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**Bravery and Eloquence:  
poetry in the *siyar sha‘biyah***

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in 2012

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Abstract of thesis: **‘Bravery and Eloquence: poetry in the *siyar sha‘biyah***

Poetry lies at the heart of the *siyar sha‘biyah*. There are approximately 32,000 lines of verse in the nine major *siyar*, forming between 4% and 27% of each text. This poetry has been largely unexplored (although occasionally dismissed) by scholars: a fact which suggests that it is peripheral, or in some way irrelevant, to the basic prose text. This thesis aims to show that the poetry does in fact lie at the heart of each *sīrah*, often playing a crucial role in the plot and always highlighting the main underlying themes.

The thesis examines the content and role of the poetry in the following *siyar*:

*Zīr Sālim*

*Dhāt al-Himmah*

*‘Antarah*

*‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*

*Banī Hilāl*

*Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*

*Fīrūz Shāh*

*al-Amīr Ḥamzah*

*al-Zāhir Baybars.*

In each case, the text to be examined is that of the current, available printed edition. Given the vast quantity of poetry and text, detailed analysis is restricted in each case to the opening sections of the *sīrah*, with the length of the section varying (between 45 and 1,173 pages) according to the need to include a sufficient amount of poetry (between 345 and 588 lines). The analysis includes detailed examination of the texts of particular poems as well as more general consideration of categories of poem. It looks at the motivation and effectiveness of the verse as well as its content and role.

The study shows that there are considerable differences in the type, content and function of poetry between the *siyar*, but that in each *sīrah* poetry is a source of

power and prestige and its role is central in presenting the underlying theme and objective of the *sīrah*.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

## Introduction

The objective of this thesis is to examine the poetry contained in the *siyar sha'biyah*: the Arabic popular epics which have been described as ‘works of battle and romance, primarily concerned with depicting the personal prowess and military exploits of their heroes’.<sup>1</sup> The *siyar* to be examined are:

*Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim*

*Sīrat Banī Hilāl*

*Sīrat al-Amīrah Dhāt al-Himmah*

*Sīrat ‘Antarah bin Shaddād*

*Sīrat ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*

*Sīrat al-Malik Sayf ibn Dhī ‘l-Yazan*

*Qiṣṣat Firūz Shāh*

*Sīrat al-Amīr Hamzah*

*Sīrat al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars.*

They include all the major *siyar* which are available in printed editions, except only for *Sīrat ‘Alī Zaybaq*, which has been omitted because it contains almost no poetry.

These works vary enormously in subject matter as well as in length, and they have their origins in different regions of the Arab world, but they share certain important characteristics, including three of particular relevance to the topic of this thesis:

- (i) they were originally composed as oral works, to be recited or sung by professional story-tellers and were only written down much later - the earliest record of specific works occurs in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the earliest manuscripts date from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and printed editions became common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>;
- (ii) they were composed in a mixture of colloquial dialect and literary Arabic, sometimes referred to as ‘middle Arabic’; and

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<sup>1</sup> Heath (1996) p.xiv

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* p.xvi

(iii) with the exception of certain versions of particular *siyar*, they are written predominantly in prose or rhymed prose, but the prose is interspersed with a significant amount of poetry and they can be described as works of *prosimetrum*<sup>3</sup>.

Something else which all these works share, and which flows from the above characteristics, is the long-standing disregard of scholars and of the educated literary audience in the Arab world. It reflects the gap, which has always existed in the Arab world, between ‘elite’ or ‘learned’ literature: what is generally included within the concept of *adab*, and popular literature: *al-adab al-sha‘bī*. Key characteristics of popular literature, which have been regarded as justifying its pariah status, have included its accessibility to a wide audience and its stress on entertainment rather than edification.

Whilst the *1001 Nights* is now recognised as one of the treasures of Arab culture and has been the object of massive scholarly and critical attention in recent years, the *siyar* have remained relatively ignored. There has been a steady, if thin, trickle of scholarly attention, but this has been largely concerned with the works as sources of social, anthropological and historical information, rather than as works of literature. Typical is one of the major works to be published in the last few years, Thomas Herzog’s study of *Sīrat Baybars*: ‘*Geschichte und Imaginaire*’, whose focus is summed up in its sub-title: ‘*Entstehung, Überlieferung und Bedeutung der Sīrat Baybars in ihren sozio-politischen Kontext*’ (‘The Origins, Tradition and Significance of *Sīrat Baybars* in its socio-political context’)<sup>4</sup>.

There have, nonetheless, been a gradually increasing number of articles and books focused on literary aspects of the *siyar*. Notable examples include Peter Heath’s *The Thirsty Sword: Sīrat Antar and the Arabic Popular Epic*<sup>5</sup>, Marguerite Gavillet

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<sup>3</sup> defined by the New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (Princeton, 1993) as ‘a text composed in alternating segments of prose and verse’.

<sup>4</sup> Herzog (2006)

<sup>5</sup> Heath (1996)

Matar's introduction to her edition of *La Geste du Z̄ir S̄alim*<sup>6</sup> and Sa'īd Yaqtīn's *Qāla 'l-Rāwī*<sup>7</sup>, as well as a number of articles on literary aspects of *S̄irat Baybars*. The total still remains very small and if the works, as a whole, remain relatively unexplored from a literary standpoint, the poetry is almost totally virgin scholastic territory. In *The Thirsty Sword*, his work on *S̄irat 'Antarah*, Peter Heath includes the poetry in his list of 'directions for further research', pointing out that '*S̄irat Antar* contains over 10,000 lines of poetry, some of it very good. Further investigation will illuminate the narrative purposes that this enormous corpus serves within the epic. These verses must also be critically analysed in their own right from formal, aesthetic and comparative perspectives.'<sup>8</sup> Among the very few critical works to focus on the poetry in its own right have been:

- Marguerite Gavillet Matar's 2005 edition of *Z̄ir S̄alim*, where her introduction devotes 26 pages to a discussion of the poetry and its role;
- papers by George Bohas<sup>9</sup> and Katia Zakharia<sup>10</sup> in 2004 on the 'metres and inter-textuality' and the 'poetic genres and intra-textuality' respectively of the poetry in *S̄irat Baybars*; and
- an unpublished PhD thesis in 1987 by Bernoussi Saltani, '*L'Univers Poétique dans S̄irat 'Antar*'<sup>11</sup>, which contains a lengthy section devoted solely to the poetry in *S̄irat 'Antarah*.

Other works of great relevance to an appreciation of the poetry are Dwight Reynolds'<sup>12</sup> and Bridget Connolly's<sup>13</sup> studies of the oral verse *s̄irah* of *Banī Hilāl*. Existing scholarship on each *s̄irah* will be reviewed in the relevant chapter.

The purpose of this thesis is to fill at least a part of this gap in the literary analysis of the *siyar* and to examine the poetry contained in them with a view to answering

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<sup>6</sup> Gavillet Matar (2005)

<sup>7</sup> Yaqtīn (1997)

<sup>8</sup> Heath (1996) p.167

<sup>9</sup> Bohas (2004)

<sup>10</sup> Zakharia (2004)

<sup>11</sup> Saltani (1987)

<sup>12</sup> Reynolds (1995)

<sup>13</sup> Connolly (1986)

two main questions:

- What are the scope and characteristics of the poetry?
- What is its literary role within the works?

