciated by travel as if he were a dīftār.\(^\text{73}\)

The ghazal like the nasīb can be appreciated from two different perspectives, as a love story within its social context and as a structural unit within the polythematic qaṣīda.\(^\text{74}\) In its social context, the ghazal is addressed to the poet’s beloveds. It explains his feelings and emotions and gives insight into

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\(^{72}\) A camel that is milked by putting the finger in her nose.

\(^{73}\) A species of lizard.

\(^{74}\) Encyclopedia of Islam, 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) ed., s.v. “Nasīb.” Renate Jacobi.
what is considered acceptable in the expression of love in the poet’s society. It also empowers the women and shows their social superiority. In a non-linear narrative, the poet confesses his love (line 4A), grief (line 8), pursuit of his romantic love (ll. 8, 10–11, 13–16), and sleeplessness (line 12). These are contrasted with the amatory and enticing conduct of the women (line 4B), their lack of emotional engagement and notoriety (line 6), their cruelty and social superiority (line 9). The women are depicted as unyielding and they seldom appear emotionally engaged. At the end when the poet’s love is not compensated, he resolves to forget his beloveds and turns to the main theme of his poem.

Noteworthy are lines 1–3 where the poet presents names of six women: Hind, Sulaymā, Daʿd, Lamīs, Sumayyā, and Laylā. These names – it would appear – are fictional characters rather than actual women with whom the poet had a relationship. This is a common practice in classical Arabic poetry.

According to Ibn Rashīq, poets would sometimes use names (including the six names used by our poet) not just for their palatability but for metrical (iqāmatan
lil-wazn) and aesthetic reasons (taḥliyatan lil-nasīb).\textsuperscript{75} Al-Sayyid al-Ḥumayrī in one of his nasīb introductions mentions the name of four women.

And he was friends with the beautiful women
Hind, ‘Abdah, al-Rabāb, and Bawza’.

Medieval Arab critics spoke about the qaṣīda in ways that suggest that in order to produce an excellent poem, the poet must begin with a captivating prelude and to achieve this the poet must observe certain principles. Ibn Rashīq compared poetry to a lock that is unlocked by the beginning of the poem:

Poetry is a lock, the beginning of which is a key. It is therefore imperative on the poet to better the beginning of his poem, for it is the first [thing] to strike the ears and (enables one to) draw a conclusion right from the beginning.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibn Rashīq, \textit{al-ʾUmda}, 2:783–784.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibn Rashīq, \textit{al-ʾUmdah}, 1:350.
Ibn Qutayba (213/828–276/889) also in his *al-Shīr wa-l-Shuʿarāʾ* described how a poet should start his *qaṣīda*.

I have heard men of letters say, that one who intends to compose a *qaṣīda* begins by mentioning abandoned encampments, traces, and vestiges; he weeps, laments, apostrophizes the sites, and begs his companion to stop, that he may make this an occasion to speak to those who have departed… To this he joins the *nasīb*, and complains of the force of his passion, the pain of separation, and the excessiveness of his longing and desire, so as to incline hearts towards him and to attract interest, and gain an attentive hearing. For the poetry of love is close to the soul and insinuates itself into the heart… Once he is assured that he will be heard

and heeded, he proceeds to the affirmation of his rights: thus he mounts up, in his poem, he complains of his hardships and sleeplessness, night journeys, the midday heat, and the emaciation of his weary camels. When he is assured that he has convinced his addressee of his right to hope for reward and to expect satisfaction, and has established the hardships encountered on his journey, he begins the madīḥ, in which he urges him to requite him and incites him to generosity, elevates him above his peers and diminishes their stature (as compared to) his noble station.

The excellent poet is he who follows this paths and observes a just balance between these parts, and does not make any one of them dominate the poem, nor make (one) so long that the listeners become bored, or cut it short while their souls still thirst for more.\footnote{Translated by Julie Scott Meisami, \textit{Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Poetry} (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 60.}

While not all poems begin in the fashion described above, they are still considered to be excellent by medieval scholars. They possess what critics refer to as \textit{husn al-iftītāḥ} or \textit{ibtidāʾ} (an excellent opening) which helps the listener recognize the poem’s prosodic scheme (\textit{taṣrīḥ}) and to anticipate its primary
theme. The line by ʿAws ibn Ḥajar is considered an excellent opening by Ibn Rashīq:

[من المنصرح]

أيَّتَهُمَا السَّنَّاتُ أَجْبَلْيَةً جُرَّعُهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ذَي نَخْدُرَينَ قُدُّدَ وَقُضِّبَ

O soul, man up [against] fear.

What you were afraid of has occurred.

Another one by Abū Nuwās (b. between 130/747 and 145/762–198/813 and 200/815) reads:

[من البسيط]

دَغْ عَلَىّ لَمْ تَؤْمَيْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَمَّ إِغْرِزَاءَ وَذَاوْنِي بِبَلَيْنَ كَانَتْ هُيَ الْمَدَاءَ

Stop blaming me for blame is but a temptation, cure me with that which is the disease.

80 Meisami, Structure and Meaning, 61.
81 Ibn Qutayba, al-Shīʿr wa-l-Shuʿārāʾ, 1:207.
These verses are excellent openings because they do not just set the rhyme pattern of the poem but also inform the listener of their primary themes. In the first verse, the listener anticipates an elegy and in the second verse, he anticipates wine poetry. Although it is difficult to anticipate the main theme in the opening lines of the rāʿiyya, the poet is still able to achieve one of the features of ḥusn al-ʿiftitāḥ which is the taṣrīʿ. He uses taṣrīʿ on two levels: to set the poem’s prosodic scheme and to transition into the main theme of his poem.83

The poetic persona in the ghazal cannot go unnoticed. Pre-Islamic poets rarely refer to their own experience and, as argued by Renate Jacobi, their verses are based on collective experience and therefore written in a way that each member of the tribal aristocracy can identify.84 As a result, the pre-Islamic poet would normally use the second or third person pronoun when describing his love affairs and in most cases, he would switch between pronouns. He would switch from talking about himself and his experience to talking about other people and their experiences. This style is thus both rhetorical and dramatic.

83 See lines 1 and 18 in IAS AR/127, IAS AR/239, Ghana/16.13/MSX.
where the listener becomes an active observer and he is able to identify with the poet and even partakes in his misery. Another explanation to the shift in the poetic persona is that the poet changes person as a way to distance himself from what is being said, becoming like an uninvolved observer looking at himself from the outside.\textsuperscript{85} Īmar Krachi makes sudden shifts from the first person pronoun (ll. 4, 7, 8, and 9) to the third person pronoun (ll. 10–17). This swift change of persona is both dramatic and vague in that it leaves no clue as to who the third person might be. The only valid explanation is that the poet tries to distance himself from what is being said, looking at himself from the outside.

\textbf{Themes of Madiḥ in the Rāʾiyya}

The modularity in the structural composition indicates that the raʾiyya is polythematic. In addition to the main theme of madiḥ, there are other themes which occur in non-fluid and nonlinear form. They sometimes occur between

one section of the main theme and another and they sometimes occur abruptly, so that it is not always easy to fit them into a functional and formal outline. The two lines (ll. 17–18) which follow the ghazal act as a transition (takhalluş) and are subtly connected to the main theme of the rā‘īyya. The poet introduces the mamduh in just one line (l. 19) which subsumes all the noble qualities of the mamduh: amir (leader), ghadanfar (lit. lion), and mashhūr (famous) in addition to his nickname. This is immediately followed by information about the ancestral lineage of the mamduh in an attempt to give legitimacy to his rule. As if these were not enough, the poet goes on to assert the legitimacy of the mamduh through divine sanction (ll. 21–28). He then attributes to him the virtues of knowledge, wisdom, and modesty which he claims are gifts from God (ll. 29–30). The importance of this cannot be overstated as it underscores the religious tone which is palpable throughout the poem. The poet then proceeds to address his own detractors in what might seem a digression but also acts as transition into the next section of the panegyric (ll. 31–35). He mentions what he referred to as the names of Şallaw but to be more precise, these are virtues that fall
under the broad categories of courage, justice, intelligence, and modesty (ll. 36–48). He then proceeds to attack opponents of the *mamdūḥ*, those he referred to as ‘enemies’ and ‘enviers’. His invective is between admonition and exhortation, between harsh criticism and persuasion (ll. 55–67). The next two verses (ll. 68–69) function as yet another transition into the motif of invective. The poet describes the palace of the *mamdūḥ* as having a strong foundation. He then proceeds to address the opponents in a milder tone in what may be described as *tawīd* (admonition). He asks them to repent or face the consequence of their actions in the afterlife (ll. 70–74). This is followed by prayer for the *mamdūḥ* against his enemies (ll. 75–77). The poet also uses *iqtibās* from the Qur’an to compare Sallaw and his enemies.86 The latter is compared to a shadow and the former to the sun’s full heat (l. 93). After making this comparison, the poet moves into another section of the panegyric, the praise of the *mamdūḥ* for his knowledge, thoughtfulness, soberness, tranquility, justice, and the ability to solve problems (ll. 95–98). These virtues are compared to the enemies’ evil

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86 Sura Fāṭir 35:21.
machination (ll. 99–101). After this the poet resumes his praise the *mamdūḥ* for his generosity (ll. 102–114). He then prays for the *mamdūḥ*, asks for God’s favor on him and his household, asks for protection against his enemies and finally prays for his deceased parents and relatives (ll. 125–146). For the first time, however, the poet speaks about his poem which he likens to servants and maidens. Servants probably because they are meant to render praise to the *mamdūḥ*. He also makes a humble submission in lines 147–152 to the lack of perfection of his poem, suggesting anomalies in the meter. He finally makes a prayer and concludes with the date when the *rāʿīyya* was written (ll. 153–158).
**Structural Composition of the Rāʾiyya**

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**Imitation and Originality in the Rāʾiyya**

It is relevant at this point to answer the following questions. In what way(s) does Ṭāmār Krachi imitate pre-Islamic and Islamic poetic conventions and how does
he strive to achieve originality in his poem. ‘Umar Krachi follows the pre-Islamic
convention of a polythematic qaṣida by speaking to the topic of love [ghazal],
praise [madīḥ] and invective [hijāʾ] within the same qaṣīda. He imitates the
classical way by working within the general structural framework of the qaṣīda
but at the same time, he is informed by social reality. For instance, in pre-
Islamic nasīb/ghazal the poet, after lamenting over the deserted campsite of his
beloved and after describing his violent passion and sleeplessness, often turns to
his camel for consolation and asks if she will be strong enough to carry him to
his destination. This is often followed by a detailed description of the camel
(wasf al-nāqa), embellished by scenes of animal life in which the camel is
compared to a wild bull, onager, ostrich, and in some cases an eagle.87 ‘Umar
Krachi thus works within this amatory framework. However, his own situation
does not permit him to talk about his beloveds in a sensual way or in ways that
excite erotic readings. Also the reality of his time does not allow him to talk
about the deserted campsite and the camel. Therefore, what we see in the ghazal

is a kind of imitation by contradiction; our author accepts the general
framework of the *ghazal* “while giving it a new setting and a decidedly
contradictory moral twist.”

As far as originality in the four poems is concerned, there are at least two
areas to look at: imagery including performance in reciting and style. These
three areas are related to two main issues. The first is the audience as a target
group with a limited level of Arabic competence. Arabic was not the language of
the masses, but a component of high culture, limited to the educated class. Twi
is the language of the Ashanti’s and was used for communication with the court.
Juula, Gur, and Hausa were commercial languages and Arabic was used at least
for prayer purposes. The second is the role played by oral history and oral
tradition in the poet’s society. Before the introduction of formal education, oral
transmission was the main system of education in African societies. The
importance of this system cannot be overstated as it is still used in most West
African Muslim societies, especially in the *madrasa* where children are taught to

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89 Robinson, *Muslim Societies*, 128.
read and memorize the Qur’an. These two issues—Arabic as an elite language and a culture of orality—affect the structure of ʿUmar Krachi’s poems and his poetic style.

The ṛāʾiyya is filled with imagery that calls on performance or memory. These images are found in lines that are descriptive. In the ghazal section of the poem, the poet describes his beloved in words that invite the listener to draw a picture or recall his past experience. Such words present an image of an attractive and charming woman, strong enough to mesmerize a man (even though the poet uses words that turn this charming beloved into a repulsive character later on).

The second form of imagery used by ʿUmar Krachi comes in the madīḥ section of the ṛāʾiyya. In (ll. 49–51, 53), where Şallaw is described as a smiling character, one with a shining face, and a dignified person. These descriptions sum up three pleasant images of physical beauty, high rank, and good character.

The third form of imagery is the opposite of the two above. It is filled by unpleasant images and they are attributed to the detractors of Şallaw. In lines
60–63, 70–73, 77–88 the poet addresses enemies of Ṣallaw and threatens them with destruction, famine, calamities, etc.

As Arabic literacy was not widespread in popular culture in the poet’s society, we appreciate the importance of gestures in West African societies. Thus, performance is used as a tool to reach the wider audience. It can be found in certain verbs and demonstrative articles that require gesturing by the poet.

When ʿUmar Krachi introduces the mamdūḥ, he uses the demonstrative article [dhāka], thus pointing to Ṣallaw who might be sitting some distance away. Also, in lines 21–24 the poet talks about how Ṣallaw was blessed by al-Ḥājj Dikko who placed his hand on the head of the former, a common practice in most West African Muslim societies in which an elder or a scholar blesses a younger man by putting his hands on his head and praying for him. Another gesture is in line 52 when ʿUmar Krachi talks about tyrant leaders who oppressed their subjects. The word used is “zanaqū” they strangled. This may require some form of action by the poet to demonstrate to his audience. Again in line 69, we see a direct address to the enemy. He calls him and ask him to come and listen. (qafandarun
hāti wa-sma’). In the sections where the poet invokes almighty God and prays for Śallaw and against his enemies (ll. 74–75, 89–91, 115, 123–140) we expect the poet to have raised his hands and looked up to the sky to call unto God.

In the rā‘iyya, ʿUmar Krachi uses various styles for aesthetic reasons. One of the styles in the rā‘iyya is repetition. In lines 36–47 ʿUmar uses three phrases to talk about the names of Śallaw. These phrases (in qultu, aw qīla, and in qīla) serve as both emphases in addition to the melody they produce.