An obvious problem in meeting this challenge lies in the quantity of the material to be examined. Even a relatively short *sīrah*, such as *Zīr Sālīm*, contains almost 1,000 lines of poetry, while the longer ones, such as *‘Antarah* and *Dhāt al-Himmah*, contain several thousand lines. There is therefore a requirement to be selective in tackling the wealth of material. It is proposed to base the examination on a section, rather than on the whole, of each of the selected *siyar*. To avoid both arbitrary selection and the need to provide over-lengthy explanations of context and plot, it is proposed to select in each case the first section of the *sīrah*; the exact length will depend on the narrative divisions of that particular *sīrah*. It is believed that this approach can be justified, both because the selected section will in every case include a very substantial amount of poetry (at least several hundred lines) and because in each *sīrah* the nature and role of poetry remains broadly consistent throughout that work. The following table shows the proportion of poetry examined in each work:

	<i>total number of pages</i>	<i>total lines of poetry</i>	<i>poetry as % of text</i>	<i>pages in section examined</i>	<i>lines of poetry in section</i>
<i>Zīr Sālīm</i>	157	1,087	27.0%	45	345
<i>Dhāt al-Himmah</i>	5,971	7,410	5.0%	109	588
<i>‘Antarah</i>	5,066	12,998	10.7%	219	452
<i>‘Umar al-Nu‘mān</i>	177	575	9.8%	177	575
<i>Banī Hilāl</i>	393	2,378	26.3%	52	490
<i>Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan</i>	1,270	2,923	7.7%	143	585
<i>Fīrūz Shāh</i>	1,642	1,629	4.0%	403	394
<i>al-Amīr Ḥamzah</i>	1,071	1,460	4.5%	257	434
<i>al-Ẓāhir Baybars</i>	<u>3,634</u>	<u>3,674</u>	<u>4.6%</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>601</u>
Total:	19,381	34,134		1,605	4,464

The analysis will be based on a broad examination of all the poetry in each selected

section, which will include detailed ‘close readings’ of selected passages. The methodology used is a traditional *explication de texte*: that is, an approach which recognises that form and content cannot be separated in analysing the aesthetic effect of a work of art.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Howarth and Walton (1971) p.xx

## Chapter 2

### *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim*

## A. Introduction

*Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* is one of the shorter *siyar* at approximately 150 pages. It is a story of tribal warfare and the pursuit of blood vengeance as a result of a breach of tribal hospitality followed by a killing. It is based on a real pre-Islamic conflict, between the tribes of Taghlib and Bakr, known as the War of Basūs, which has provided material also for a corpus of classical poetry in the *Ayyām al-‘Arab*. It is exceptional among the *siyar* for the unity and consistency of its treatment of its central theme of blood vengeance and Marguerite Gavillet Matar has commented on “sa trame relativement ramassée et bien structurée qui la rapproche de la tragédie”<sup>15</sup> (its relatively compact and well-structured theme which brings it close to tragedy).

It is also unusual in having been the subject of a scholarly edition and translation, by Marguerite Gavillet Matar in 2005. However, she based her edition on a Syrian manuscript, rather than on the manuscript which formed the basis of the popular printed edition which is the subject of this study. Although the basic story and *dramatis personae* are broadly similar, there are significant differences between the two versions - reflected in the fact that the Gavillet Matar version is approximately twice the length of the popular edition. The proportion of verse to prose is broadly similar and many of the poems are found in both versions, albeit with some differences, but there are also many poems in each version not found in the other.

Gavillet Matar provides a long introduction to her edition and translation, which includes one of the few extended studies of poetry in a *sīrah*. Reference to her findings will be made in the course of this chapter.

NB: All references to the text of *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* are to the edition published by Dār al-Fikr in ‘Ammān (undated).

Poems are numbered as shown in Appendix 1.

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<sup>15</sup> Gavillet Matar (2005) vol 1, p.11

## B. Section chosen for analysis

### (i) Volume and distribution of verse

*Sīrat al-Zīr Sālīm* consists of 157 printed pages, divided into three roughly equal parts. It contains 123 pieces of verse, whose distribution between the three parts can be summarised as follows:

<i>part</i>	<i>no. of pages</i>	<i>no. of poems</i>	<i>no. of lines</i>	<i>% of text</i>	<i>ave. lines per poem</i>
1	46	29	345	31%	11.9
2	51	41	338	28%	8.2
3	60	53	404	28%	7.6

It can be seen that the distribution of poetry throughout the *sīrah* is extremely even, despite the declining average length of the poems.

The following table shows a breakdown of the length of all the poems, which varies between 1 and 75 lines:

<i>no. of lines</i>	<i>no. of poems</i>
1 - 2	8
3 - 5	40
6 - 10	54
11 - 20	29
20 +	4

The average length of the poems is 8.8 lines and the verse is 29% of the total text (measured in lines).

The section chosen for detailed examination is part 1: pages 3 - 48. As shown in the above table, it contains 29 pieces of verse, amounting to 345 lines, which is 31% of the total text. This is broadly in line with the other two parts of the *sīrah*, although the average length of poem is slightly longer at 11.9 lines. The shortest poem is 4 lines and the longest is 75 lines.

(ii) **Synopsis of section's plot**

The first part of the *sīrah* sets the scene for the start of the war of Basūs and introduces the main characters. Its plot can be summarised briefly. When the *sīrah* starts, the Arab world is split into two groups: the Qaysites led by Rabī'ah and his brother Murrah, and the Yemenites led by Tubba'. Qaysite power is cemented by a proposal to marry Rabī'ah's and Murrah's children to each other, including the marriage of Murrah's daughter, Jaḥlīlah, to Rabī'ah's son, Kulayb, but peace is shattered when Tubba', the Yemenite leader, hears of the power of the Qaysite kings and decides to wage war against them. The Qaysites are defeated by their own hesitations and betrayals, Rabī'ah is killed and the other Qaysite leaders dispersed. Tubba' hears of Jaḥlīlah's beauty and decides to marry her himself. But Kulayb smuggles men into Tubba's palace, hidden in Jaḥlīlah's wedding chests, and he himself enters Tubba's presence disguised as Jaḥlīlah's jester. He kills Tubba', takes over as king and marries Jaḥlīlah. One of the mightiest Qaysite warriors is Kulayb's brother, al-Zīr, the hero of the *sīrah*, but Murrah's sons are warned against him by a soothsayer and Jaḥlīlah agrees to help them to get rid of him by persuading Kulayb to lure al-Zīr into a situation where he is certain to be killed. All Jaḥlīlah's plots fail, as al-Zīr emerges victorious from whatever danger is prepared for him (usually a ferocious man-eating lion).

C. **Example: poem 16**<sup>16</sup>

(i) **Introduction**

The characteristics and qualities of the poetry can best be examined by a detailed analysis of one of the poems. The selected poem, no.16, whose text (plus translation) is set out below, is one spoken by Tubba', the Yemenite king, after he has been tricked by Kulayb and is facing death. Kulayb has refused his plea for

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<sup>16</sup> *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* p.29

mercy but has asked him to explain how he came to kill Kulayb's father, Rabī'ah. Poem 16 is Tubba's reply.

This poem has been chosen because it is a good example both of the formal characteristics of the poetry and of its content and its role in the *sīrah*.

(ii) Text

قال الملك تبع حسان	ظلمني دهري دون الناس	1
يا ابن ربيعة يا مخدوم	أنت أمير شديد البأس	2
طويل الباع بيوم نزاع	عفيف شجاع ثقيل الراس	3
تسألني عن قتل أبيك	فكل بناية لها أساس	4
فلما جيت لأرض الشام	أتى للقانا كل الناس	5
أتاني كل أكابر قيس	وكل أمير أيدي باس	6
إلا أبوك فقد خالف	ولم يفعل كباقي الناس	7
فراح الغيظ بوسط القلب	أمرت بشنقه للحراس	8
وهذا بأمر الله مكتوب	فوق جبينه بأعلى الراس	9
وأنا بقيت بهذا اليوم	وحيد فريد بلا ايناس	10
أريد العفو عما جنيت	بحيات عمك مع حساس	11
إني كنت زعيم القوم	وحكمي نافذ بين الناس	12
فلما أتاني وعد الله	بطل العظم وظني خاس	13
دهنتي الجليلة بالحيلة	وغابت عني كل الناس	14
وهذا أمر الله محتوم	وأمره نافذ فوق الناس	15

This can be translated as:

- 1 King Tubba' Hasān spoke  
fate has treated me more unkindly than other people
- O son of Rabī'ah O master  
you are a prince of great courage

mighty in the day of battle  
 upright brave and intelligent

you ask me about the killing of your father  
 all buildings have a foundation

5 well when I came to Syria  
 all the people came to meet us

all the Qays chiefs came to me  
 and all the princes kissed my hands

except your father who behaved differently  
 and did not act like the rest of the people

rage took possession of my heart  
 and I ordered the guards to hang him

this was written by God's order  
 on his forehead on top of his head

10 to this day I have remained  
 alone single friendless

I ask pardon for my crime  
 by the lives of your uncle and Jasās

I was leader of the nation  
 and my authority ruled the people

but when God's decree came to me  
 (my) might vanished and my assumptions collapsed

Jafīlah outsmarted me with a trick  
and everyone abandoned me

15 this is God's sealed decree  
and his order is effective on all people.

[ *for ease of consultation, a copy of the  
Arabic text is shown also in Appendix 2* ]

### (iii) Analysis

The structure of the poem falls into three well-defined sections: the first four and the last four lines form a symmetrical framework for the central section of seven lines which contains the core of the poem. The first four lines provide an introduction, in which Tubba' presents himself and Kulayb, before repeating the question he has been asked by Kulayb. In the central section, he answers the question by explaining his action and asks for Kulayb's pardon. In the final four lines, he concludes by drawing the moral from what has happened and submitting to God's will.

Looking at these sections in detail:

#### Section 1 (lines 1-4)

The first hemistich takes the form of an introductory formula similar to those found in almost all of the poems in *Zīr Sālim* (as discussed in D (i) (a) below). However, the very first word of the poem establishes a meaningful equivalence between this and the other poems in *Zīr Sālim*. The use of the past tense قال is at variance with the usual opening present tense يقول : the only previous use of the past tense opening was by Rabī'ah just before his death and the use here reflects Tubba's knowledge of his own approaching end. The second hemistich sets Tubba' apart on his own: 'fate

has treated me more unkindly than other people'. It features three repeated 'ī' sounds and the rhythmic beat of the repeated hard consonants *z, d, d, b* has the effect of a funeral march: *zalamnī dahrī dūna bāqī 'l-nās*. Tubba' is going to his death.

The first line has introduced the principal *motif* of the poem in its reference to *دهري*. Whether translated as 'time' or 'fate', this word has important connotations in ancient Arabic poetry: it is 'time' in its widest sense and in a worldly (rather than otherworldly) context - time as it passes and as the bringer of man's destiny, which must ultimately be death. Hence it is also 'fate'. Its ravages and vicissitudes are contrasted with the constancy and permanency of God and the hereafter. It is a word often found in the *nasīb* section of pre-Islamic poetry, where the poet is evoking the passing of time in his description of the *atlāl*.<sup>17</sup> Its use here foreshadows the subject of the poem, which contrasts the transience of Tubba's earthly glory with the permanence of God's authority. It can also be seen as forming the equivalent of a *nasīb* in the structure of the poem.

The second line is similar in structure to line 1: the first hemistich introduces the addressee, while the second hemistich describes him. The first hemistich includes a repeated *يا*, which establishes an equivalence between *مخدوم* and *ابن ربيعة*, highlighting the opposition of Kulayb's dead, conquered father, Rabī'ah, with Kulayb's own new status as 'master'. The second hemistich proceeds to set up another equivalence, with the second hemistich of line 1, through the repeated 'ī' sounds of *amīr shadīd*... This equivalence again highlights an opposition by contrasting Kulayb's heroic status with Tubba's own miserable condition.

The third line continues the repetition of 'ī' sounds, supplemented here by accompanying 'ā' sounds, so that the phonological pattern of the line is:

$$a - \bar{i} - a - \bar{a} - i - aw - i - \bar{a}$$

$$a - \bar{i} - a - \bar{a} - a - \bar{i} - a - \bar{a}$$

<sup>17</sup> Caskel (1926) pp. 42-52.

There is also a complex system of internal rhyme and assonance between the words in the four phrases making up the line: between *tawīl* – ‘*afīf*– *thaqīl* and *bā‘* - *nizā‘* – *shujā‘*.

The first hemistich of the fourth line contains two more ‘ī’ sounds; here their equivalence sets up an opposition between Tubba‘ (*tas’alnī*) and Rabī‘ah (*abīk*). The long ‘ā’ sounds are repeated three times in the second hemistich, adding weight to the gnomic *fā kull bināyah lahā ‘asās* (all buildings have a foundation). The repeated ‘ā’ and ‘ī’ sounds throughout these first 4 lines have served to stress the semantic coherence of this section.

## Section 2 (lines 5-11)

The placing of the gnomic phrase at the end of line 4 reinforces the fact that the poem is moving into a new section. The phrase forms what Andras Hamori has called a ‘cadence’: a ‘type of utterance frequently used for stops along the way’.<sup>18</sup> Line 5 starts the narrative describing how Tubba‘ came to have Rabī‘ah killed, which is the answer to the question posed by Kulayb.

Line 5 is marked by repetitions of ‘ī’ s and ‘ā’ s in each half of each hemistich. This parallelism is reinforced by the way the structure of the first hemistich:

[ subject (+ verb) - preposition + dative of objective ]

is reversed in the second hemistich:

[ (verb +) preposition + dative of objective - subject ].

The effect is to emphasize the importance of Tubba‘ s position as the axis round which others’ lives revolved: he moves to Damascus but other people move to him. The final word of the line, *ناس*, is a repetition of the *ناس* at the end of line 1, which again stresses the importance of his position as ruler to whom ‘all the people’ come,

<sup>18</sup> Hamori (1992) p.19

but does so in opposition to his current downfall where he is more wretched than ‘the rest of the people’. It is also making the point that in both situations, as powerful king in line 5 and as a beaten man in line 1, he is equally isolated.

The repetition of *أنا*, at the start of line 6, reinforces the message of the previous line; it was the great men who had to come to him and not the other way round (and see the ‘opposition’ of this in line 14 below). The *كل* of *الناس*, at the end of line 5, is repeated in each hemistich of line 6, reinforcing the description of his former power, when it was not just anyone, who came to him, but ‘all the great men of Qays’ and ‘all the princes’. Again the structures of the two hemistiches are inverted, so that the verb is the opening word of the first hemistich and the closing word of the second, thus highlighting Tubba’s own role as the passive receiver of other people’s homage.

In line 7, the fact that Kulayb’s father was different from other people is emphasized in the first hemistich by the opening *إلا* and the closing *خالف*. The line ends with a repetition of *باقي الناس*, repeating the phrase which ended line 1 as well as the word ending line 5. It serves to present Rabī‘ah’s position as equivalent to Tubba’s own: that is, different from other people. This difference is emphasized also by the unusual *enjambement* between lines 6 and 7.

Line 8 contains the answer to Kulayb’s question, when Tubba‘ confesses in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich that he ordered Rabī‘ah to be hung. The importance of this moment is reflected in the line’s status as the central line of the poem, as well as by a striking change of rhythm in the second hemistich where the usual 4-word structure of the hemistich is replaced by 3 words. The crucial second hemistich opens with a powerful active verb, *أمرت* (I ordered), which is only the second time that Tubba‘ has referred to an action by himself (the other being his coming to Damascus in line 5) and serves to stress the acknowledgement of his own responsibility for Rabī‘ah’s death.

The first hemistich of line 8, which tells how rage had entered Tubba’s heart, can be seen as an attempt to excuse the action for which he is about to take responsibility.

This argument is reinforced by line 9, where Tubba‘ describes the action as having been ordained by God’s command; the repetition of أمر in both lines points to the equivalence and opposition of the two ‘commands’. The gravity of the statement in line 9 is emphasized by the enjambement between the two hemistiches and by the repeated long ā sounds, *bi-a‘lā ‘l-rās*, which close the line.

Line 10 starts with وأنا and the next five lines are focused entirely on Tubba‘ himself. The cohesion of these lines is reflected both in their parallel structure, where each has an active verb in the first two words of the line, of which Tubba‘ is either the subject (lines 10-12) or the object (lines 13-14), and in the succession of repeated ‘ī’ and ‘ā’ sounds: for example, line 10:

a – ā – a – ī – ā – ā - aw

a – ī – a – ī – ā – ī – ā.

It is reflected also in the repetition of ناس at the end of lines 10, 12 and 14. The repetition of ناس, in ايناس, at the end of line 10, establishes its equivalence with lines 1,5 and 7. Again it stresses Tubba’s isolation, but this time the feeling is stronger than ever; he is no longer described as someone different from ‘other people’, but as someone wholly without human companions.

Line 11 starts with a strong verb: أريد (I want). This is in the present tense, in contrast to the other verbs in this group of lines, reflecting the fact that the only action remaining open to Tubba‘ is to beg pardon for his crime. It provides a ‘cadence’ to signal the end of the main section of the poem.