Another style ʿUmar Krachi uses is the ḥarf al-nidā’ to get the attention of his audience. Yā ayyuha al-a‘dā’, yā ayyuha al-shu‘arā’, yā ayyuha al-nās (ll. 64, 115, 149). Other ways of catching the attention of his listeners is through (1) command (amr) example, fa-ṣghū ilā mā aqūl, wa-lā tanṭiqū bi-jafāʾin, wa-lā takhaf aghbiyāʾ (ll. 31, 34, 118). (2) question (su‘āl) example, wa-hal takun lī mugḥīthan, wa-hal samī’ta sakhiyyan, (ll. 17, 119).

Finally, iqtibās is used by ʿUmar Krachi in his rā‘iyya. He takes verses from the Qur’an to improvise some of his lines. The most palpable of these is line 92 which is taken from sura Fāṭir 35:21.
CHAPTER TWO

THE MĪMIYYA: PANEGYRIC FOR PEOPLE OF TETEMU ZONGO.90

In pre-Islamic times, madīḥ poetry was addressed to an individual, a group, or a city and it was thus expected to produce immediate or direct benefit. The panegyric is expected to begin with nasīb except when it is to celebrate a particular event such as the coronation of the mamdūḥ or his victory in which case the poet is not obliged to open with nasīb. In other cases, it should be avoided completely because then the listener will not be interested in hearing anything other than the event.

The Maṭlaʾ of the Mīmiyya

Western scholars apply the term nasīb to the first section of the ode, while modern Arab scholars employ the term according to medieval usage and often referred to the opening section of the qaṣīda as maṭlaʾ (prologue).91 I shall use

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90 The Mīmiyya (Ghana 16.6/MSX) has three leaves numbered 83–87.
the term *maṭlaʿ* to refer to the first part of the *mīmiyya* for reasons that will be made clear. In a broader context, the *nasīb* denotes love poetry expressed in traditional amatory themes: the expression of emotional love and desire; remembering the beloved and lamenting over her deserted encampment; describing the joy of meeting and the grief of separation; celebrating the beauty of the beloved and emphasizing her social status. The woman in the pre-Islamic *nasīb* is depicted as capricious and unyielding and unfaithful. She seldom appears emotionally engaged in a relationship and she is presented as a heroine whose perfection is never questioned.⁹² In short, the overall theme of the *nasīb* is the expression of amatory love and its related elegiac motifs.

Admittedly, the opening lines of the *mīmiyya* contain aspects of traditional elegiac motifs. However, what we find is a frigid, non-amatory opening. To be more specific, the poet questions the emotional engagement of the women (ll. 1–2) and describes them as unattractive, churlish, and reprehensible (ll. 3–5), unfaithful, capricious, and unyielding (l. 6). The poet

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⁹² *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. “*Nasīb.*”
shows no desire toward them, he expresses no sympathy for their feelings and emotions. Rather what he seeks to do is to criticize the women’s attitude in an unapologetic voice. It is not clear why the poet chose this kind of prelude. What we know is that the polythematic qaṣīda has evolved over time, especially the prelude section of the qaṣīda. This has affected the way poets treat the beginning of their poems, from minor changes in the motif to avoiding it completely. Abū Nuwās was particularly fond of mocking the ʿatlāl topos in his nasīb.

Let the ʿatlāl be effaced by the windstorm
and allow the episodes of time to decompose it.
Leave the camel rider to ride through a land
that is inhabited by the strong and the best camels.
A land whose plants are thorny plants and acacia

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and most of its hunted animals are hyenas and wolves.

ʿUmar Krachi on the other hand seems to have taken a middle position in his mīmiyya. He neither accepts all the elegiac motifs nor does he reject them completely. He accepts the general framework of the nasīb and at the same time challenges the pre-Islamic tradition of amatory love. We can therefore argue that, the maṭlaʿ in the mīmiyya has an anti-nasīb motive.

The maṭlaʿ begins with one of the traditional openings discussed by Jaroslav Stetkevych in his article on seven key elements of nasīb diction used by classical Arabic poets:

There are several ways in which the classical Arabic qasīdah deals with the motif, or rather the poetic stance, of “questioning.” … the poet has to break into the poem directly — for the most part either through the apostrophe of a question or through that of a command/request, or in an exclamation aimed at his inanimate surroundings. He asks: li man id-di-yārū (Whose are the abodes?), liman ṭalālūn (Whose ruin is this?), or hal, mā ʿalimta … maktūmu
(Is that which you knew ... kept hidden?), *hal ghādara sh-shuʿarāʾ* (have the poets left [untouched]?)...\(^\text{94}\)

The first two lines of the *mīniyya* thus begin with *suʿāl* (question) which is repeated in its varied mode (*hal, ʾam, ʾaw*). The questions are asked with an anonymous voice, probably a man’s. But unlike the pre-Islamic poet who has no answers to his questions, our poet does provide an answer to his unsettling questions in lines 3–5.

As mentioned in chapter one, among the functions of the opening lines of the poem is to inform the audience about the poet’s intention. Most statements suggest that it is the main *gharaḍ* (theme) that should be anticipated in the opening lines of the *qaṣīda*.\(^\text{95}\)

\[ من الرمل

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\(^{95}\) Meisami, *Structure and Meaning*, 66.
Does Laylā have a wish?
or does Hind have a say?
[what about] the promises from Ḥidhām
or the pledges made by Qaṭām?
They are all in a state of coquettishness,
surliness, and reprehensibility.
They do not keep promises,
they are not people with desires.
You don’t see in her fidelity,
if you lived a millennium.
They severed their relationship
and cast it in the dust.

The Tripartite Structure of the Mīmiyya

‘Umar Krachi uses lines 7–8 as both takhallus (transition) and to indicate the
main theme of his poem. Line 7 also makes an interesting revelation about the
structure of the *madīḥ*. In other words, readers of the *mīmiyya* would realize that
the poem is structured in an interlinear narrative format. The poet narrates his
sojourn in a traditional story telling fashion, starting with the time of his arrival
in the village (representing the introduction), his stay in the village
(representing the body) and the time of his departure (representing the
conclusion). In the same respect, the panegyric is structured in a three-layered
format: collective praise of the people of Tetemu Zongo, praise of specific
individual members of the community, and another collective praise. Thus
representing a tripartite structure.

lines 7–11 represent a general panegyric of members of Tetemu Zongo
who share the common virtues of *faḍl* (nobility and virtue), *sakḥāʾ* (generosity),
*nāqāba* (leadership), *ṣalāḥ* (faithfulness), *īmān* (faith), *ʿadālah* (justice), *ṣabr*
(patience), *qunūt* (obedience), and *ihṣān* (sincerity). These virtues can be
subsumed under the four qualities (*al-Faḍāʾil al-ʿarbaʿa*) identified by Qudāma in
his *Naqd al-Shīʿr*. However, a closer reading of these verses gives a hint about

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96 Qudāma, *Naqd al-Shīʿr*, 64–66.
class relations. That is, some of the qualities attributed to members of the village such as *faḍl* and *naqāba* are virtues related to the ruling class, while obedience and patience are required from the masses as well as believers. The rest of the qualities are shared virtues in which both the noble and the common have equal stake.

Arrange this word neatly,

[O you] perfect transmitter of poetry.

In praise of men of excellence,

noble men of Tetemu.

Virtuous and generous,

chieftains among rulers.

Righteous and pious,

just in [settling] disputes.

Patient and obedient,

doers of good take [my] word.
After stating his intention and making a general praise, the poet starts to narrate his journey. He begins with the time of his arrival in the village by describing how his host, the people of Tetemu Zongo ushered him in their village with all due pomp and respect. This shows how important the visitor is to the people and an acceptance to take on the duties of hospitality by providing the poet with food, shelter, and above all comfort.

قَدْ لَقِىْتُونِي فِيِّ الْخَمْمِيِّس
وُتَلَامِيْ، فَمَا شَاءَ بَعْنَ،
حَمَّامٌ بِرُبِّ الأَئْلَمِ،
مَا جَمَعُوا جَمَعًا كَحِبًا،
نَغَمَْ، هُمْ يَهْؤْلُ الْأَذْحُوَلُ،

They ushered me on a Thursday,
with a handsome group of people.
And students in their prime age,
returning from the woods.
[Singing] praises to the Prophet,
giving thanks to the Lord of mankind.
They assembled in huge numbers,

97 The first word in the second hemistich is not clear in the manuscript. The semantic context implies a positive attribute to the poetic persona’s long stay. The word could possibly be نعمه = their boon.
from maidens and children.
Excellent were they the day I entered.
Delightful was my long stay.

The lines that follow speak of the poet’s residence in the village and his relationship with the villagers. A relationship of trust, friendship and openness.

They also describe the hospitality and generosity of the villagers in providing the visitor with food and gifts. This hospitality according to the poet is carried out by members of the village irrespective of their financial status.

We found no blemish behavior in them rather, we lived in peace.
In happiness and activeness,
in humor and affection.
They sent [me] gifts
continuously and always.
You will find no miser amongst them,
they were no ignoble.
Rich and poor,
each gave according to their means.
The rich gave more,
the poor gave the little [they have].

The poet focuses on the collective praise for the people of Tetemu Zongo. At this point, he decides to acknowledge certain figures in the community. He begins with their leader, ‘Uthmān and attributes to him the seven virtues of endurance (ṣabr), justice (‘adl), goodness (ṣalāḥ), prestige (maqām), sobriety (sukūt), dignity (waqār), and prayerful (ṣalāt). But these virtues are expressed in the superlative (ṣīgha al-tafḍīl) for the purposes of exaggeration. Interestingly though, line 24 of the encomium on ‘Uthmān indicates that it is an elegy (rithāʾ) and as defined by Ibn Sallām, rithāʾ includes praising and extolling the dead.98

98 Ibn Sallām, Tabaqāt, 1:5.
May Allah have mercy on a leader ‘Uthman [who lies] in the grave.
He [was] enduring, he [was] just
[a man of] goodness and prestige.
[He was] sober and calm
he prayed in the dark [at night].

Without any form of transition, the poet mentions a woman for her praise-worthy characteristics. She was called Muwwa and she always provided the poet food. He praises her in arguably the most beautiful lines of the mīmiyya and posits that she is incomparable among her compatriots. He refers to her as bint al-kirām (daughter of noble descent) and compares her to the sun and stars in beauty. He attributes to her the qualities of diyāfa (hospitality) and gives a detailed description of the food she brought him on a daily basis. The treatment Muwwa gave the visitor and the kind of food she provided him reveals her social as well as economic status.
Excellent is Muwwa among women,
verily she is an honorable woman.

She sent me food every day
since I settled [in the village].

From waffles and cake,
then bread in savory
And Rice prepared
with fish and meat.
Continuously and uncountable,

and eggs from ostriches.

Does such a person have an equal,

from behind and front?

You will not see the like of Muwwa,

in wakefulness or in dream.

In fact, she is an exception among all women.

These words

Say them loud without fear,

among crowds of people.

She surpassed her compatriots in kindness,

in gift and in uprightness.

She is like the sun among women folk,

like the stars in a remarkable pattern.

The author then uses another form of transition to move into the last

section of his panegyric to address his audience and ask for their attention. After

that he makes a concluding panegyric by attributing the virtues of karam

(nobility and generosity), dhakāʾ (intelligence), ʿilm (knowledge), ʿadab (well-
natured), and sukūb (denoting abundance) to the people of Tetemu Zongo.
This final section of the madīḥ also represents the concluding part of the narration, the moment of departure. Here the poet narrates yet another eventful occasion where men and women, young and old, rich and poor, even the sick came out to bid him farewell. According to the poet, the only person who did not join the crowd is the imam.
So listen O you people
to what I say with commitment.

People of Zongo are generous,
living in blessedness.

In Afanjī there are brilliant men,
sincere in their homes.

Knowledgeable and disciplined;
pouring like the clouds.

They honored me in their village,
the duration of the month of fasting.

They presented me with gifts,
during the day and at night.

They bade me farewell on the day of my departure,
all but the Imam.

They filled all the roads,
with crowds in huge numbers.

Everyone! None was left
[behind] even the riffraff.

The old and young,
and a boy who was sick.

The rich, the poor,
the visitors, all like twins.
Including Female Muslims,
pious, from noble [homes].
Obedient and repenting,
worshipping in dark.
May our Lord recompense goodness
and a happy ending.
I bid you farewell,
stay in peace, stay safe.

Structural Composition of the *Mīmiyya*

1–6  *Maṭla’*  24–26  Praise of ‘Uthmān
7–8  Stating the *gharaḍ*  27–38  Praise of Muwwa
9–11  Collective praise  39  Speaking to his audience
12–16  Narrating the beginning of his journey  40–44  Collective praise
17–22  His sojourn in the village  46–51  The moment of departure
23  Restating the *gharaḍ*  52–54  Prayer and conclusion
Imitation and Originality in the *Mīmiyya*

The *mīmiyya* follows the bipartite structure of the *qaṣīda*; prelude and praise. The prelude however does not have the pre-Islamic amatory and elegiac motifs.

There is no mention of the poet’s love affair, no mention of the *atlāl* (beloved’s ruins), no mention of his *raḥil* (journey), and no description of the camel. What our poet seeks to do is to use an element of the *nasīb*, the *suʾāl* (question) to implicitly challenge the traditional way of portraying the woman by questioning her emotional engagement and not expressing his own feeling and emotion.

Additionally, unlike the polythematic theme of the *rāʾiyya*, the *mīmiyya* is mono-thematic. The entire poem is devoted to the praise of the people of Tetemu Zongo. It informs us about an aspect of the social life of the people. We see that this is a collective society that is bound by shared values and identities.

The simplicity of the relatively short lines says something about the target group whom the poem is meant to praise. These are villagers majority of whom are probably not well versed in Arabic let alone in poetry and poetics. It is only prudent for the poet to be as simple as he could so that the average Arabic
speaker could understand and even explain to those who do not speak the
language.

The imagery in the mīyya is found in the prelude section of the poem
when the poet talks about the women. He describes them in terms that bring
images of reprehensible characters not worth-loving (ll. 3–4). Also when he
speaks about Muwwa in line 37, he compares her to the sun and moon in beauty
and generosity.