### Section 3 (lines 12-15)

In Line 12 the verb reverts to the past tense as Tubba‘ looks back again at his former glory, where his decision prevailed ‘among the people’ (بين الناس). While previous repetitions of ناس have emphasized Tubba’s being apart from ‘other people’, this time it shows how, although he himself was apart from them, his decision used to prevail amongst them. This highlights the fact that his power used

to depend on his rank; now that he has been overthrown, he is, as stated in line 10, 'friendless' (بلا ايناس).

A change in grammatical structure in lines 13 and 14 shows a shift in emphasis. From being the first-person subject of lines 10-12, Tubba' becomes the object of the verbs in lines 13 and 14, as he is first the recipient of God's decree and then the victim of Ja'fīlah's wiles. The verb أتاني, in the first hemistich of line 13, is a repetition of the opening word of line 6, itself a repetition from line 5 (also given prominence at the start of the second hemistich) and establishes a powerful opposition between the past, when great men came to Tubba', and the present, when it is God's decree which visits him. The terrible consequences of God's decree are reflected by the inverted structure of the second hemistich in line 13, which stresses the opening and closing verbs: بطل (was illusory) and خاس (was lost). The final كل الناس repeats the ending of line 5, emphasizing the opposition between the time when everyone came to greet him (أتى للقانا - line 5) with the present where everyone has abandoned him (غابت عني - line 14).

Thus lines 13 and 14 set up a double equivalence/opposition with lines 5 and 6: between the coming of his princes' homage and the coming of God's decree, and between these 'comings' and his abandonment by everyone.

The concluding line of the poem, line 15, uses repetition to resonate with all the previous lines. The first hemistich repeats the first three words of line 9, where God's decree was first mentioned (الله - أمر - هذا), and the final word, محتوم (ordained), echoes the مكتوب (written) of the earlier line. God's decree is both ordained and decisive. Then the second hemistich follows the structure of the second hemistich in line 12, repeating نافذ and the final الناس : the equivalent structure highlights the opposition between Tubba's decision which used to be effective 'amongst' the people and God's order which is effective 'over' the people. The poem ends, therefore, by affirming God's supremacy and this is stressed by the use of the present tense in contrast to the past tense of the preceding three lines.

God's command is *مختوم*: that is, decisive and unavoidable, and this description resonates and links with the opening of the poem and its reference to *دهري*: that is, to the vicissitudes of Tubba's personal fate. The opposition between the power of Fate and the power of God is a *topos* of classical Arabic poetry and Stefan Sperl has shown how the power of the Ruler is presented in an oppositional pairing with the power of Fate. Fate "rules the world arbitrarily; human beings are powerless", but the Ruler "rules the world in conjunction with God; his subjects are protected and nourished".<sup>19</sup> Whereas this *topos* is normally found in the context of *madīh*, where the qualities of the good ruler are being praised, in this poem the ruler is shown to be ineffective and thus ruling in accordance with Fate's arbitrariness rather than with God's certainty and security. The point is stressed by the antithesis between *دون* and *فوق* in the first and last lines: Tubba's fate (*دهر*) has placed him below other people (*دون الناس*), while God's power (*امره*) reflects his position above mankind (*فوق الناس*).

A further link between the beginning and the end of the poem can be found in the *Qurān*'s references to *al-Dahr* and *al-Nās* in the *sūrat* known by those names. In the *sūrat al-Dahr*, *dahr* is used with the meaning of 'time' and in the context of man's total dependence on God since he does not exist until created by God.<sup>20</sup> While in *sūrat al-Nās* God is defined by his relation to mankind (as their Lord, King and God).<sup>21</sup> The repetition of *al-nās* in the poem echoes the similar repetition in the *sūrah*, where five of the seven lines end with *al-nās*.

#### D. Form and structure of the poetry

##### (i) Form and structure of poem 16

The above analysis shows that these 15 lines of verse are a carefully crafted and complex piece of poetry, which relies largely on repetition of phonemes, words and phrases, as well as on grammatical repetitions and variances, to achieve its effects.

<sup>19</sup> Sperl (1989) p.22

<sup>20</sup> Qurān 76:1

<sup>21</sup> Qurān 114

It is noteworthy that some of these features are ones which would have been condemned in a piece of ‘classical’ verse.

The poem complies with the conventions of classical Arabic poetry in consisting of lines of 2 equal hemistiches and in having a single consistent end-rhyme or ‘monorhyme’. However there are a number of significant differences from the classical model:

- (a) The rhyme is often deficient by classical standards, notably in the repetition of the same rhyme-words - in this poem, for example, the word ناس (people) is found at the end of no less than 7 of the 15 lines.
- (b) The metre does not comply with any of the 16 canonical metres of classical Arabic poetry. Indeed there is no clearly identifiable, consistent metre, in the usual sense of a repeated combination of feet composed of ‘long’ and ‘short’ measures. There is however a remarkably consistent number of words in each hemistich: 26 of the 30 hemistiches contain exactly four words. And a very clear four-stress rhythm can be discerned in each hemistich if diacritic marks are omitted from pronunciation as would be normal in colloquial speech. The rhythm can be shown in the following transliteration of lines 5 and 6 from poem 16:

/ / / /	/ / / /
<i>f'lamā jīt l'ardi 'l-Shām</i>	<i>atā lliqānā kullun-nās</i>
/ / / /	/ / / /
<i>atānī kull'l-akābir Qays</i>	<i>wa kull'amīr aydī bās</i>

- (iii) The language of the poem is strikingly simple, in contrast to the deliberate complexity of the vocabulary in classical poetry.
- (iv) Also striking is the total lack of imagery or metaphor. Again, simplicity is the key-note of the poem. However, that does not rule out sophisticated rhetorical devices, as seen above in the complex internal rhyming structure of line 3.

As noted above with regard to the poetry generally, the bipartite structure of the verse is the chief tool which is used to create semantic effects and, above all, the use of parallelism and repetition. Jurij Lotman, who makes ‘the principle of repetition’ a corner-stone of his analysis of poetic texts, comments that all forms of repetition belong to ‘orderings based on equivalence’ (i.e. paradigmatic) rather than on sequence (i.e. syntagmatic) and that all orderings are meaningful; no repetition can be regarded as accidental.<sup>22</sup> His view is very relevant to this poem, notably with respect to the repetition of the end-word *nās* seven times, two of them being at the end of the important first and last lines. Each repetition sets up contrasts and repetitions with previous occurrences of it and acts as a unifying element in the poem. As Lotman has also pointed out, the effect of repetitions is to increase the impact of the oppositions which are revealed by the equivalences: ‘coincidence singles out and structurally activates the non-coincident part’.<sup>23</sup> So, in this poem, the repetitions have stressed the contrasts between Kulayb and Tubba‘ and between the latter’s former and present conditions.

**(ii) Formal characteristics of the poetry as a whole**

The formal characteristics of the poetry as a whole are similar to those found in poem 16.

**(a) line structure and rhyme**

Almost all the verse passages in the section comply with the conventions of classical poetry in consisting of lines of two approximately equal hemistiches and having one consistent end-rhyme, or ‘monorhyme’. However, the monorhyme differs from classical usage in a number of respects:

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<sup>22</sup> Lotman (1977) p.106

<sup>23</sup> *ibid* p.132

- consistent use of a long vowel sound (usually *ā* or *ī*), the only exception being poem 9<sup>24</sup>, whose rhyme letter is *mīm*.

Gavillet Matar ascribes the use of a final long vowel to the tradition of the poems being sung in performance and the scope which the long vowel provides for elongation of the musical phrase.<sup>25</sup>

- frequent use of ‘assonance’ instead of normal rhyme e.g. in poems 1 and 2<sup>26</sup>, where the rhyme words are: *jawāhir*, *jabābir*, *akābir* etc.
- the monorhyme is not normally found at the end of the first hemistich (the only exceptions are nos. 8, 15, 25 and 27).<sup>27</sup>
- frequent repetition of the same rhyme-word in a poem.

In cases where two poems form a dialogue, so that the second poem is an immediate response to the first poem, the two poems share the same rhyme. Examples are poems 1 and 2<sup>28</sup>, 14 and 15<sup>29</sup>, 28 and 29<sup>30</sup>.