On the other hand, the mīyya contains some aspects of performance
especially when the poet talks about his arrival in Tetemu Zongo and the
welcome he received from the villagers (ll. 12–15). The villagers gathered in
their numbers and they sung the praise of the prophet in welcoming an
important figure in their village. Lines 17, 19–20, 28–36 are filled with
performance and description of the poet's sojourn in the village, including the
generosity of his host. The jesting, the joys, the vitality, the food and meat. Lines
39–54 are about his departure and how the whole village came out to bid him
farewell.
CHAPTER THREE

THE LĀMIYYA: ELEGY FOR AL-ḤĀJJ LABBU.99

Introduction

The study of classical Arabic poetry saw the development of literary theories including a theory of poetic genres in which redactors of the dawāwīn (sing. dīwān – a collection of poetry) classified poems according to genres.100 One of the themes that did not have the consensus of medieval critics regarding its genre classification is rithāʾ (elegy). While some theorists considered it a main theme, others argued that it is a sub-theme of the mādīh (praise poetry). Among those who argued that the rithāʾ is a sub-theme of the mādīh is Qudāma ibn Jaʿfar. In discussing what he called the aqṣām al-maʿānī, he enumerated the themes of poetry (aghrād al-shuʿarāʾ) as praise (mādīh), invective (ḥijāʾ), love poetry (nasīb), elegy (rithāʾ), description (waṣf), and simile (tashbīḥ).101

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99 The Lāmiyya IAS AR/121 written on 8 leaves. The poem is also being translated by John Hanson and Muhammad al-Munir Gibrill, under the title: “Discourses of Muslim Scholars in Colonial Ghana” http://aodl.org/islamicpluralism/goldcoast/.
101 Qudāma, Naqḍ al-Shīʿr, 58.
Death represents the final stage of the individual’s life cycle and the *rithāʾ* is no less important in celebrating the life of the deceased as the *madiḥ* is in praising the living. The poem discussed in this chapter was written in lamentation of the poet’s son al-Ḥājj Labbu. It is composed in the *al-Basīt* meter and rhymes in the letter *lām*. Like most classical poems, the *lāmiyya* opens with *nasīb* followed by the theme of *rithāʾ*.

_Nasīb Prelude in the Rithāʾ_

Despite arguments by scholars such as Ibn Rashīq against beginning the *rithāʾ* with *nasīb*, it was still a widely practiced tradition among classical Arab poets. Consequently, scholars have studied the beginnings of *rithāʾ* and have drawn points of comparison and contrast between the introduction of the *marthiyya* and the elegiac *nasīb* of the polythematic *qasīda*.\(^\text{102}\)

\(^\text{102}\) Hammond, _Beyond Elegy_, 53.
The *nasīḥ* in the *lāmiyya* has both elegiac and amatory motifs similar to that of the polythematic *qaṣīda*. In lines 1A and 2B, the poet expresses deep sorrow and grief at the departure of his beloved and mourns over her deserted encampment. These lines bring images of the pre-Islamic poet watching the slow departure of his beloved until she fades out of his sight. Other words which are imbued with images of classical Arabic elegiac motif are the words *buqʿa* and ʿtalal (deserted campsite of the beloved). The ʿtalal almost immediately brings back images of deserted campsites obliterated by wind and rain and inhabited by other creatures. However, the *buqʿa* and ʿtalal may not just be references to physical places where the beloved once lived, they may also be seen as antitheses. The ʿtalal is the antithesis to the *buqʿa*, replacing sweet memories with sadness and grief. When the pre-Islamic poet and his fellow-travelers came across the aṭlāl, he called on his companions to halt and weep over the memories of his beloved and her deserted home. Line 3B of the *lāmiyya* is somewhat indirect on the aṭlāl motif in that there is, presumably, an indirect plea to weep over the beloved and her deserted camp. Thus, when the news of the beloved’s
departure spread, they became dejected and saddened (wa-‘innahā tarakat akhdānahā hamalā). There is connection between the departure of the beloved and the death of al-Ḥājj Labbu. Both the beloved and the deceased left their loved ones and the effect that their departure had caused is almost similar. It is a feeling of grief because in both instances there is an acceptance that they will not come back.

Another elegiac motif worth looking at is the grief of separation and the sleepless nights. The pre-Islamic poet would stay awake unable to sleep all night long and would embark on a dangerous journey on his camel in pursuit of his beloved.

Between lines 1–5 and 15–27 is an elegy in which the poet mourns the dead. After this, the poet returns to the second part of the nasīb. This section is couched in an amatory style and encoded with pre-Islamic images of celebrating beauty, social standing, and infidelity (l. 16A). It also portrays the woman as niggardly and emotionally disengaged (ll. 17B and 18A). Although less erotic, the nasīb in the lāmiyya is similar to the traditional amatory qaṣīda in which the
woman is portrayed in somewhat explicit sexual ways or in verses less erotic but
which still yield some degree of erotic readings. Traditionally, it is the man who
solicits the woman and she is often depicted as a heroine whose perfection is not
even questioned. She was empowered like a goddess and determined the course
of the relationship. In the panegyric *qasīda*, the poet is most often the victim and
in most cases his love is never returned. Contrary to this, the *lāmiyya* rather has
a fascinating twist. The poet maintains all the motifs noted above: the
empowerment of the woman, her social standing, and lack of emotional
engagement. However, because the *lāmiyya* is not a panegyric *qasīda* and
because one of the functions of the *rithāʾ* is the praise of the dead, the poet takes
his audience back in time to when the deceased was alive. He attributes to him
the qualities of the *mamdūh*: handsomeness, tenderness, and generosity (ll. 19–
20) and shows his social superiority whereby despite all the privileges enjoyed
by the woman, she did not resist his charm and beauty. What we find therefore
is a kind of role reversal where the woman now becomes the victim of love. She
is now emotionally engaged and expresses violent passion and desire toward the man and unlike the pre-Islamic woman, her social standing is no longer relevant.

The poetic persona in the first part of the *nasīb* (ll. 1–5) is stated in the first and third person plural. In line 1, the poet talks about a collective “we” referring to himself and most probably his audience. This however shifts to the third person plural in lines 3B, 4A, and 5A where the poet now becomes the narrator while his audience become active participants. This poetic persona again changes in the second part of the *nasīb* when the third person pronoun becomes a noun. Thus in both lines 16 and 17, the poet uses the words *ḥabīb* (lover), *ʿazīz* (mighty), and *rijāl* (men) in place of the third person pronouns. The implication of this is that the poet reveals the gender and identity of his audience.

مَآ بَـَـَـَـَـاَبَـَـَـَـَـالُ هُـْـْـْـْـنِـْـْـْـْـْاَّرَ نِـْـْـْـْـْاَّرَ عَـَـَـَـَـََـَـَََـََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََََّا

85
What is the case of Hind who left us without strife?

news of her is recited loud and wide.

She left and she became like those who left before [her]

and her home became a deserted campsite.

News of her departure spread widely,

indeed, she left her compatriots dejected.

They were like herds whose ears have heard

the roar of lions neaby.

Her beloveds were awake all night in grief like Nabigha

and saddened like Jacob when he didn’t see [his beloved] child.
There is Hind passing away leaving behind her abode,

after amorous gestures that dazzled mountains.

She is beautiful, flirtatious and cunning,

angry at any lover without reason.

How many powerful men came desiring her?

and found nothing but hatred when they arrived

Nay she was ill-natured who preferred no one,

she drove away men who came to her in haste.

But if she saw al-Hājj Labbu in [his]

youthful garment, an excellent man when he walked with

swag.
[If she saw] his long neck, teeth and smile when
he gently spoke and offered generosity.

She would seek to solicit him quickly without shame,
and she would suddenly become winsome and [would] send servants.

She would say: This man has no equal
verily, I am his companion, truly without delay.

I shall pay him [the] dowry without hesitance,
indeed, this is the husband whom I prefer.

If I marry him I have achieved my aim,
sufficient he a husband besides anyone else.

I [shall] live in his house in a state of satisfaction [with drink and food],
and I shall not lack fashionable garment and kohl.

I [shall] be submissive to him the submission of slaves to their masters,
and I [shall] not disobey his words or deeds.

For he is a progeny of chiefs, diligent, affectionate,
humble among his people without pride nor self-conceit.
The *Rithāʾ* Section of the *Lāmiyya*

Reading the *lāmiyya*, we come to the conclusion that *rithāʾ* like *madiḥ* has other themes which makes it polythematic. Besides lamentation and praise, the *lāmiyya* invites the audience to picture the life of the deceased from his childhood to adulthood. It also allows us to follow the various stages of the mourning process and funeral rites (*janāza*): washing the dead; covering the corpse; funeral procession; and burial. Most importantly is the psycho-social debate of gender stereotyping where women are considered emotional and volatile when confronted with calamities such as death and as al-Ḥūfī remarks, “when struck by a calamity, a woman finds refuge in her tears.”¹⁰³ This propelled the poet to appropriate “masculine and feminine tropes in the mourning process” to reinforce this naturalistic theory.¹⁰⁴

The *rithāʾ* can be divided into three parts. One, praising the virtues of the dead and celebrating his merits. Two, mourning the deceased through the

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¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 48.
various stages of the mourning process. Three, praying for the dead by invoking
God’s mercy and forgiveness.

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**Part One: Praising the Dead**

The poet begins his praise of the dead by referring to his genealogy and nobility.

This has a dual function; as praise (*madḥ*) for the dead, and self-praise (*fākhra*) for
the poet and his tribesmen. After that the poet proceeds to ascribe virtues of
diligence (*ṣuḥṣuḥ*), affection (*ḥādib*), humility (*dhā nājin*), and a lack of self-
conceit (*lā khuyal*). He compares the deceased to the moon for his generosity
and goodness and celebrates his achievements. Al-Ḥājj Labbu as he was
affectionately called died at 32 years but even at this age there are considerable
feats to his name. According to the poet, he attained *manāqib al-ʿarbaʿ* (the four
virtues): knowledge; performing hajj, power, and a good reputation (l. 43). His
ability to actualize these virtues meant he died honorably (*māṭa fī haybatin*)
earning him the respect of his people. The praise of al-Ḥājj Labbu reads as
follows:
His nickname is Labbu, his age is Labbu;\footnote{\(l + b\) has a numerical value of 32 which is the age al-Hājj Labbu died.} would you not wonder how nickname and age correspond?

He is like the moon whose light is completed at night, and he benefit men with his rays when the sun is absent.

He replaced the darkness of that night and took away the burden of grieve and sorrow, imagine the sight.

Praise be to Allah. He acquired prosperity in the world, he died in honor and did not die worthless.

He achieved four virtues in an orderly manner:

knowledge, pilgrimage, power, and good reputation.

Men of knowlege knew him and elevated his place [among them], so may [Allah] the Exalted reward them.
Part Two: Mourning the Dead

The poet begins mourning his son by describing the general atmosphere at the time of receiving the shocking news of the death, inviting the audience to picture the general atmosphere of grief and apprehension. It is a moment of silence which was later transformed into tears. There is a sorrowful acceptance of the inevitability of death and an impassioned desire to be reunited in the hereafter (ll. 6–14). The poet then proceeds to describe the funeral rites (janāza) in accordance with Islamic teachings. First, washing the dead and perfuming. Second, wrapping the dead and carrying him on the bier for burial (ll. 35–38).

The poet in his own wisdom decides to ignore an important aspect of the funeral rite, the prayer that is performed for the dead (ṣalāt al-janāza).

abiyyu baiinka as-sa'raf.
wa la tatiru al-muddun yussihibu idha al-embro
wala bayyini yarhug sunuhatu fi al-siraah ala'la
kufuddi abiyyu ba'ssunub yusamshu il-muslimu
wa ghajal il-qal'as l-ma asyirin hantu jallat
wahbati al-muriz yusmar al-adwaa al-adwaa wa al-muja
wala tazri unna da'ilak ghyiru ba'ka'ima Waghajir b-salak yushamak yu'emu wusila.
And every beloved became silent with sorrow,
and tears did not disobey [its owner] as they flowed.

Some would scream out loud,
[lamenting] the loss of a beloved, like a man enduring the weight [of his loss].

The heart made a vehement sound when it was announced: Hind had left
and the wind blew spreading sorrow and fear.

At that moment you will not find except wailing folks,
and those not wailing their tears transmitted large drops of water.

Women folks were gathered in huge numbers;
they were all saying: We have no direction.

O Hind! O Hind!! When will you return?

The answer: There is no return until [the Day of Judgment].

No doubt! No doubt we are separated.
Alas! A separation that takes men apart.

At that point they said we have no joy,

in this abode indeed, it is puzzling.

You will see them lamenting as if they were drunk,

you would imagine they had all gone mad.

You should have seen the moment when he was wrapped in shrouds,

after the perfume and this was after he was washed.

You should have seen his bier when he was carried to

the grave, in a procession of men who filled the roads.

Before him is a congregated body of men crying of grief,

and behind him is a group of men wailing like bereaved mothers.

In classical Arabic poetry, it is customary for the poet to mention the

event, if any, which led to the death of the deceased. The poet would describe
the death scene and the battle in which the deceased was slayed and would call on his tribesmen to avenge the death of their kinsman. The lāmiyya also does a similar thing. It describes the cause of death including the symptoms and the medications. But as the poet admits, these medications proved futile because “the term of Allah” has come, underlying the poet’s belief in the inevitability of death.

He was afflicted by pemphigus and we didn’t realize its [intensity] until it gashed [his skin] and became worse.

It ravaged his lungs, heart then [his] gut, and [his] liver, his esophagus and kidney.

After that we tried all medicines, everything proved futile because the term [of Allah] had come to pass.

Up unto this point, the poet speaks about a collective mourning, where the general public mourns the loss of al-Ḥājj Labbu. However, from line 57 he
mentions individuals who were bereaved. They include the deceased’s three wives and some of his closest friends. The names of the wives were given in lines 58–60 as Ḥawwāʾ, Ṣafūrāʾ, and Ḥafṣa. These lines apart from mentioning how each of the wives mourned their husband also informs the audience of the marital life of the deceased. That is, he lived a polygamous life. This brings us to the point we raised previously regarding the naturalistic theory of gender where women are considered emotional and volatile when confronted with calamities such as death.106 When the poet talks about the wives of the deceased, he describes them crying and uses different terminologies to this effect. He uses the words: bakat – she cried, damʿuhā - her tears, walwalat – she wailed, ṣawtuhā yaʿlū - her voice was raised, nawḥuhā - her wailing. Also when he spoke about apprehension at the time of death, he uses the feminine pronoun to refer to those who were crying (walā tarā ʿinda dhālika ghayra bākiyatīn – you will not find at that moment except wailing [women]). Those who did not wailing were described using the phrase wa-ghayr bākin (those [men] who did not wail)

106 Hammond, Beyond Elegy, 48.
reinforcing the naturalistic theory and gender stereotype with regards to mourning.

 Truly the people of Ghabräʾ were saddened [by his death] their elder ‘Abdu his body grew lean.

 His wife Ḥawwāʾ – the intelligent one – wept,

 that is Thāghūr crying until her tears poured.

 Likewise, was Ṣafūrāʾ mourning her husband

 and she wailed with tears overflowing.

 Kumāṭū Ḥafṣa was crying loud,

 and no doubt her wailing sounded like a drum.

 All his beloveds were sad especially

 Hāfiẓ Manzo, truly his sorrow was intense.
At that moment you will not find except wailing [women] folks, and those not wailing their tears transmitted large drops of water.

At that moment you will not find but wailing [women] folks, and those men who did not wail their tears poured like rain.

*Ta‘ziya* (condolence) is an important aspect of the *rithāʾ* and a platform to hear other elegiac voices besides the voice of the poet. Beginning in the second century of Islam, letters of condolence became frequent. These letters were addressed to the bereaved family and often written in prose. However, when written in verse, it is virtually indistinguishable from the *rithāʾ*.¹⁰⁷ The poet informs us of letters of condolence that came from different places and in some

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cases, they were accompanied with money. He also mentions names of places who sent delegates to offer their deepest condolences. Unfortunately, we do not know the content of the letters and whether they were in prose or verse. What this tells us however is that the West African region used to be a place of vibrant literary life. And for the first time in just one line (l. 70) the poet refers to his own emotion and affect at the time of death. He described it as jazaʿ (fear and unable to bear the calamity which befell him).

When he died there came from every direction, oral and written messages from noblemen.

Some [of the letters] were accompanied with money meant for prayers, the custom of the land, not to be stingy.

From the forest of Ashanti and from the land of Tuareg;
and from Ghamnāt and Ghambel.

From the rivers of Mesahohe and all the lands which surrounded it

and from Hausaland, Kano, Dawra and Hadeje.

From the land of Katsina, Zakizaki and the land of Kebbi,

the land of Ghobir, and Zarmā, they sent messengers.

Part Three: Prayer and Exhortation

There are two kinds of prayers which are offered by the poet. The first prayer is for the deceased and the second one is for poet and his audience. Lines 71–77 are prayers for the dead for forgiveness for the sins he committed and unlimited grace and mercy in the afterlife. He also prays that he gets a comfortable resting place in his grave and be admitted into paradise in the Judgment Day. On the other hand, lines 87–88 are for the poet and his audience against what he calls mašāʾīl (calamities) of his time which he claims are the result of the moral degradation.
O Lord always pour his grave

with favors the amount that supersedes the [grain of] sand.

Send down [your] mercy on him continuously,

[the amount] that will fill low and highlands.

Make tulips and narcissus grown [on his grave],

and make violets and jasmine grow in abundance [on his grave].

Allow musk to diffuse in his grave whose ambergris is

*qust, ghāniya, and nadd.*

O Merciful Lord have mercy on him, You Who is Eternal and Absolute,
in the ranks of those who died fearlessly.

Admit him into the Garden of Eden without reckon,

Save us from the changes of time You Who is Eternal and Absolute,
indeed, in our time is what bewilders the mind.

O Lord protect us from these calamities O You Who overcomes the arrogant.

Protect us from the evils we committed,
with the [same] protection you gave the prophets and messengers.
Other Motifs in the Rithāʾ

The rithāʾ is not just a moment for the poet to pay his last respect to the memory of the decease but a rare occasion for the living to reflect on the social realities of life. In the lāmiyya the poet uses the occasion to discuss matters of morality. He talks about good and evil, reward and punishment, obedience and transgression, guidance and misguidance, bravery and cowardice. These are topics which are framed on morality and have, to some extent, considered universal values. The poet therefore makes a passionate plea to his audience and cautions them against the calamities that may befall them if societal norms continue to degenerate. These are aphorisms-cum-exhortations and they are framed in both religious and moral terms.

وَنَجْنَا مِنْ صَرْوَفِ الْمَزْحِرِ يَاصْصَمَدْ فَإِنَّ فِي ذَهْرِهِ مَا يَغْلِبُ الْغَفْلَاء
وَيَدْهِشُ السَّمْرَبِ فِيهِ دَهْشَةُ عَظُمَى وَيَمْتَعُ اللُّدْمَ وَالْأَمْغَامَ وَالْأَكْنَالَ
وَكُلُّ مَنْ لاَ يَخْشَى مَتَالَةً وَطَغْسَى وَلَا يَثْبِتُ بَالَى بِسُعْرَةِ الرَّحْمَةِ فَهُمْ غَفِيلُ عَلَى
فَإِنَّ أُهْلَ الْهَوَى نَآلَوْا مَأْرُوبًا فِي زَاهِيَّةٍ مُهْمَّةً الفَضَّلاً
Save us from the changes of time You Who is Eternal and Absolute,

indeed, in our time is what bewilders the mind.

It confounds mankind with the greatest shock,

it prevents sleep, joy, and food.

Whosoever does not fear his desires and transgressed [the bounds of God]

and cared less the rules [set by God] such a person is arrogant.

Verily people with desire have obtained their want,

they live in opulence and they are considered the best.

No wonder! No wonder—that time has change,

people of guidance are today down [at the bottom of] the valley.

Indeed, I fear if we live longer,

that we shall witness the turtle commanding the cat with submission.

Or see the lion running away from the most dreadful cats,

or the he-goat suffers defeat until it wrestles the wolf.
Or even the fowl will not heed to the sound of the eagle, when it sees her, it will say: come and it will answer.

Or we see the hero of every battle being led by the most cowardly horseman, take my word.

Similarly, today are men of peace, they have become base resembling goats.

Structural Composition of the *Lāmiyya*

<table>
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Imitation and Originality in the Lāmiyya

The lāmiyya is no exception to both the rāʾiyya and the mīmiyya in their bipartite structure of prelude and the themes of madīḥ and rithāʾ. The poem begins with nasīb with both amatory and elegiac motifs. Each of these motifs are also connected to the theme of rithāʾ, which is a celebration of the life of the deceased and a lament for his loss. The fascinating thing in the nasīb is when the deceased is transformed into an object of desire for the woman. This is interesting because he is given qualities similar to that the mamdūḥ in panegyric poems. Furthermore, like many classical poems where rithāʾ revolves around the poet’s own feelings and emotions, this is not the case in the lāmiyya. ʿUmar Krachi was interested in talking about other people’s emotion and grief and barely mentioned his own, and how he personally felt.

The imagery in the lāmiyya is in the nasīb section where the poet describes Hind in amatory language, bringing images of beauty and physical attraction (l. 6), and when he compares al-Ḥājj Labbu to the moon (ll. 30–31). On the other hand, lines 6–14, 32–38, 53, 55–59 are verses that speak about the
funeral and the mourning of the bereaved family. Lines 70–80 are prayers and may be accompanied by an action, raising the hands and looking up to the sky.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE SĪNIYYA: HIJĀʾ ON AN INTRUDER

Introduction

Hijāʾ is one of the genres of Arabic poetry used to attack and humiliate opponents. It is often defined as the direct opposite of madiḥ and fakhr. Poetry according to ‘Abd al-Ṣamad ibn al-Muʿadhdhal comprises three words; when one praises, one says: ‘You are’; when one makes hijāʾ, one says: ‘You are not’; and when one laments, one says: ‘You were’. This statement forces us to accept a narrower interpretation of hijāʾ as invective, a type whereby one only intends to humiliate, ridicule and insult. In its broadest sense however, hijāʾ includes other categories (funūn) such as blame (dhamm), reproach (ʿatb), and rebuke

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109 There are two versions of the Sīniyya, Ghana/121/MSX (IAS AR/121). This has three leaves and was owned by Malam Baba b. Muhammad Kabawi, of Asiakwa. The second version IAS AR/137 also has three leaves.


(ta’nib) or even hazl (light joke).\textsuperscript{113} Thus making it more than just the direct opposite of madīh. In light of this, I shall focus on this broader interpretation of hijāʾ in my discussion. This chapter is inspired by Geert Jan van Gelder’s \textit{The Bad and the Ugly: Attitudes Towards Invective Poetry (hijāʾ) in classical Arabic literature}.

In his work van Gelder argued that:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Hijāʾ}, commonly translated as ‘satire’, is hardly sufficient to cover a wide range, from lofty, moralistic and serious to the coarse, amoral, immoral, obscene and flippant; from fun and wit to insipidity and dullness; from objectivity and distance to anger and emotion; from subtlety and obliqueness to bluntness and blatancy.\textsuperscript{114}
\end{quote}

I have decided to use the Arabic term hijāʾ instead of the English translation. For the term hijāʾ encapsulates the object of the poem under discussion more than the English translations of invective and satire which are characterized by insult, abuse, ridicule, and derision.\textsuperscript{115} The aim of the poet as he puts it is to:

\textsuperscript{113} Ibn Rashīq, \textit{al-ʿUmdah}, 1:195.
\textsuperscript{114} Gelder, \textit{The Bad and the Ugly}, 1.
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Webster’s Third New International Dictionary}, s.vv. “invective, satire.”
We composed not to boast or play
but we intended it as a gratitude and to establish
[the truth].

The S̱i̱niyya and the Story behind its Composition

It is important to note that a hijāʾ poem alone is not enough to decide its nature. Each hijāʾ has a history behind it. It is either triggered by an individual or group act or words. Therefore, the relationship between the poet and the object of the hijāʾ must be established as well as the intention of the poet.116 Hence, there are at least two parties involved; the ḥājī (the one making the hijāʾ) and mahjuww (the object of hijāʾ). The ḥājī most often than not responds to what he deemed as a vice or shortcoming of a particular group of people or an individual toward him or his tribe. What started as a tribal hijāʾ in which the whole tribe was collectively held responsible for the action or inaction of its members later became personal, on an individual level. The sīniyya is an example of individual

116 Gelder, The Bad and the Ugly, 6.
In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. May Allah send His blessings on the Prophet, his household, his companions and salute him with all respect. What happened was as we were with a large number of students, an evil one amongst mankind intruded upon us at a time when a student was reading, this intruder began to listen. And when he finished reading he praised Allah and I responded: *al-ḥamdu li-llāhi taʿālā* (praise be to Almighty Allah). At this point, the intruder objected to us saying this is *ḥarām* (unlawful), forbidden in Islam and whoever makes
such an expression deserves severe condemnation (yu‘azzar ta‘zīran shadīdan). He was asked why. He replied: lām al-jalāla is always maqṣūra (shortened), no one elongates (yamudduhā) except a misguided innovator (ḍāllun mubtadi‘un). He was asked: where did this come from and since when? He replied: from their shaykh who appeared in this era to correct what has gone wrong in the religion. He was asked: who is this scholar of yours and where did he come from? He answered: he is from Hausaland; Allah has opened his vision in order to lead people to the right path. He was asked: who is he? What is his name? Which Hausa village did he come from? Who was his shaykh? Which Hausa tribe did he come from? But we did not get a satisfying answer nor a clear proof. Rather, the answers he gave were futile and weak. At this point, we made an example out of him, and we criticized and shamed him. And after some time, we used these lines (sīniyyāt; rhyming in the Arabic letter sīn) as hijāʾ. It became the popular poem of the day. Praise God. Here is the hijāʾ.

This introduction raises many points of interest about polemics in that particular society. Here, it is relevant to understand the actions of the unnamed person and his intention in order to appreciate the intention of the story. Umar Muhammad talked about what he called “the literacy challenge”, a phenomenon where the knowledge of a scholar is put to the test with the intention to humiliate.

Scholars were highly revered in West African societies and thus became objects of pride and envy. The implication of this is that the knowledge of an individual
scholar serves as a tool to safeguard his acquired status and protect himself from enemies.\textsuperscript{117}

Another interesting thing is the claim that the sīniyya is a qaṣīda ṭannāna (a widely circulated poem). It is known that many hijāʾ poems had bigger audiences and sometimes a line in a particular poem became so popular that it was recited by children on the street. A line by Jarīr was said to have been recited by water carriers and slave girls.\textsuperscript{118} There were also individuals who paid money to prevent poets from making obscene hijāʾ on them.\textsuperscript{119} Inasmuch as the sīniyya is written in a simple language, we are still unable to assess the extent of its circulation. One possible guess is that the hijāʾ was popular among students

\textsuperscript{117} Muhammed, “Alhaj Umar Abubakar Krachie,” 53–54.

\textsuperscript{118} والLEAN: إذا تخرج للفرى حك استى وتمثل الأمثال

The Taghlibite, saying ‘Ahem!’ while expecting hospitality, scratches his arse and quotes proverbs. (Translated by van Gelder).

See: Al-Marzubānī, al-Muwashāḥ (Cairo: Dār Nahḍa Miṣr, 1965), 131. Also: Ibn Rashīq, al-ʿUmdah, 2:884. According to Ibn Rashīq, al-Akhtal said to Farazdaq: “I am better than Jarīr in poetry …. I am not sure anyone had composed a hijāʾ like mine [al-Qawm izā Istanbahā al-ʿAdyāfu Kalbuhumū Qālū li-ʿUmmihūhū: Būlī alā al-Nār]. But it was only transmitted by connoisseurs of poetry while Jarir’s line (quoted in footnote above) was recited by every water carrier and slave girl.