The only exception to the use of monorhyme occurs in poem 26<sup>31</sup>, which consists of four rhyming pairs of hemistiches in the pattern:

a	-	a
b	-	b
c	-	c
d	-	d.

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<sup>24</sup> *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* p.17

<sup>25</sup> Gavillet Matar (2005) vol.1, p.108

<sup>26</sup> *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* p.4

<sup>27</sup> *ibid* pp.15, 29, 43 and 46

<sup>28</sup> *ibid* p.4

<sup>29</sup> *ibid* pp.26-29

<sup>30</sup> *ibid* pp.46-47

<sup>31</sup> *ibid* p.44

There is one further example of an unusual rhyme scheme to be found later in the *sīrah*,<sup>32</sup> where the rhymes in each hemistich form the following pattern:

a	-	b
c	-	c
b	-	d
e	-	e
e	-	b
f	-	f
f	-	f
g	-	g
b	-	b
f	-	f
f	-	f.

It is not possible to form any consistent strophic pattern out of these rhymes.

(b) metre

No clear metrical rules can be defined and none of the sixteen canonical metres can be identified in any of the poetry in *Zīr Sālim*. This is consistent with the findings of Ayoub and Connelly, in their study of the metrics of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, where they concluded that ‘..looking for metrical feet as constituent elements of oral poetry is a dead-end approach....No quantitative regularity exists, neither does rhythmic regularity of syllables within a line or the sequence of lines making up the poem as a whole’.<sup>33</sup> It was only when they listened to recordings of performances of the *sīrah* that they were able to recognise the way in which individual poet/reciters used ‘vocal elongation, pauses and instrumental interludes in order to regularise their lines and adjust them to a basic temporal schema’.<sup>34</sup> Marguerite Gavillet Matar refers to Ayoub and Connelly’s research in support of her own conclusion that the poetry in *Zīr Sālim* complies with no recognisable metrical rules and reflects the need for each reciter to fit the lines to his own speech rhythms so that each line could be sung in the same length of time (i.e. a requirement which

<sup>32</sup> *ibid* p.138

<sup>33</sup> Ayoub and Connelly (1985) p.326

<sup>34</sup> *ibid* p.345

would vary for each poet-singer). She supports this with evidence of phonetic markings in the manuscript from which she was working.<sup>35</sup>

Although it is not possible to discern clear metrical rules, this does not mean that there is no consistent metrical rhythm to be found in the verse. As noted above with regard to poem 16, there is a consistent four-stress rhythm in each hemistich if lines are spoken in accordance with colloquial usage (that is, with very limited pronunciation of case endings). The rhythm is also conveyed by the fact that the hemistiches tend to consist of exactly four words.

### (iii) Structure, style and imagery of the poetry as a whole

The language of the poetry is similar to that of the prose. It uses a ‘middle’ level of Arabic, combining elements of classical and colloquial grammar and vocabulary, which must reflect its oral origins as well as its subsequent reduction into written form.

The vocabulary used in the poetry is simple and so is the style. Use of imagery is rare and conventional, being largely confined to depicting either warrior-like qualities or female beauty. Examples of the former are to be found in poem 4<sup>36</sup>, where Tubba‘ is encouraging his troops as they embark by describing their excellence: the soldiers are “like lions” (عساكر كالأسود), their chain mail is as fine ‘as locusts eyes’ (زرد كما عين الجراد) and they include ‘every resolute colossus who fights 1000 lions in the hunt’ (كل جبار عنيد يقاتل ألف ليث في الطراد). Examples of the latter abound in poem 11<sup>37</sup>, where the old lady fortune-teller is describing Jaḥīlah’s charms to Tubba‘: she is ‘tall as the pole of a lance’ (طويلة كعود القنا), has ‘eyebrows like bows’ (حواجب كالقوس), ‘cheeks as red as roses’ (وجنات حمر كما الورود), ‘a body like a graceful delicate wine’ (جسم رقيق ورقيق رحيق), ‘a neck like a gazelle’s neck’ (عنق كعنق الغزال), ‘shoulders like ivory’ (كتاف كالعاج) and ‘hips and buttocks like dough’ (أعطاف وأرداف مثل العجين).

<sup>35</sup> Gavillet Matar (2005) p.111

<sup>36</sup> *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* p.7

<sup>37</sup> *ibid* p.21

The poems do not make much use of rhetorical devices such as *tajnīs* or *radd al-‘ajz ‘alā’l-ṣadr*, but there is frequent use of internal rhyme, as seen in poem 16 above. The poems’ style depends above all on effective use of what Raymond Scheindlin described as the bi-partite structure of ancient Arabic verse, so that each line is constructed of ‘two syntactic units which seem to balance each other, either in length, or in meaning, or both’.<sup>38</sup> There is thus skilful use of parallelism and repetition in the structure of the individual lines as well as in the poems as a whole, again as noted with reference to poem 16 above.

### E. Introductory formulas

All the poems are introduced by two formulas. The first introduction, which could be called ‘pretextual’ (in relation to the poem), consists of the narrator’s words leading up to the start of the poem. The most common formulas are: أشار يقول (he addressed him saying...), أنشد يقول (he recited saying...) and خاطبه بهذه الشعر والنظام (he addressed him with this poetry and verse...). There does not appear to be any significance in the choice of the particular words and their only function appears to be to signal the changes taking place: the speech moving from prose to poetry and from the narrator to the character in the story.

There are occasional instances (poems 13, 16, 19, 26)<sup>39</sup> where the words include references to the speaker’s mood through the addition of the formula من فؤاد متبول (with a ravaged heart), but there does not seem to be any significance in this addition since it is used in cases where it is patently untrue (as in the introduction to poem 13: Jaḥīlah’s hypocritical poem praising Tubba‘ before he is overcome by Kulayb) as well as in cases where it is genuine (as in poem 26 where Jaḥīlah is urging Kulayb to send al-Zīr to his death).

<sup>38</sup> Scheindlin (1974) p.36

<sup>39</sup> *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* pp.24, 29, 37 and 44

There are also rare instances (poems 8, 11, 15)<sup>40</sup> where the words contain references to the subject of the poem. An example is poem 11, where the treacherous old woman describes Jaḥīlah's beauty to Tubba' and the poem is foreshadowed in the words: 'she set out to describe Jaḥīlah's beauty and what God had given her of beauty and loveliness'. Again there does not appear to be any significance in the addition of such words to the particular poems.

Notably there is only one instance of a religious element in the formulas. This occurs in poem 27<sup>41</sup>, where the words leading up to the poem are: 'he recited saying pray for Taha the Messenger'. Otherwise the absence of invocations of God or His Prophet, unlike in other *siyar* or in other versions of this *sīrah*, could suggest that this text is based on a manuscript not of Muslim origin.

The second introductory formula occurs in the first line of each poem. The first hemistich consists invariably of words naming the speaker and confirming the act of speech. The most usual form is along the lines of: 'there speaks Tubba' the Yemeni king' (يقول التبع الملك اليماني) (poem 4<sup>42</sup>). Despite the use of the third person, as in يقول, it is clear from the words in the pre-textual introductory formula that the words are the speaker's rather than the narrator's. In other words, to use Gerard Genette's definitions, the second formula must be regarded as peri-textual rather than pre-textual.<sup>43</sup> There is only one exception, in poem 2,<sup>44</sup> which starts with the words: 'Rabī'ah turned to him and then said' (تبدى له ربيعة ثم قال له), which are clearly the narrator's words. There are one or two minor variations on this wording: for example, some of Jaḥīlah's poems are introduced by: مقالات الجلييلة (poems 18, 19, 22, 24)<sup>45</sup>. The use of مقالات suggests 'the giving of an opinion' rather than mere speech<sup>46</sup> and this suits the tone and content of these poems, which are urging Jaḥīlah's brothers or Kulayb to action. Invocations of God or His Prophet are notably absent, as seen above with regard to the pre-textual formulas.

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<sup>40</sup> ibid pp.15, 21 and 29

<sup>41</sup> ibid p.46

<sup>42</sup> ibid p.7

<sup>43</sup> Genette (1997)

<sup>44</sup> *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* p.4

<sup>45</sup> ibid pp.36, 37, 40 and 42

<sup>46</sup> Kazimirski (1860) p.837

The use of this standard opening to the poems reinforces the messages of the pretextual formula in signalling the moves from prose to poetry and from narrator to character. This repetition of the signalling suggests that the distinction between the two was seen as meaningful and important.