\textsuperscript{119} Gelder, The Bad and the Ugly, 38.
and in circles of knowledge, since knowledge of poetry was the hallmark of
scholarship in West Africa and limited to men of letters.\textsuperscript{120}

**Opening Lines of the Sīniyya**

The combination of *nasīb* and *hijāʾ* was common in pre-Islamic and Islamic-era
poetry and became rare over time when *hijāʾ* poems were written in short
epigrams or in long monothematic poems.\textsuperscript{121} Looking at the structure of the
poem on page 124, we notice that the *sīniyya* is an example of a monothematic
*hijāʾ* poem with motifs ranging from mild criticism, reproach, boastfulness, and
exaggerated polemics. The language of the *sīniyya* is civil and within ethical
limits.\textsuperscript{122} Although the idea that a particular poem is less obscene in its language
is somewhat subjective. One way to measure this is through the *hijāʾ*’s effect on


\textsuperscript{122} Here I am referring to the opinion by some scholars who argue that *hijāʾ* should be limited to behavioral and related traits and should not include the individual’s physical disposition. See: Ibn Rashīq, *al-ʿUmduḥ*, 1:874.
or the subsequent reaction from the victim. Our reactions to events or words is
the result of our interpretation of those events and not the words or events
themselves. Unfortunately, we are unable to measure the effect of the *hijāʾ* on
the victim since we are told he was a *wāghil* (intruder) meaning he was not a
member of the society or the *ḥalaqa* (circle of students) which the poet was
teaching.

The *hijāʾ* opens in a collective mode using the third person plural,
emphasizing collectivism in classical Arabic *hijāʾ* such that a whole tribe is
lampooned for the behavior of one of its members. The poet makes an unspecific
and a general *hijāʾ* without mentioning the person’s name nor his tribe, making
his identity known only to the people around at that time.
By the Lord of creation listen O my people,

for in our time are evil men.

They came and went round with distorted speeches

and all their words are false in spite of how they may sound.

They attacked a school with ignorance upon ignorance,

and all they falsified about us became vain.

Saying we erred in the Name of the Most-High,

how miserable is their offense how gravely miserable?

They knew not morphology how then,

with the knowledge of antonomasia, they became water buffaloes.

There came one amongst them with his deceit,

wanting to test and to spy on us.

We said to him: You are treacherous don’t come closer,

we enticed him not nor socialized with him.

Alleging that there was an intelligent scholar amongst them,
who says: No elongation in the Name of Allah. Doing so is a dubious act.

We said: You lied! You lied!! indeed you lied!!!

and what you said may resemble a nightmare.

*Hijā’ and its Various Components*

The aim of the opening lines is not to narrate what happened but also to justify the *hijā’* which is to be expected. Even so, the poet seeks to humiliate and above all, question the credibility of the unnamed victim through his use of phrases and words such as *aqwāl muḥarrafā* (false speeches), *ifk* (slander), *safāḥ* (stupidity), *khidʿa* (deception), *khattār* (perfidious or traitor), *kadhabta* (you lied).

Logically, the story behind the *ṣīniyya* does not warrant the use of obscene and foul-language since the intention of the unnamed victim was to test his knowledge and to humiliate him, it was only appropriate for the poet to use words of similar signification for the same purpose.
By his honor, whoever came to humiliate us
even if he came from a distance [such as] Ṭūs and Tūs.
He will be put to shame and be rage by his display of stupidity,
a laughing stock among men of God.
We pay no attention to the sayings of the atheist
and their speech resembled jingling bells.
We will not obey anyone who deviated from the path
even if he came riding on elephants and rhinoceroses.

Another method employed by the poet in his attempt to humiliate his
victim is the use of advice in a ridiculing manner, what I call “advice-cum-
mockery.” He advises his victim to read wide and makes suggestions that his
victim’s behavior is as a result of his lack of knowledge of ancient books.
Verily science has foundation and a place of inquiry, so return to your hut and search into the papyrus.

Be a reader of the books of men of truth, don’t be lazy.

Maybe your eyes did not look into books.

You will not find [anyone] who believes the word of your teacher except those who are the mob and mosquito.

Did you look at the books of those who had passed away?

Did you look into the Talmud and Gospel commentary?

Use your mind [to realize that] truth is absolute, and don’t be a ghafus among the people of religion.

Fakhr (boastfulness) is another common feature in classical hijāʾ poetry and is considered a substitute for hijāʾ.123 The sīḥiya contains aspect of fakhr but unlike the classical tribal fakhr, the fakhr in the sīḥiya is individual. It is when the poet boasts about himself and his teacher from whom he learnt so much.

123 Gelder, The Bad and the Ugly, 16.
Ironically though, the poet claims that what he did was not fakhr but a form of gratitude [to his teacher?]. This is less convincing especially if we juxtapose this with his own attempt at attacking and discrediting his victim’s teacher. Here are instances in the sīniyya where the poet uses fakhr.

The ignoble will not become strong amongst us and indeed, we have the logic to differentiate between human and a calf.
Indeed, our teacher ʿUthman taught us

the difference between a buffalo and a truffle.

By his honor, whoever came to humiliate us

even if he came from a distance [such as] Ṭūs and Tūs.

He will be put to shame and be rage by his display of stupidity,

a laughing stock among men of God.

We pay no attention to the sayings of the atheist

and their speech resembled jingling bells.

We will not obey anyone who deviated from the path

even if he came riding on elephants and rhinoceros.

Even if he brought knowledge equal to Spencer,

the equivalent of Balʿām or Satan, the devil.

They cast their ropes and cast their sticks. Certainly!

As if in our hands is the stick of Moses

Whoever comes to us with his plots and ploys,

even if they came wearing a crown or a burnoose.

They will be disappointed with their intention to embarrass us,

by what we learnt from ʿUthmān. Certainly!

We composed not to boast or play

but we intended it as a gratitude and to establish [the truth].
Another component of the *hijāʾ* is *mubālagha* (hyperbole). It is commonplace in *hijāʾ* poetry especially in obscenities because the object of *hijāʾ* is to humiliate the victim as well as to convince the public, not of the truth of the accusations, but of the humiliating potential of the poem and once the public is convinced of that, the victim is humiliated, at least as long as he does not retaliate. Though, our poet does not make exaggerated obscene accusations and rather makes exaggerated allusions, these should not be considered as true either. In defending his pronunciation of *al-ḥamdu li-llāhi taʿālā*, he alludes that earlier scholars such as Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates pronounced the phrase in the same way he did. This is nothing more than an exaggerated polemics.

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124 Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly*, 33.
The Name of the Most-High indeed, its elongation is prevalent among the public, from Tūlā to Sousse.

Also the Ṭagharghar and the Chinese, they all elongated its pronunciation and rebuked its shortening.

The elongation of the Name of the Most-High has engulfed every country, land and sea, from London to Paris.

People of this region elongated it without difference, from Qambalū it run to Hausaland.

Indeed, early philosophers also pronounced it [similar] to the elongation of Aristotle and Socrates.

Aristotle and Plato, then Avicenna as well as Ptolemy.

They all pronounced with elongation, what a surprise! for a Muslim who has become deceptive and sinful.

Take this [poem] to refute the sayings of the foolish whose speech is unintelligible.
Structural Composition of the Sīniyya

1–4 Narrating the story behind the hijāʾ  15–24 Hijāʾ
5  Hijāʾ  25 The aim of the hijāʾ
6–9 Continuation of the story  26–34 Polemics
10–14 Advice-cum-sarcasm (sukhriyy)
CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis is to look at the concept of imitation and originality in four poems by ʿUmar Krachi. My discussion of these poems was based on the following:

1. Structure: We were able to show how ʿUmar Krachi copied the classical Arabic structure in his poems. In the ṭāʾīyya, mīmiyya, and lāmiyya we saw how he used the bipartite structure of the nasīb/ghazal and the themes of mādiḥ and rithāʾ. In the sīniyya we realized that he did not follow this structural convention.

2. Theme: The most prominent themes in classical Arabic poetry are mādiḥ, hijāʾ, and rithāʾ. ʿUmar Krachi was able to explore these themes in his poems. In each of these the poet gave a social commentary of events and talked about matters relevant to his society. In doing so he did not necessarily use classical tropes and topoi but contextualized these themes.

This is where the concept of originality comes in. ʿUmar Krachi was influenced by social, political, and religious factors in his time. He was a social
commentator who used poetic style in his commentaries, and these poems are useful sources for our understanding of the history of that particular society.

This may explain the style of the poet and the choice of his subjects. He was not concerned about embellishment as much as he was concerned about the message of his poems.
APPENDIX A: CRITICAL EDITION OF TEXTS

The Rāʾīyya

MSS: Ghana/16.13/MSX (رمز ج), IAS AR/127 (رمز ب), and IAS AR/239 (رمز ج)

Subject: Literature: poetry: praise: Sallaw

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>ُبِشَّرْتُكَ أَنَّك بِمَشِيَّر ممَّنٍ عِندَ هُبَّةٍ بِصِيِّرُ</th>
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<tr>
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<td>ِوَمَمَّن سُعْيٍ لَّيْمِي وَدَعَدٍ وَممَّن لَّمْ يَبْتَنِي مُبْتَنِر</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>ِوَمَمَّن سُعْيٍ وَلِيَّةٍ وَممَّن كَلِهٍ كَلِهٍ سَيَفَرَر</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ُوَذَٰلِكَ لِهِ يَرِنِي قَلَامٍ دَبْلَهُنَّ سَيَفَرَر</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ِسَجَّعَةٌ عَنْ غَصْـٰبِهَا لَا تَطْبِـرُ</td>
<td>126</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>ْوَعَوْدُهُنَّ حَزُورٌ 127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ِسَّلَبَةٌ أَنَّكَ خَلْيٍ 128 وَصَنَعَارٌ عِنْدِي خَرِيشُرُ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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125 في أ: من هذ هد يبصير.
126 في أ: ورق.
127 في ب و ج: خزورة.
128 في أ: لقلي.  

127
في أ: تركتي.
129 في أ: تواشي السحور.
وفي رقم 11 في أ جاء بيت: "هصار يطابهن حتى تلوالي النهر" وهذا خطأ.
130 في أ: يبنو.
131 في أ: تلواني.
132 في أ: يبنو.
133 في أ: يبنو.
134 في أ: يبنو.
135 في أ: يبنو.

اللفاء غير واضح. كلمة (بئيل) هي أقرب لمعنى البيت.
فَذَٰلِكَ صَنُّوْلَا أَمِينُ ١٩
غَضِينَ فَنَّفَرُ مَشَىٰهُؤُرُ
٢٠ خَفِيفَّاً أَهْلَ ٌكَمْ شَأْنَلُو ْبُوُزِّيٌّ تَكُورُوْغُٰنَ
٢١ الخَضَاجُ بَبَارَكَ فِيٌّ الخَضَاجِ دَكُّوا أَمِينُٰٰ
٢٢ وَمَسَّهُ رَأْسُ حُسَنَيٌّ ضَمَّهُ أَظُهَرُوْهُ
٢٣ فَقَالَ بَبَارَكُ لَبَأْرُكُ لَنَأْ هُمْ دَجِيٌّ ضَلَٰلٌ
٢٤ بَنِلَ كُلِّكُيٌّ قَضَٰلَ أَمِينُ وَشَهِيدُ بَزُمُّا ظَهِيٌّ ضَرُّ
٢٥ وَكَلِهَ مُعَظُّمُ عَظُمَّ مُسْتَمَّةٍ لَّا حَيَّانُ لَا تَصِبِّبُ
٢٦ هُمُّدَا عَطِيَّتُهُ الْأَلَّهُ سَهْيَانُ إِلَى الْوَاهِبُ بَلْ غَرَّ كُمُّ
٢٧ سَبِّ بَخَانَةٍ وَتَعِمُّ النَّفَّالِ الْوَاهِبُ بَلْ غَرَّ كُمُّ
٢٨ أَعَطِيَّتُهَا مَعَافِقُ هُمُّدَا يَبْنِيَ أَيْهَا أَيْهَا الْمَفْقُوزُ
٢٩ أَعَطِيَّتُهَا عِلْمًا وَجِلْمًا فَإِنَّهَا عُيُّنَتْ عَيْنَٰسُ جُورُٰٰ
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١٣٧ في ج: العينسُ جُورُٰٰ.
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فإنما يقولون، فإنهم أغمار.

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أو قيَّلُ هُمُّذَا زِكَّـيْرُ فُؤُّلُوا زِكَّـيْرُ طَهَرُورُ

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143 في: أي هذ.

144 في: أي يتلالها.
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149 في: أ أو ب: توبر

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أبياتهن نادمين نذاما لآذانك
The Mīmiyya

MS: Ghana/16.6/MSX

Subject: Literature: poetry: praise: people of Tetemu zongo

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. صلى الله على مَنْ لا يَنبي بعْجُدَة وآله وأصْحَابه وسَلَمَ تشليماً

من الرمل

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وْمَا دِيهِي دُو نَّصْبِهِم
وجَنَّبَ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفْ عَلَيْهِم
غُلَفْنُان فِي الرَّجُلِينِ
ذِو صُصْبِرْهُ هُو عَدْنُون
وَصَّلَلْهُ وَقْتِهِ
وَصَّلَلْهُ فِي الظِّلَّةِ
إِنَّهَا بِبِنْسَةِ الكَبَارِز
نَغْمَ مُـقَوَّمَ فِي الْفَسْاء
مَـدْدُ نَزْلَتْ بِالْطَّعَامِ
أَرْسَالُهُ يُكَلِّي نَسْئِم
مَـنْ رُقَاقُ نَـمْ كَعَايَةٍ
مَـمْعَ خَبْيَةَ وَالْخَنْسَمْ
وَزْرُوْنِ مَطْبُوحٍ
31 ذا مــــرارة لا يُعـد
32 هــل لـهـذا مـن شـبيـه
33 لا تـزى مـثـالاً لـمـعـور
34 بـن إـناث الـَّدْـهْـر كـلا
35 قـلـة جـهـراً دـون وجـيل
36 فاـقت الاقـرـان فـضـلاً
37 هـي كـشتـمـس في الـبـنـسـاء
38 بنـت [.....] مـن نـسـاء
39 فاـستمـعوا يـنـا هـؤـلأـه
40 مـما أفـقـرـون بـالنـتراز
41 مـما أـكنـون فـسـي الـبـغـماـم
42 فـي أفـقـرـن أذـكـيـسـاء
43 نـصـلـهـا فـسـي الـبـغـماـم
44 عـلـمــها أدـبـيـسـاء

205 في الأصل: مرار.
206 في الأصل: الحياة.
207 الكلمة ليست واضحة.
208 في الأصل: لعلم.
국

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في الأصل: الإمام
في الأصل: ملأ
الفخر: العظيم القدير. المحيط: 456:3.
The Lāmiyya

MS: IAS AR/121

Subject: Literature: Poetry: Eulogy: al-Hajj Labbu

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. صلى الله على سيدنا محمد واله وصلى وسلام

من البسيط

1. مغالي صديق آت غنى يغني قليا وصادٍ أنباءها ينفي ما وملأ

2. حازرت وصياً كما صقرُ الذين خلوا وغُدَّادها يعشقْ معهودة طلولا

3. وشغَّ مأشاغ من أنباء هجرتها وإنها تراكبت الحدادها فملأ

4. كأنهم أغلقهم الخصي قد سمعت أذنها من هزار الشتر وزجَّلا

5. وبات أخبرها في الليل ذا غابته 212 وحُزَّن يغفوهم إذ ما لم ير السحلا

6. وصار كَلَّ حبيب ساكناً أسففاً ولا تزرى الدهم يغصيهم إذا الهُملا

7. والطيب يزفع صوئتا في الصراخ على ققد الخبيب صنيعو يحمل السقلا

8. وجلجل القلب لما قفوا هند جالته وحَدَّت السحراي يسرُ الغنم والمؤجلا

9. ولا تزرى كنَدَت ذلك غيّر باكيَّة وغيّر ناكي يختل دمعة وببلا 216

10. جمع النساء كثيير دون معاً عديد فكأنه من يقولن ماماً للبضلا

An infant that is an object of of love to his parents. Originally the offspring of the sheep or goat. (Lane, 1325).