The formula also confirms very clearly who is speaking. On a practical level, this provides an important aid to the audience's understanding. But its significance is surely more than this and it can be seen as confirming a fundamental element of poetry's nature as a statement of identity and existence (see further discussion in section F below).

The second hemistich of the opening line is often also formulaic or takes the form of an introductory description of the speaker's mood or of what he is about to say.

Examples of formulaic words are:

- *ودمع العيون على الوجنات طوفان* (and his eyes flooded his cheeks with tears), found (with slight variations) in poems 5, 22, 28<sup>47</sup>;
- words referring to the vicissitudes of fate, e.g. in poem 25:  
*رمانى الدهر فى كل المصائب* (fate has cast me into every misfortune)<sup>48</sup>.  
Similar words are found in poems 6,10 and 16.<sup>49</sup>

Examples of words describing the speaker's mood are:

- *صفا عيشى وقد طابت فؤادى* (I am calm, my heart is serene) in poem 4<sup>50</sup>;
- *أبا قيس زال الهم عنى* (Father of Qays, care has left me) in poem 12<sup>51</sup>; and
- *لهيب النار تشغل فى فؤادى* (fire is kindled in my heart) in poem 14<sup>52</sup>.

Another use of the second hemistich is for a gnomic comment, as in poem 15:

*كلام أشد من ضرب الهناد* (words are mightier than the blow of a sword)<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālīm* pp.10, 40 and 46

<sup>48</sup> *ibid* p.43

<sup>49</sup> *ibid* pp.12, 19 and 29

<sup>50</sup> *ibid* p.7

<sup>51</sup> *ibid* p.22

<sup>52</sup> *ibid* p.26

<sup>53</sup> *ibid* p.29

**F. Content and role of the poetry**

**(i) Content and role of poem 16**

In considering the content and role of the poem, it needs to be placed in the context of the narrative surrounding it. A number of features are significant:

- (a) it occurs at a key moment in the plot: Kulayb has defeated Tubba‘ and is about to take vengeance for his father’s death;
- (b) it is spoken by one major character to another: by the Yemenite leader, who has dominated the action hitherto, to the Qaysite leader who will remain a prominent member of the *sīrah*’s cast of characters; and
- (c) it reveals a lot about the speaker’s character: it highlights Tubba‘’s characteristics, both as a person and as a figure of authority: his killing of Rabī’ah was a result of petty resentment at being ignored rather than of more lofty motives, and he has come to appreciate the transience of power and authority.

These three features can be said to be common to most of the poems in the work (see (vii) below), but there are two other features which are less common:

- (d) it discloses new information, not contained within the prose part of the narrative: that is, the reasons for Tubba‘’s action as well as confirmation that Rabī’ah was hanged.
- (e) it is making an important moral point: about the nature and transience of authority.

(ii) **Content and role of the poems as a whole**

(a) introduction

In looking at the poems in this section of the work as a whole, it is again important to see them in their narrative context. This is shown in Appendix 1: ‘Placement of poems in *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* (pp.3-48)’.

It can be seen from Appendix 1 that the poems occur regularly and frequently in the course of the narrative. However, of the 29 poems in this section, only two provide new information essential to the plot: that is, information which is not provided already in the prose. Those poems are: poem 16<sup>54</sup>, as described above, and poem 19<sup>55</sup> where Jalīlah explains to Kulayb that al-Zīr has assaulted her (after Kulayb has found her with torn clothes and asked her what has happened). However, while not being essential to the narrative, the poems often add flesh to the bare bones of the information provided in prose. At the same time, they serve an important dramatic purpose in increasing the impact of key events and also in depicting the characters of the key players, as noted with reference to poem 16 above.

It is significant that the only extended prose passage, not accompanied by poems, occurs between pages 27 and 32, where a large part is devoted to an account of the battles between the Qaysites and the Yemenites; in other words, it is a passage concerned only with a description of action and not featuring any of the major characters.

The other essential feature of the poetry is that it is a means of dialogue. In the chosen section, there is only one poem which is not addressed to another character: that is poem 27<sup>56</sup>, where al-Zīr soliloquizes as he returns from his successful mission to the well of Şandal. Indeed, in the whole of the *sīrah* there is only one other poem<sup>57</sup> not addressed to another character (or, in one case, to God<sup>58</sup>).

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<sup>54</sup> ibid p.29

<sup>55</sup> ibid p.37

<sup>56</sup> ibid p.46

<sup>57</sup> ibid p.127

(b) difference between verse speech and prose speech

In considering the role of verse in the *sīrah*, it is instructive to examine the difference between the use of verse from that of prose in the characters' speeches.

This can be seen very clearly in the context of poems 3 and 4, which are Tubba's speeches to his Court announcing his intention to go to war (poem 3)<sup>59</sup> and to his assembled army before their embarkation (poem 4)<sup>60</sup>. When Tubba' hears from his minister about the power and wealth of Rabī'ah and Murrah, he responds 'with words of fury' and launches into a furious response in prose before he breaks into verse: 'I must target them, kill their king Rabī'ah', visit them with annihilation, destroy their country and remove all trace of them with the sword'. His prose speech simply expresses his anger, but his poem is carefully designed to obtain a certain response from his listening courtiers (as well as revealing features of his character). It complies with Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogic heteroglossia', as an utterance which 'not only answers the requirements of its own language as an individualised embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of heteroglossia as well; it is in fact an active participant in such speech diversity'.<sup>61</sup> In his introductory opening line, Tubba' stresses that he is trustworthy: 'the statement is not false' (فما للقول زورا). Then in line 2 he reminds his audience of what he has achieved on behalf of his people 'by force and ability' (غصبا واقتدارا). In lines 3 and 4 he outlines the reasons for action: the power and wealth of Rabī'ah (who can therefore be regarded as a threat to the Yemenites). In line 5 he states his intentions in bold terms: 'I will leave his land waste and bare' (وأترك أرضه قفرا وبورا). Lines 5-9 are designed to win his followers' support by stressing both the might of his army (equipped with 1000 ships) and the booty to be won by his soldiers, whose wives will be 'girls like full moons' (بنات كالبدورا). Finally in line 10 he depicts a happy outcome where 'my mind will be at peace after being troubled' (يصفى خاطري ( بعد الكدورا).

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<sup>58</sup> ibid p.148

<sup>59</sup> ibid p.6

<sup>60</sup> ibid p.7

<sup>61</sup> Bakhtin (1981) p.272

Similarly, in poem 4, Tubba' adjusts his speech to appeal to the army assembled for embarkation. After starting with an expression of self-confidence (which echoes the ending of the previous poem): 'I am calm, my heart is serene' ( صفا عيشي وقد طابت ( فؤادي), he devotes the poem to making three points designed to encourage an army about to go to war. First, he suggests that they are going to be victorious by stressing the size and excellence of the army and its equipment: 'soldiers like lions have come to me, thousands of riders mounted on chargers' ( عساكر كالأسود أنتني تسري ( ألوف راكبين على جياذ). Secondly, he warns them of the penalty awaiting deserters: 'I will kill anyone who insists on opposing me' ( وأقتل كل من يطلب عنادي ( . And finally, he reminds them of the rewards of success: 'rejoice that you will receive from me what you desire, whatever you want and more' ( ومني أبشروا فيما تريدوا ومهما تطلبوا ( ( فبازدياد).

The difference between the prose and the verse could be defined in terms of the distinction which Bakhtin draws between 'authoritative' discourse and 'internally persuasive' discourse. The former is wholly 'someone else's magisterial' word, which has only one meaning and which can only be transmitted and cannot be artistically represented because of its 'inertia, its semantic finiteness and calcification', while the latter is a discourse which uses shared words and thoughts and is 'half ours and half someone else's'.<sup>62</sup> It is in the verse that shades of feeling and meaning are expressed.

These poems illustrate another important feature of the verse in the *ṣīrah*: verse is used because the situation demands it. And verse is shown to be effective. An example of the effectiveness is the reception of Tubba's speech in poem 4: 'when the king finished his verse, the princes and generals and soldiers applauded and wished the king success and long life and rejoiced in the might of that country and were certain of victory and of attaining their goal'.