خان: الصاحب. قاموس المعجم 2:25.

212 في الأصل، الليل.

213 يقل في المحسن: ليلة دغيّة. ليلة اللهم والأرق.

214 السخنة: ولد شاة.


216 المهدي: المطر الشديد الضخم القطر. المعجم 4:567.
يا وَاهِنُدْ نِيَا هَنَذَ مَا يُؤِمُ الْرُّجُوعُ أَنَا لَسَـٰـيْـنُ حَـٰـٓـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰ~

الخليل: الحج. المحيط 2:11.

الخليل: النحل. المحيط 2:744.

النحل: الطير. المحيط 2:370.

النحل: الرفعة. المحيط 2:11.

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لأنّها نجّل قَرْر صُحْصُح حَدِيدًا ذَّا تَمِّج في الْقُوَّم لَفْخُوزَ وَلَا خُلْوًا
كَلَّا وَلَا ذَا تَوَقُّى فِي الشُّبَاب كَمَا قَضَى بِهِ رَبُّنا الْمُرْحَمْ جَنُّ عَلَى
قَلَّة لُبِّ سَنَّة لُبّ فَاغْجِبْ تَطَابِقُ اللَّيْلَة وَالْأَنفُوْمَ يَنْصُرْجَالآ
كَانَّهُ الْمُنْبَدِرُ يَنْصُرُ الْمُنْبَدِرُ لَيْلَةٌ وَيَنْصُرُ النَّاسِ فِي صَنْوَاٰء إِذَا أَفَلَاء
نَابِتُ دَيْنِي أُحِي ذَلِكَ الْلَّيْلَ وَاتْبَعُتُ تَكَافُ أَفْغَمْ وَالْحُبُّان خُذِّمْ مَثَالًا
مَاتُ الْقَتَّالِ إِنْ أَجْرِ اللهِ قَدْ تَزَلُّا
وَلَوْ أَنْ تَزَى جَنِين ذَالِكَ غَيْرُ باَكِيَةٌ
وَالْبَعْضِ يَسْقُطُ كَالْإِنسَانِ لَا يَذْرِي
مَا ذَا يَقْبُولُ وَيَنْذِدُ ذَلِكَ المَرْجَالا
وَلَا تَزَى جَنِين لَفْعَ بَلْلَفْقِ بَأَفَقِ مَنْ بَغَدَ الْبُخُور وَذَا مَنْ بَغَدَ أَن غَسَلًا
أُوْلِي لِلْكَهْرَت فِي نَطَّاقٍ إِذْ حَمِّلَهُ إِلَى بَنِيْتَ الْبَشْر بِجَمْعٍ يَهْلُكُ اَلْمُسَبِّبًا
أَمَامَهُ زُمْمَرَةٌ يَزَكُّونَ مَنْ أَسْفَنَ وَخَلفَةٌ زُمْمَرَةٌ يَزَكُّونَ كَالْقَلَّا
وَجَنِين أَيْبُوا كَأَنْهُمْ سُمِّقَوا فَفِي مَسْقِيَّهِم مَسْقِيَّةٌ أَلْفُقَلَلا
لْوَلَّكَ الَّذِينَ أَنَّ الأَمْرَ مُخْتَلِجٌ وَهَذِهِ السَّدَار لَيَسْتَنْثِرُ دَارُ مَنْ نَحْلًا

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221 أَفْلَ: غَابٌ. الْمُحيِّط 1:161.
222 الإِكْسَالِ: الْيَلِّ.
223 الْبَيْجُور: الْقُلُوم.
224 ذَيَلَكَ: فِرْقٌ. الْمُحيِّط 2:671.
226 ذَلِكَ: الْضَّيِّقِ. الْمُحيِّط 2:239.

هَذَا بِتَبَيِّنَتْ بَيْنِيْنِ يَنْحَبُطُ كَالْقَلَّا وَلَكَ الْاَنْضُرُ وَيَنْبُدُ ذَلِكَ الْرُّجَالَا وَلَا تَزَى جَنِين لَفْعَ بَلْلَفْقِ بَأَفَقِ مَنْ بَغَدَ الْبُخُور وَذَا مَنْ بَغَدَ أَن غَسَلًا أَوْ لَوْ أَنْ تَزَى جَنِين لَفْعَ بَلْلَفْقِ بَأَفَقِ مَنْ بَغَدَ الْبُخُور وَذَا مَنْ بَغَدَ أَن غَسَلًا
227 الْلَّلَكِ: الْهَلَاكِ. وَفَقَدْنَا الْحَبِّ الْوَلَدِ. الْمُحيِّط 1:413.
شكرت أخبارتي كلاً بما سنغوا في ذلك إن مزأة كلاً و إن رجز
الله نل السعد في السدتينا قدمات في هيئة ولم يسحت بطلا
حاز المناقب أربغة على نسيجي علمها و حجها و سلطنتها و حسنت خيلا
أهل المعرف عرفوه وقد رفعوا مقامه فجزاه ذو الولى بلالا
أمسا الأزائل والغوغاء أنهم برونة خجراً يرمى بيه الحجلا
ياوتيت لا تسبواو عند مائشية نتبتا و قيبا و ترسوا و ضرب كلا
والدهب والزورق والمرجان لا تغسل عند الذواب يعوض وتروع خيرا
أو مثلا جمال وزود حب يستغشها وزود و تسغب في القذرات خدما مثلا
وهكذا الناس منهم من يلي علما وأهمل خبير يقين منهم الغملا
و المبغض عند ذوي شار و يشببهم ليأكل البقال أو كي يفعل الجزلا
داه الفقاعة أصاب يثب على قدر و نخن لا ينذري حتى فرز و غلاء
يلسن رنينه و القلب تتم معى و جرح الكبد والبلغان تتم كلا
من يغذ ذاك فعلنا كلاً أديبة لم نجد شقينا لأن أجل قد ح فلا
وجينما مات جُنُّ النَّاس قد جُرِّغَوا، لأنّهُ مَـدَد سَمِعت قَدِمُّها مَـا بَخَـالَ.

بن جُنُّةِ الجَفَّلِي مِنْ غَيْبَةٍ ما التَّقَرَّ، بِذَاكَ يَوْصِفَ إِلَّا مَـنْ طَغَى وَقَـالَ.

لَمْ يَـكُونَ ذَوَقُ وَمَكْبَىٰ وَضَـيْقَبُ الأزَغَـن وَلُوْلُوا وَجَـتَ.

حقًا فَنُبِّئُوا غَيْبَةٍ كَلِهَـمُ أَسْـفَوْا كَبِيرَـهُمْ عَيْـنُ سُـدُّ حَتَّى جَسَـمُهُ نَحْـلاٰ.

يَـتَّكَذِّبُوا حتَّى دَمَـغْهُما هَمَـلاٰ.

كُـذَا صَـنُّفَ اثْـبَأ كَبِيّـهِ زُوجَهُـا رَغْـمَـا وَلَوْلُوَتْ عَيْـنُ دَابِـل غَيْـرَةً هَـطْلاٰ.

كُـمْأَءُو خُلْصَةُ ثَأَيُّهُـا صُـنُّفَهَا يَـعْـنَوْا وَنَوْـحُهَا دَوْنَ شَأْـكَ يُقَـهِّمُهُـا الطَّـبِّـلاٰ.

أخِبََّبَـةُ كَـلِهَـم زَخْـنُوا وَلَا بَـيْـٰضُـا كَـلِهَـم مَـسْـرَفْـتَـلاَ وَلَا دَـغْـلُ حَـنَّ الْخَيَاةَ وَبَـعْدُ الْمَـؤْـتَ لَا غَـوَّـلاٰ.

بَـن وَهَّـا نَـمْـسَعْ مــسْـرَفَـتَـلاَ وَلَا دَـغْـلُ حَـنَّ الْخَيَاةَ وَبَـعْدُ الْمَـؤْـتَ لَا غَـوَّـلاٰ.

لَـمْـا تَـوَقَّـي أَتَّنَى مــنْ كَـلِهَـم نَـاجِيَـةِ رَسُـتِا وَتَـحْـسَـارَـز مــنْ النَّـبِيَـلاٰ.

وَلَـبَـغُضُ مـْـقُوـرُتَـةً بـالْمَـال مــنْ النَّـبِيَـلاٰ مــنْ أَرَضٍ غَـمْـ نَـتَـيْ أو غَـنِـبَـل حَـذْـ وَفَـلاٰ.

مــنْ غَـيْـل شَـنَّتَيْ وَمــنْ أَرَضٍ الغَـوْـرَـق بـالْمَـال مــنْ أَرَضٍ شَـنَّتَيْ أو غَـنِـبَـل حَـذْـ وَفَـلاٰ.

مــنْ بَـخَـر مـْـلِـسـّـ وَمـْـقَـحـوْلَـةٍ كُـثَـعَا مــنْ أَرَضٍ فَوْـسَـا كَـلَـفَـوا ذَرَأ حــدِـيْـجٍ حَـذُـلاٰ.

مــنْ أَرَضٍ كَـثُـيْـرَةٍ زُكُـزُكَ وَأَرَضٍ كِـبْـرَ وَأَرَضٍ غَـوْـرَ بَـوْرَـ وَزَـرَـمْـا أَرَسَـلُوا رَـسُـلاٰ.
لذلك لما قضى مازاغى خَرَّعَ

وأرخمخ غيبرذ يَا مَنْ لا شريك أَنْ يُؤْتِيَ النَّزْرَ منْ الرَّحْمَاتِ دُمَتْهَا

وأسْكَبَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ الرَّحْمَاتِ دُمَتْهَا ما يُمَلَّوَ النَّزْرُ مِنْهُ السَّهْلَ والجَبَلَّا

وأردَّتْ عَلَيْهِ تَزَايقٌ وَأَنْجُسُهَا بْنَقْطٍ وَغَانيَةٍ بَنْذَّةٌ شَيْدَا حَالًا

يَفْسُخُ فِي قَبْرِهِ مَسْكٌ وَعَلَّبَ هُا فَسَطَتْ وَغَانِيَةَ بَنْذَّةٌ شَيْدَا حَالًا

واَرَحَمْهُ يَا مَنْ هُوَ الرَّحْمَانُ يُصَامَدُ بِحَقَّ صَنَحَبِ الْدُّهْنَى بِشَوْرُوا القَلْثَا

وِدْخَلْتُ الْجَنَّاتَ عَدْنَى دُونَ مَخْسَمَةٍ وَأَدْخَلْتُ دَارَ الْمَسْلَمِ يُبَاسَلَّمُ بِهَا

وَنَجَنَّا مِنْ صَزَورِ الْقَدْرِ يَا صَامِدُ فَإِنَّ فِيْ ذَهْرِنَا مَا يَغْلَبُ العَفَقَلا

وَيَبْدِهِلَ النَّمَرُدُ فِيهِ دَهَشَةً عَظِيمَةً وَيُنْسَغَ النَّجَسُ وَالْأَلْغَامَ وَالأَكْبَلا

وَكُلُّ مِنْهُمْ لا يَخُفُّ مَثَلَّةٍ وَطَغَى وَلَا يُبْنِيَّانِي بِسَأَلِرُ اللهُ فَهُمْ وَعَلا

فَإِنَّ أَهْلَ الْيَوْمِ يُنَبِّئُونَ مَعْظُومِهِمُ فَإِنْ بَلَدُ فِيْ رَفَاهِيَةٍ هُمْ آفَادُوا

لا غَرَّوْا لا غَرَّوْاَ أَنْ أَشْدَرُ أنْ تَكُنْنَا أَهْلَ الْهَدَايَيْنِ شَيْوُمُ فِي وَإِنْ قَدْ أَنْسَفْلا

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إِنَّكَ أَخَافُتْ إِذَا طَلَّ اللَّهُ الْحَيَاةَ بِنَّا بَـٰـٰـٰـٰٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰـٰ~

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The Sīniyya

MSS: IAS AR/121 (رمز د) and IAS AR/137 (رمز ق)
فلَّالْهُ أَنتِ خَتَامُ الْكِتَابِ وَلَمْ تَذَٰلِ مَّرْضًا وَلَمْ نَزََّلْنَاهُ إِلَّآ فَرْبًا وَتَأَيِّيسًا

8

بَرْعَمْهُ أَنَّ فِيهِمْ عَالِمًا فَقْطًا يَقُولُ لَا مَسَّهُ فَقِيْهُ اللَّهُ تَقَلَّبَـي