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<sup>62</sup> ibid pp.344-345

Another example of how verse is required by the situation and is used effectively is poem 6<sup>63</sup>, where Murrah pleads for his life to the triumphant Tubba'. It is again a skilfully crafted argument by Murrah. First, he acknowledges Tubba's triumph: 'you have given the enemy and the envious something to savour' (اشمت العدا (والحاسدين). Then he reminds Tubba' that they are both in a similar position (a reminder of vulnerability as well as status): 'we are rulers like you, O King' (ونحن يا (ملك حكام مثلك). Finally he confirms his willingness to acknowledge defeat and pay the financial penalty: 'we have become your subjects...and we will pay a tithe punctually' (صرنا لك رعايا...وندفع دائما عشر المال حالا). His argument is successful: 'when Tubba' heard his verse, he pardoned him and gave him protection'.

As mentioned above, there is only one poem in the section which is not addressed to anyone. There is, however, clear motivation for it, albeit different from the other poems. It is poem 27<sup>64</sup>, where al-Zir is returning, with lion in tow, from his successful mission to the Well of Şandal: 'when he approached the camp, he thought of what had happened with his brother and the lion, and of how he was returning in triumph, and poetry welled up in him and he recited...'. In this instance, poetry results from emotion rather than from an intellectual need; it will be seen that this motivation is the usual one in most of the other *siyar*.

### (c) revelation of character

Revelation of character is not achieved through lyrical outpourings (as in certain other *siyar*), but through characters revealing themselves by the tone as well as the content of what they say. For example, just as Tubba's speeches show him to be an arrogant, authoritative, intelligent and effective king, Murrah's show him to be passive and feeble.

People's first poems are particularly significant in depicting character.

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<sup>63</sup> ibid p.12

<sup>64</sup> *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālīm* p.46

A good example is al-Zīr's first poem (no. 25)<sup>65</sup>, which occurs when he is answering Kulayb's question about how he managed to obtain the lioness's milk after being sent on a supposedly impossible mission by Jaḥīlah. The first line contains an introductory formula in the usual pattern, which refers to the afflictions of fate (الدهر), a reference which adds a sense of solemnity to the poem. There follow three lines of a gnomic character in which al-Zīr warns Kulayb first against listening to 'the words of the enemy' (قول الأعداء) and then against listening to women, 'for their words are undoubtedly lies' (لأن كلامها لا شك كاذب). As well as being evidence of al-Zīr's intelligence in warning Kulayb against the machinations of Jaḥīlah, it reflects a key element in his character: his total distrust of women. The remaining 14 lines of the poem consist of pure narrative as al-Zīr describes how he kills a lion which attacks him but, when a protective lioness approaches him with her cubs, 'I wanted to flee' (ليت هارب) and he leaps into the branches of a tree (again, a reminder that the female is always the one to be feared most). Faced with the need to escape, he kills the lioness, takes the milk which was the object of his quest, and returns with the seven cubs and the heads of the lion and lioness. He describes how, on his return, he was welcomed by everyone and he concludes with a simple statement:

وهذا ما جرى لي في نهاري وما قاسيت من هول المصائب

(This is what happened to me today

and the terrifying trials I endured).

It is a bare, unadorned, 'matter-of-fact' narrative which tells his story excitingly and effectively and is a perfect reflection of al-Zīr's character. As well as being brave and practical, he is frank and modest (as in his admission of fear). He does not go looking for trouble, but is unstoppable once forced to act.

Other examples of poetry revealing character are the first poems spoken by Jaḥīlah and Kulayb. It is surely no coincidence that Jaḥīlah's first poem should be a lesson in deceit, which foreshadows her future intrigues and trickery. In poem 13<sup>66</sup>, she sings for Tubba' and pretends to be burning for love of him: 'the fire of my heart is lit by love of him' (ومن حبه شغل بقلبي ناره), even while she is plotting his death. Even

<sup>65</sup> ibid p.43

<sup>66</sup> ibid p.24

her deceit is not straightforward, as she cannot resist ending with a gnomic warning: ‘O guardian of the orchard, watch over it for, if you do not take care, the birds will fly away’ (ألا يا حارس البستان صنه وإن فرطت فيه الطير طار).

So also. in poem 15<sup>67</sup>, Kulayb’s first poem serves to establish his role as a firm ruler when he refuses the defeated Tubba’s plea for mercy. After articulating his new status: ‘today I have become the Ruler’ (أنا قد صرت هذا اليوم حاكم), he enumerates Tubba’s crimes: ‘you killed my father and ruined the country’ (قتلت أبي وخربت البلاد), before giving his decision: ‘I won’t change my decision to cut off your head’ (فلمست (براجع عن قطع رأسك).

(d) dramatic speech

If it is possible to see *Zīr Sālīm* as an early form of Arabic novel, containing all the elements of plot, theme and character development, which would be expected in a modern novel, it is also possible to see it as an early example of Arabic dramatic art. There are only three cases, in the chosen section, where verse is used for an exchange of speeches: poems 1 and 2<sup>68</sup>, where Murrah and Rabī‘ah discuss their children’s marriages; poems 14 and 15<sup>69</sup> where Tubba’s plea for mercy is refused by Kulayb; and poems 28 and 29<sup>70</sup>, where al-Zīr relates his success at the Well of Ṣandal and is congratulated by Kulayb. However, it is ‘dramatic’ poetry in as much as it is put into the mouths of the different characters taking part in the action and it is performed as though on a stage in a scene of a play. This impression is enhanced by the spatial dimensions of the *sīrah*’s action, which tends to be centred in one of three locations: the Qaysite court, the Yemenite court and the Yemenite headquarters after their defeat of the Qaysites. Events are reported as happening elsewhere (such as the Governor’s treachery in Damascus and the battles between the Qaysite and Yemenite armies), but the main action moves between these three settings where the characters meet and talk. In this respect, the structure of the *sīrah* is similar to that of a play. It can be seen, from Appendix 1, that poems tend

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<sup>67</sup> ibid p.29

<sup>68</sup> ibid p.4

<sup>69</sup> ibid pp.26-29

<sup>70</sup> ibid pp.46-47

to occur each time that the scene changes, which suggests that they are important to the dramatic impact of the narrative.

It would be interesting to know whether, in oral recitations, the verse was ‘acted’ by the reciter altering his voice and gestures to suit the different characters. The relatively scarce accounts of performances of the *siyar* do not give a clear picture, but there is some support for this view in Lane’s description of an audience in Cairo being amused ‘with the lively and dramatic manner of the narrator’<sup>71</sup> and in Nerval’s description of ‘l’animation du récit’ in his account of listening to the story of ‘Solomon and the Queen of the Morning’ over a period of two weeks.<sup>72</sup> Claudia Ott’s more recent account, of Si Mlūd reciting *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* in Tunis, does not describe ‘acting’ but states that the poetry was always delivered with greater emphasis and on a different note from the prose, and observes also that Si Mlūd would keep greater eye contact with his audience during the poems.<sup>73</sup> And there is no suggestion of drama in Taha Husayn’s famous account of his listening to the ‘gentle and pleasant’ voice of the *sha‘ir* in his childhood.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps the most convincing, as well as the most complete, account is to be found in Dwight Reynolds’ description of performances of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, albeit limited to performances of a single epic composed entirely in verse. The first two performers are described as giving spirited, dramatic performances: the first ‘...sways back and forth, waves his rabab in the air, employs a wide repertory of facial gestures and humourous voices for such characters as old women, religious judges, Christians, Jews and villains’, and the second ‘is lively in performance and also uses comic effects’ (although hindered by old age and a lack of teeth). However the third performance was ‘stark and even severe....and might be termed monotonous’, while the fourth performer ‘uses little facial expression, no body movement, and little variation in tone, volume or tempo. The result ...is monotonous.’<sup>75</sup> This description of individual performances makes it clear that the degree of drama introduced into a performance would depend on the skills and style of the performer concerned. It is likely that the impact of the verse in *Zīr Sālim*, as in the other *siyar*, will often have

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<sup>71</sup> Lane (1986) p.397

<sup>72</sup> Nerval (1984) p.670

<sup>73</sup> Ott (2003) pp.198-201

<sup>74</sup> Husayn (1981) p.5

<sup>75</sup> Reynolds (1995) pp.128-136

been heightened by individual narrators taking advantage of the opportunities offered to alter their voice and gestures to fit the different characters.