9

فَلَّا كَذِبْتُ كَذِبْتُ بَنَّا كَذُّبَتِ أَهْلَ الْحَقِّ وَقَدْ يَسِتَهْلُكَ يَا قَوْلُهُ

10

إِنَّ الغَلَامَ وَهُمْ أَصْنَلُونَ وَمَيْتَةٌ قَارَدُونَ إِلَىٰ كَوْحَاتٍ وَافْتَتُنَّ قَرَاطِيسًا

11

كَنَّ طَالِعًا كَذَّبُ أَهْلَ الْحَقِّ لَا تَكُونُ أَهْلُ الْحَقِّ يَعْنِيكَ لَمْ تَظُنْ عِزِّيْزًا

12

وَلَنَّ شَرِى مِنْ يَقُولُ قَوْلًا عَالِمًا مِنْ أَنْفَسِي فِي عَزَّيْزًا وَنَافْسُوـا

13

وَهَلْ نَظَرْتٌ إِلَىٰ كَذِبِّي الَّذِينَ مَضَنُوْا وَهُمْ نَطَالُ تَلَّمُّدُونَا وَبَرَنَاسَا

14

فَالْحَيَّزَ يُرِيَّكَ أَنَّ الْحَقَّ خَالِسًا وَلَا تَكُنْ بَنِينَ أَهْلَ الْحَقِّ غَرَّوْنَا

15

يَسِتَهْلُكَ يَا قَوْلُهُ إِنَّا نَقُلْ عَلَيْكَ لَمْ تَعْلَمْ إِنَّ اسْتِبْنَ ابْنَتُكُنا وَبَالَوْسُنا

16

فَإِنَّ أَسْتِبَنَ ابْنَتُكُنا عَلَّمُنَا فَرْقًا إِذَا قَيْلُ جَامِعَهُ وَجَامِعُهَا

17

بَجَاهِهُ مَنْ أَتَى كَيْسًا يَفْضِحُهَا وَلَوْ أَتَى مِنْ بَعْدِ طَوْسِ أَوْثُوسَا

18

يَبْحِرُ بَخْزٌ وَغَليظٌ مِنْ غَيْبَانِهِ أَضْحَكَةٌ بَنِينَ أَهْلِ الْحَقِّ إِكِيسَا

19

أَتَمَّنَّى مَثَالَ مَنْ زَيْمِقًا فُصْحِيْتُ فَسِبْهَتُ قَوْلُهُمْ هَٰذَا نَوَافِيَـهُمَا

20

وَلَا نَطْلِغُ الَّذِي قُدُّرَ غَيْبٌ عَنْ نَهْجِ وَلَوْ أَتَى رَاكِبًا فِيْلاً وَمُرْمِيـَـهَا
لا يوجد نص يمكن قراءته بشكل طبيعي من الصورة المقدمة.
APPENDIX B: TRANSLATIONS

The Rā‘iyya

1. I bring you glad tidings and wisdom from Hind.

2. From Sulaimān and Da‘d, from Lamīs [comes] a counsellor.

3. From Sumayyā and Laylā, from each of them [comes] a messenger.

4. My love for them is old, their amorous gestures are [like] burning flames.

5. I competed with the dove for melodious sounds, on her branch she flew not.

6. Their hearts are empty, their bodies full of energy.

7. They charmed my mind and heart and [their voice] was a melody of running water.

8. They left me in pain as if I were entombed.

9. They saw my gray beard and they said this is nakhūr.\(^{270}\)

10. He [continued] searching for them until night enshrouded.

11. And night was gradually stealing away until dawn merged into day.

12. He did not sleep all night as if he was seduced.

13. Listening [carefully] to their voices as the bird listens

14. To the voice of a flying falcon as if it were a mandolin.

15. He missed what he was desiring, sufficient is his loss.

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\(^{270}\) A camel that is milked by putting the finger in her nose.
16. He was emaciated by travel as if he were a ḍiftār.  

17. Will you be my help O detractor?  

18. If you will not be my help beware, I have a bigger aide.  

19. There is Ṣallaw, a leader, a lion, and popular.  


21. Al-Ḥājj had blessed him, al-Ḥājj Dikko the leader.  

22. He touched the head of Ḥusayn, surely this is a learned great man.  

23. He said: O Lord, bless [him] because he is a protector.  

24. Even Kankiyā replied: Āmīn, so was Sheikh Barmo supportive.  

25. They all revered him because he was a happy man.  

26. This is a gift from the Lord, there is no power and no scheme [against the wish of God].  

27. Glorified is He and Mighty, the Bestower [of bounties], the Praiseworthy.  

28. He gave him more than this, [be happy] O maqzūr.  

29. He gave him knowledge and wisdom; indeed, he is ‘aysajūr.  

30. He embellished him with modesty, He is the Living God, the Pure One.  

31. So hearken to what I tell you, O good people.  

32. Those who abnegate my words, they are indeed wicked.

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271 A species of lizard.  

272 In the annotation it is given as al-muwżam al-muḥibb: great beloved.  

273 A type of camel that is strong and able to endure any form of hardship.  

274 In Ghana/16.13/MSX it translates: fasghū ilā mā yaqūlu: So listen to what he says.
33. Those who criticize my praise [for Ṣallaw] indeed, they are the evil doers.

34. Utter not anything distasteful, O men of little experience.

35. Those who are impressed with my praise [for Ṣallaw] indeed, they are men of knowledge.

36. The names of Ṣallaw are many, here they are jotted down:

37. Among them are amir ghaḍīr (soft and delicate leader), among them are qarīr qarīr.

38. If I say: This is faqīh (intelligent), say: faqīh amīr (an intelligent leader).

39. If I say: This is jamīl (handsome), say: jamīl naḍīr (man of perfect beauty).

40. Or if it is said: This is sirāj (light), say: sirāj munīr (an illuminating light).

41. If it is said: This is adīb (man of letters or well-mannered), say: adīb ṣabūr (an extremely patient man of letters).

42. Or if I say: This is shujāʾ (brave), say: shujāʾ jasūr (an audacious man of bravery).

43. If it is said: This is jadār (competent), say: jadār jadīr (a worthy man of competence).

44. Or if it is said: This is jawād (generous), say: jawād qaswarun (a generous man of courage).

45. Or if it is said: This is taqiyy (pious), say: taqiyy Shakūr (a grateful pious man).
46. Or if it is said: This is zakīyy (honest and innocent), say: zakīyy ṯahūr (a pure innocent man).

47. If it is said: This is saḥāb (cloud), say: saḥāb muṭīr (a rainy cloud).

48. No doubt these are his names O Khabūr.¹⁷⁵

49. You see him every time, cheerful without a frown [on his face].

50. His face sparkling as if it were a pomegranate blossom.

51. A man of dignity and solemnity, as if he were Kawkabūr.²⁷⁶

52. Leaders have strangled many [of their subjects], but he is ṣarsūr.²⁷⁷

53. Their sun he is, and they are all stars.


55. This is a gift from the Lord of Heavens, so repent, turn [to your Lord] and change your ways.

56. O enviers, how can you all be deluded.

57. The Lord had decreed that Ṣallaw be a leader.

58. The heavenly creatures responded: O Lord this one is more suited

59. To be a leader so long as the orbit rotates.

60. And there is nothing left for his enviers except tribulation and destruction.

61. Except evil and alienation, except grief and barking [like dogs].

¹⁷⁵ In the annotation it is given as ṣāḥīb kalāmi: my audience.
²⁷⁶ He is believed to be an ancient Egyptian king.
²⁷⁷ A kind of insect. (cockroach). There is also ṣārsūr al-bahr
62. If life prolongs you will notice that there is no [loved ones] to occupy their homes.

63. The punishment for envy is surely hanging and destruction.

64. O enemies, repent you all and accept the truth.

65. Surrender [your wills] completely, let no ignorance delude you.

66. Did Satan delude you? O did the evil [one amongst you] tempt you?

67. Beware! The place of Ṣallaw is firm as if it were solid rock.

68. Nay! its foundation is flawless and it has no cracks.

69. *Qafandar*²⁷⁸ come and listen, repent to Him, He will provide your sustenance.

70. If you do not repent, you will be blown up by *dabūr*.²⁷⁹

71. If you do not repent to him, you will be afflicted with famine.

72. Soon you will die, and be buried all.

73. Your words are but lies, magic and deceit.

74. We invoke you Lord of servants, O Living God O Subduer [of all].

75. Come to Ṣallaw’s aide quick against anyone who intends to harm [him].

76. Be they women or men, be they young or old.

77. And anyone who reviles Ṣallaw indeed, such person is ignoble.

78. He will not achieve his wants, for he ill-intentioned.

79. Say he is stupid; Nay! he is badmouthed.

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²⁷⁸ According to the annotation this is a disgusting person, one who wishes but evil.
²⁷⁹ A windstorm from the *al-Maghrib*. 

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80. He will die hungry and with rage, consider him to be Qitfir.\footnote{This is one of the most common names for the biblical Potiphar in Islamic tradition. He was the treasurer of Egypt. See Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd ed., s.v “Ḳitfīr.”}

81. He shall not acquire wealth neither shall he have a membrane of a date seed.

82. He shall not ride a horse; his clothes are worn out.

83. His nutriment is that of a dog, his savory shall be shantakūr.\footnote{Probably a kind of food.}

84. In the home of Ṣallaw is food, meat and dates.

85. But the other dies ingloriously as if he were khaytaʿūr.\footnote{A small harmful black insect.}

86. He shall be buried and soon after, a serpent comes to him.

87. In his grave are all kinds of worms, Munkar and Nakīr.\footnote{The names of the two angels who examine and if necessary punish the dead in their tombs. See Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd ed., s.v “Munkar wa-Nakīr.”}

88. Because he died in a state of sadness as if he were maqrūr.\footnote{A black sticky substance like coal tar for ships to prevent leakage.}

89. Perish any hateful-being nay, they shall all be subdued.

90. We pray against any reviler; may they be surrounded with calamities.

91. O time do not leave amongst them a true companion.

92. Truly, the shadow is not equal, O my people, to the sun’s full heat.

93. Anyone who matches Ṣallaw [in virtue] No, his deeds are well known.

94. Knowledge, thoughtfulness, and silence, and unbent wisdom.

95. How many problems did he solve without being confounded?
96. He is calm when seated among his people he spoke less.

97. How many judgments did he make with fairness, that is plenty?

98. How many times did they plot against him, amongst them is kabūr the deceitful.

99. Among them are lice, dark and meaty.

100. And what they contrived became lies that did not profit them.

101. Is there anyone to match his generosity? In our day there is none.

102. His munificence among mankind, his generosity is endless.

103. He gives everything expensive, so listen to him O you who is tempted.

104. He gives horse and saddle; this means nothing to him.

105. And his stirrup and kinām including kalmazūr.\(^{285}\)

106. His wool and jall, his tinjimā and ghūr.\(^{286}\)

107. So does he give his garment that is loved by the public.

108. So does he give his burnoose one after the other, many palliums as well.

109. He gives silver and gold, excellent is such a leader.

110. His gifts are uncountable; his good deeds are well remembered.

111. He gives the near and far, this is well known.

\(^{285}\) These are all objects for riding horse according to the annotation.

\(^{286}\) Jall: an object used to cover animals from cold. Ghūr: ornament put round the neck of the horse.
The people of Kumasi had their homes inhabited [by loved ones].

All of them live in blessing, their benefactions will not diminish.

And the poorest among the people has clothing and a house.

O people say: Excellent is such a leader.

Verily since his childhood he had many qualities.

Anyone who envy's my master, indeed [that person] is a hornet.

Fear not the stupid even if they are in multitude.

Have you heard of generous O my companion?

The days of Ṣallaw are bright, his reing are full of light.

The likes of this leader [is rare to come by] indeed, he is patriotic.

Ṣallaw is resolute and chaste, so obey him O zughrūr.287

But for the fear of my Lord, I would say you are the Light.

O Lord the Majesty, we invoke You Who conceals vices.

Help him in whatever he wants, O Subduer of all.

Help him in all matters, O our Lord the Helper.

Answer my prayers quick, O Lord the Oft-Forgiving.

Give him good things, descendants who shall not perish.

Increase his offspring my Lord, O creator; All-Seeing.

Protect him with the best of protections, for You are Knower [of the past and the future].

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287 This is given as hāsid: (envier) in the annotation.
131. Destroy all his enemies, may they be surrounded with calamities.
132. Save him from all machinations, You are the Lord of Security the Omnipotent.
133. O Lord have mercy on his father, You are the Compassionate and the All-forgiving.
134. Admit him into Paradise, through which rivers flow.
135. And have mercy on his uncle, that was a calm old man.
136. He was called Mūsa the counselor, excellent is that prayeful man.
137. Also is Thāni his brother, have mercy on him O Compeller [of his creations].
138. Āmīn a thousand times, the utterance of āmin lightens [prayers].
139. So say: Āmīn O people, for people of āmin are many.
140. We truly hope for an answer; we have no doubt or denial.
141. Excellent in mentioning his brother will this poem complete.
142. Say yes to a good intention, by God no turning back [against Ṣallaw].
143. His praise will not cease until the orbit ceases to rotate.
144. Our beloved is Khaḍir indeed, he is [like] gold.
145. His was his biological brothers, but he [Khaḍir] was older.
146. I give this [poem] to you without requite, O leader.
147. This is my gift to you O eminent [leader].
148. Its verses are pure; its words are virgins.
149. O poets indeed, I am weak and blind.

150. I do not know poetry but I am [like] a brambling.

151. Whoever finds flaw in [the verses] should correct them, it is no shame.

152. Praise and gratitude to my Lord, for He is Praiseworthy.

153. Send your blessings and salutations O my Lord, the [equivalence of the sound emitted by] the starling bird.

154. To the prophet, his household, and his purified companion.

155. [This poem is composed] in the year bashmas, rhyming with the word rurūr. 288

156. In the first month of the year, Muḥarram which was mentioned.

157. Its verses are our companion, a companionship that will not end.

288 The value of the letters (b + sh + m + s) has a numerical value of 1402 minus the letter sīn gives 1342 which is the number written in the MSS.
The *Mīmiyya*

1. Does Laylā have a wish? or does Hind have a say?

2. [what about] the promises from Ḥidhām or the pledges made by Qaṭām?

3. They are all in a state of coquettishness, surliness, and reprehensibility.

4. They do not keep promises, they are not people with desires.

5. You don’t see in her fidelity, if you lived a millennium.

6. They severed their relationship and cast it in the dust.

7. Arrange this word neatly, [O you] perfect transmitter of poetry.

8. In praise of men of excellence, noble men of Tetemu.


11. Patient and obedient, doers of good take [my] word.

12. They ushered me on a Thursday, with a handsome group of people.

13. And students in their prime age, returning from the woods.

14. [Singing] praises to the Prophet, giving thanks to the Lord of mankind.

15. They assembled in huge numbers, from maidens and children.

16. Excellent were they the day I entered. Delightful was my long stay.
17. We found no blemish behavior in them rather, we lived in peace.

18. In happiness and activeness, in humor and affection.

19. They sent [me] gifts, continuously and always.

20. You will find no miser amongst them, they were no ignoble.

21. Rich and poor, each gave according to their means.

22. The rich gave more, the poor gave the little [they have].

23. It behooves us to be thankful to them, to render a complete elegy.

24. May Allah have mercy on a leader ‘Uthman [who lies] in the grave.

25. He [was] enduring, he [was] just, [a man of] goodness and prestige.

26. [He was] sober and calm, he prayed in the dark [at night].

27. Excellent is Muwwa among women. Verily she is an honorable woman.

28. She sent me food every day since I settled [in the village].

29. From waffles and cake, then bread in savory

30. And Rice prepared with fish and meat.

31. Continuously and uncountable, and eggs from ostriches.

32. Does such a person have an equal, from behind and front?

33. You will not see the like of Muwwa, in wakefulness or in dream.
34. In fact she is an exception among all women. These words

35. Say them loud without fear, among crowds of people.

36. She surpassed her compatriots in kindness, in gift and in uprightness.

37. She is like the sun among women folk, like the stars in a remarkable pattern.

38. A daughter of […] among women, complete in their homes.289

39. So listen O you people to what I say with commitment.

40. People of Zongo are generous, living in blessedness.

41. In Afanji there are brilliant men, sincere in their homes.

42. Knowledgeable and disciplined; pouring like the clouds.

43. They honored me in their village, the duration of the month of fasting.

44. They presented me with gifts, during the day and at night.

45. They bade me farewell on the day of my departure, all but the Imam.

46. They filled all the roads, with crowds in huge numbers.

47. Everyone! None was left [behind] even the riffraff.

48. The old and young, and a boy who was sick.

289 The second word in the first hemistich is not clear.
49. The rich, the poor, the visitors, all like twins.

50. Including Female Muslims, pious, from noble [homes].

51. Obedient and repenting, worshipping in dark.

52. May our Lord recompense goodness and a happy ending.

53. I bid you farewell, stay in peace, stay safe.

54. O Lord be kind on those who treat their guests with kindness.
The *Lāmiyya*

1. What is the case of Hind who left us without strife? News of her is recited loud and wide.
2. She left and she became like those who left before [her] and her home became a deserted campsite.
3. News of her departure spread widely, indeed she left her compatriots dejected.
4. They were like herds whose ears have heard the roar of lions nearby.
5. Her beloveds were awake all night in grief like Nabigha and saddened like Jacob when he didn’t see [his beloved] child.
6. And every beloved became silent with sorrow, and tears did not disobey [its owner] as they flowed.
7. Some would scream out loud, [lamenting] the loss of a beloved, like a man enduring the weight [of his loss].
8. The heart made a vehement sound when it was announced: Hind had left and the wind blew spreading sorrow and fear.
9. At that moment you will not find except wailing [women] folks, and those not wailing their tears transmitted large drops of water.
10. Women folks were gathered in huge numbers; they were all saying: We have no direction.
11. O Hind! O Hind!! When will you return? The answer: There is no return until [the Day of Judgment].

12. No doubt! No doubt we are separated. Alas! A separation that takes men apart.

13. At that point they said we have no joy, in this abode indeed, it is puzzling.

14. You will see them lamenting as if they were drunk, you would imagine they had all gone mad.

15. There is Hind passing away leaving behind her abode, after amorous gestures that dazzled mountains.

16. She is beautiful, flirtatious and cunning, angry at any lover without reason.

17. How many powerful men came desiring her and found nothing but hatred when they arrived?

18. Nay she was ill-natured who preferred no one, she drove away men who came to her in haste.


20. [If she saw] his long neck, teeth and smile when he gently spoke and offered generosity.

21. She would seek to solicit him quickly without shame, and she would suddenly become winsome and [would] send servants.
22. She would say: This man has no equal verily, I am his companion, truly without delay.

23. I shall pay him [the] dowry without hesitance, indeed, this is the husband whom I prefer.

24. If I marry him I have achieved my aim, sufficient he a husband besides anyone else.

25. I [shall] live in his house in a state of satisfaction [with drink and food], and I shall not lack fashionable garment and kohl.

26. I [shall] be submissive to him the submission of slaves to their masters, and I [shall] not disobey his words or deeds.

27. For he is a progeny of chiefs, diligent, affectionate, humble among his people without pride nor self-conceit.

28. Nay but he died in his prime of manhood, as our Lord the Merciful had decreed. The Most Exalted and the Most High.

29. His nickname is Labbu, his age is Labbu; would you not wonder how nickname and age correspond.\(^{290}\)

30. He is like the moon whose light is completed at night, and he benefit men with his rays when the sun is absent.

31. He replaced the darkness of that night and took away the burden of grieve and sorrow, imagine the sight.

\(^{290}\) \(l + b\) has a numerical value of 32 which is the age al-Hājj Labbu died.
32. The people were scattered when one of them announced: The young man is dead; the term of Allah has come to pass.
33. At that moment you will not find but wailing [women] folks, and those [men] who did not wail their tears poured like rain.
34. Some fell like the drunken who was unaware of what to say, deploring the loss of that man.
35. You should have seen the moment when he was wrapped in shrouds, after putting on perfume and this was after he was washed.
36. You should have seen his bier when he was carried to the grave, in a procession of men who filled the roads.
37. Before him is a congregated body of men crying of grief, and behind him is a group of men wailing like bereaved mothers.
38. When they returned they looked like drunkards, and in their eyes is what may fill a jar.
39. You may be devastated with what had happened, for it is very disturbing, this world is no place for the noble.
40. I thanked all his beloveds for what they have done, be they women or men.
41. Praise be to Allah. He acquired prosperity in the world, he died in honor and did not die worthless.
42. He achieved four virtues in an orderly manner: knowledge, pilgrimage, power, and good reputation.
43. Men of knowledge knew him and elevated his place [among them], so may [Allah] the Exalted reward them.

44. As for the vile and riffraff they saw him as a stone pelted at partridges.

45. [In beauty] rubies are not equal to camel, [so is] grass distinct from clover and herbs.

46. [So is] gold, note, and pearls not equal to leguminous plants and beasts of any kind.

47. Or similar to a camel and horse; where the lion kills the horse and lives in filth, such is the case.

48. Such are people who follow men of letters and good men are [always] measured against their deeds.

49. Some are evil men who follow them, so that they may eat and commit sins.

50. He was afflicted by pemphigus and we didn’t realize its [intensity] until it gashed [his skin] and became worse.

51. It ravaged his lungs, heart then [his] gut, and [his] liver, his esophagus and kidney.

52. After that we tried all medicines, everything proved futile because the term [of Allah] had come to pass.

53. When he died many people were shocked, because since childhood he was never penurious.
54. Nay his unending generosity knew no bounds, that was how he was described except by those inordinate and hateful.

55. That is why the poor and beggars lamented [his loss], the drum beaters all wailed in fear.

56. Truly the people of Ghabrā’ were saddened [by his death] their elder ‘Abdu his body grew lean.

57. His wife Ḥawwā’ – the intelligent one – wept, that is Thāghūr crying until her tears poured.

58. Likewise, was Ṣafūrā’ mourning her husband and she wailed with tears overflowing.

59. Kumātū Ḥafṣa was crying loud, and no doubt her wailing sounded like a drum.

60. All his beloveds were sad especially Ḥāfiẓ Manzo, truly his sorrow was intense.

61. His pure love without corruption, this is how he was when he was alive and after death.

62. When he died there came from every direction, oral and written messages from noblemen.

63. Some [of the letters] were accompanied with money meant for prayers, the custom of the land, not to be stingy.

64. From the forest of Ashanti and from the land of Tuareg; and from Ghamnāt and Ghambel.
65. From the rivers of Mesahohe and all the lands which surrounded it and from Hausaland, Kano, Dawra and Hadeje.

66. From the land of Katsina, Zakizaki and the land of Kebbi, the land of Ghobir, and Zarmā, they sent messengers.

67. Until we counted eighty men [who travelled from these lands] after which came [another group of] twenty and six.

68. And [the group that came] is never the group is expected to come, for only Allah knows those who will come consecutively.

69. This was after my fear was over, a fear deadened by righteous men with great effort.

70. [O Lord] have mercy on your servant, O You Who has no associate, forgive his sins whether purposely or ignorantly.

71. O Lord always pour his grave with favors the amount that supersedes the [grain of] sand.

72. Send down [your] mercy on him continuously, [the amount] that will fill low and highlands.

73. Make tulips and narcissus grown [on his grave], and make violets and jasmine grow in abundance [on his grave].

74. Allow musk to diffuse in his grave whose ambergris is qust, ghāniya, and nadd.²⁹¹

²⁹¹ Types of incense.
75. O Merciful Lord have mercy on him, You Who is Eternal and Absolute, in the ranks of those who died fearlessly.


77. Save us from the changes of time You Who is Eternal and Absolute, indeed in our time is what bewilders the mind.

78. It confounds mankind with the greatest shock, it prevents sleep, joy, and food.

79. Whosoever does not fear his desires and transgressed [the bounds of God] and cared less the rules [set by God] such a person is arrogant.

80. Verily people with desire have obtained their want, they live in opulence and they are considered the best.

81. No wonder! No wonder—that time has change, people of guidance are today down [at the bottom of] the valley.

82. Indeed, I fear if we live longer, that we shall witness the turtle commanding the cat with submission.

83. Or see the lion running away from the most dreadful cats, or the he-goat suffers defeat until it wrestles the wolf.

84. Or even the fowl will not heed to the sound of the eagle, when it sees her, it will say: come and it will be answer.

85. Or we see the hero of every battle being led by the most cowardly horseman, take my word.
86. Similarly, today are men of peace, they have become base resembling goats.

87. O Lord protect us from these calamities O You Who overcomes the arrogant.

88. Protect us from the evils we committed, with the [same] protection you gave the prophets and messengers.

89. By the grace of Tāhā, Yāsīn, and Baqarah, Āl-ʿImrān, Anʿām and Aʿlā.²⁹²

90. And by the favor of our leader and prophets together, the household, companions and the saints.

91. Its verses are [the letters] َḍُبُبِ, when uttered, praise be to Allah the praises by which hopes are achieved.²⁹³

92. Peace unto the one who brought us guidance, until the new moon sets in, complete or incomplete.

²⁹² These suras 20, 36, 2, 3, 6, and 87 respectively.

²⁹³ َḍُبُبِ has a numerical value of 32 which is the number of the lines in the lāmiyya.
The Sīniyya

1. By the Lord of creation listen O my people, for in our time are evil men.

2. They came and went round with distorted speeches and all their words are false in spite of how they may sound.

3. They attacked a school with ignorance upon ignorance, and all they falsified about us became vain.

4. Saying we erred in the Name of the Most-High, how miserable is their offense how gravely miserable.

5. They knew not morphology how then; with the knowledge of antonomasia they become water buffaloes.

6. There came one amongst them with his deceit, wanting to test and to spy on us.

7. We said to him: You are treacherous don’t come closer, we enticed him not nor socialized with him.

8. Alleging that there was an intelligent scholar amongst them, who says: No elongation in the Name of Allah. Doing so is a dubious act.

9. We said: You lied! You lied!! indeed you lied!!! and what you said may resemble a nightmare.

10. Verily science has foundation and a place of inquiry, so return to your hut and search into the papyrus.
11. Be a reader of the books of men of truth, don’t be lazy. Maybe your eyes did not look into books.

12. You will not find [anyone] who believes the word of your teacher except those who are the mob and mosquito.

13. Did you look at the books of those who had passed away? Did you look into the Talmud and Gospel commentary?

14. Use your mind [to realize that] truth is absolute, and don’t be a gharfus among the people of religion.

15. The ignoble will not become strong amongst us and indeed, we have the logic to differentiate between human and a calf.

16. Indeed, our teacher ʿUthman taught us the difference between a buffalo and a truffle.

17. By his honor, whoever came to humiliate us even if they came from a distance [such as] Ṭūs and Tūs.

18. They will be put to shame and be rage by their display of stupidity, a laughing stock among men of God.

19. We pay no attention to the sayings of the atheist and their speech resembled jingling bells.

20. We will not obey anyone who deviated from the path even if they came riding on elephants and rhinoceros.

21. Even if they brought knowledge equal to Spencer, the equivalent of Balʿām or Satan, the devil.
22. They cast their ropes and cast their sticks. Certainly! As if in our hands is the stick of Moses

23. Whoever comes to us with their plots and ploys, even if they came wearing a crown or a burnoose.

24. They will be disappointed with their intention to embarrass us, by what we learnt from ʿUthmān. Certainly!

25. We composed not to boast or play but we intended it as a gratitude and to establish [the truth].

26. The Name of the Most-High indeed, its elongation is prevalent among the public, from Tūlā to Sousse.

27. Also the Ṭagharghar and the Chinese, they all elongated its pronunciation and rebuked its shortening.

28. The elongation of the Name of the Most-High has engulfed every country, land and sea, from London to Paris.

29. People of this region elongated it without difference, from Qambalū it run to Hausaland.

30. Indeed, early philosophers also pronounced it [similar] to the elongation of Aristotle and Socrates.

31. Aristotle and Plato, then Avicenna as well as Ptolemy.

32. They all pronounced with elongation, what a surprise for a Muslim who has become deceptive and sinful.
33. Take this [poem] to refute the sayings of the foolish whose speech is unintelligible.

34. Praise be to Allah the Lord of creation, blessings on the best of creature who guided his followers.
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