It follows from the dramatic nature of the verse that it is ‘bespoke’ rather than ‘ready-made’, for it has to be suited to the particular speaker and situation. It is relevant that almost none of the 29 poems in this section could be moved to, or have originated in, a separate work. A possible exception is the old lady geomancer’s description of Jaḫlīlah’s beauty to Tubba‘ in poem no. 11.<sup>76</sup> This is a conventional description of a beautiful woman, whose only specificity is a passing reference to the Banū Qays and to Murrah. In this respect the poetry in *Zīr Sālim* is playing a very different role from the poems in some of the other *siyar*, where the verse passages are often quotations and seldom contain specific references to characters or events in the *sīrah*.

### (iii) The Great Epic

There is one poem in *Zīr Sālim* of exceptional length and of a strikingly different character from the other poems, so that it demands separate treatment. That is poem 14<sup>77</sup>, of 75 lines, which is described in the text as ‘the great epic’ (الملحمة الكبرى) of Tubba‘ Ḥasān. The text of the poem is shown in Appendix 3.

It is spoken by Tubba‘, when he has been told by Kulayb that he is going to die. He asks Kulayb to grant him time ‘so that I may tell you of all the matters and changes which will occur until the end of time for they have been explained to me and I have fallen into the company of the intelligent’<sup>78</sup>.

The formal characteristics of the poem are no different to the other poems, apart from the fact of its length. It is devoid of imagery, but uses constant parallelism, antithesis and repetition (notably of rhyme-words, as in poem 16 above). However

<sup>76</sup> *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* p.21

<sup>77</sup> *ibid* p.26

<sup>78</sup> شرك could equally be translated as ‘polytheism’ or ‘trap’, which adds to the impression that Tubba’s knowledge is a source of misfortune.

the subject-matter is very far from usual and has no direct link with its context in the *sīrah*, beyond the fact that it spoken by one king to another when the former is facing death and it is therefore appropriately concerned with matters of extreme gravity: nothing less than the future of the world.

The structure and content of the poem can be broken down as follows:

lines

1- 3 introduction:

after introducing himself and praising Kulayb as ‘the protector of women on the day of battle, Tubba‘ states the purpose of his poem:

أريد اليوم أن أعلمك شيئا لتعرف حال أخبار العباد

today I want to inform you of something

so that you will have knowledge of mankind.

4- 8 the past:

Tubba‘ refers to the Prophets: Moses, David and Jesus, stressing the latter’s special status ‘because God chose him to be a sacrifice’ (لأن الله اختاره يفادي).

9 the present:

Tubba‘ acknowledges that he is going to be killed by Kulayb.

10-71 the future:

10-17 events in the *sīrah*, from the death of Kulayb himself to the birth of Jarū and the death of al-Zīr;

18-22 events involving heroes of other *siyar*: Sayf Dhū Yazan and ‘Antar ‘who routs the enemy on the day of battle’;

23-26 the coming of Muhammad, ‘who establishes religion amongst mankind’, and of his Companions, ‘people of good guidance’;

27-35 the rule of the first Caliphs, Abu Bakr, ‘Umrān and ‘Alī, followed by Ummayyads and the Abassids, until the coming of the Kharijites, ‘who with their love of obscenity and

- obstinacy fill all lands with their corruption’;
- 36-43 the *Banī Hilāl*, under their leaders Ḥasan, Diyāb and Abū Zayd, ‘obliterate the oppressors everywhere’;
- 44-57 successive invaders and tyrants, including Tamurlane and Genghis Khan, result in war and dissension and ‘blood flows throughout the land’, culminating in the coming of the anti-Christ (الذجال);
- 58-60 the coming of the Maḥdī, ‘who spreads his light in every valley’, followed by Jesus and the Dayah;
- 61-71 Apocalypse: ‘the world will collapse in death...fire will lay the whole world to waste...the gate of mercy will be closed’.
- 72-73 conclusion:  
Tubba‘ claims the gift of divination (الجفر) and urges Kulayb: ‘listen O Prince Kulayb to the truth of what I have told you and understand my meaning’.
- 74-75 plea for mercy:  
Tubba‘ finishes with a plea for mercy.

A number of remarkable features can be discerned in the poem’s view of history and the future. These include:

- (i) the modest space given to the coming of Islam and the role of Muhammad;
- (ii) the relative prominence given to the heroes of the *siyar* and especially the *Banī Hilāl* (whose exploits occupy more lines than those of Muhammad and his Companions);
- (iii) the way in which periods of justice and success are never lasting and good times are always followed by bad (even Islam is not presented as something which effected a lasting change for the better); and

- (iv) the fact that the final message is one of total annihilation. The coming of the Mahdī and Dāyah, and the second coming of Christ, are followed by the obliteration of all mankind in a final holocaust. It is noteworthy that the apocalypse is not presented as a purging of the sinful and preservation of the faithful, but as a total obliteration of mankind:

يموت الخلق منه ليس يبقى سوى الرحمن خلاق العباد

mankind will perish from it, no-one remaining except the merciful creator of men.

Given that the content of this poem is extraneous to the action of the *sīrah*, it is reasonable to look for extra significance in it. The theme which can be discerned in the above summary is very similar to that of poem 16 analysed in C above: namely, the transience of power and the vicissitudes of history and fate. Whereas, in the earlier poem, the theme was based on the individual experience of Tubba‘, in the great Epic it is expanded to cover the history of the whole world. The poem can be seen to be central to the whole *sīrah* as a statement of the main theme running through it. The references to other *siyar* (*Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*, ‘*Antarah* and *Banī Hilāl*) suggest that the theme is central also to the *siyar* as a whole.

This view is supported by Sa‘īd Yaqṭīn in his study of the *siyar*: *Qāla ‘l-Rāwī*, where he singles out the Great Epic as what he terms الوظيفة المركزية (the main theme) of the *sīrah*. He comments also on the significance of the poem as a piece of divination, which plays a similar role to the book ‘from which wisdom flows’ stolen by Battāl in *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah*, to the Book of the Greeks in *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* and to the Book of the Nile in *Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*.<sup>79</sup> As Yaqṭīn points out, its role is similar to that of the many dreams and visions found in the *siyar*, which foreshadow actions to come (such as al-Rabāb’s dream at the start of *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah*, when she foresees her own death and the birth of her granddaughter Dhāt al-Himmah) or which directly cause such actions (such as Abdul Wahhāb’s vision of the Prophet in *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah*, who directs him to the tree which will provide the wood for the cross on which Uqbah will finally be crucified). However the role of the Great Epic is different in that it is not concerned

<sup>79</sup> Yaqṭīn (1997) pp.46-47

with specific characters or actions in the *sīrah*, but rather with stating the moral theme running through all of it.

## G. Conclusion

It is instructive to compare the use of poetry in *Zīr Sālim* with its use in other Arabic works which combine prose and poetry. In his study of ‘prosimetrical works in classical Arabic literature’, concentrating in particular on the *Ayyām al-‘arab* and the *Maqamāt*, Wolfhart Heinrichs found three main roles for poetry:

- (1) the first is to act as a *shāhid*, or witness, to attest to the accuracy of what is reported in prose and to add to it the authority which only verse can provide - this role can be traced back to the pre-Islamic notion of poetry as the *dīwān al-‘arab* (the ‘archive of the Arabs’);
- (2) the second role is to achieve what he calls poetry/prose equivalency or *‘aqd wa ḥall* (‘solidification [of prose] and dissolution [of poetry]’); and
- (3) the third role he describes as *tamaththul* (‘assimilation’), by which he means the quoting of a poetic parallel, ‘designed to enhance the emotional charge of the narrative’ (he comments that most poems in the *1001 Nights* fall into this category).<sup>80</sup>

If we look at the poetry in *Zīr Sālim* against these objectives, it can be seen that there are few similarities:

- (1) the poetry is seldom repeating what has been stated in prose, so as to confirm it, but rather it is expanding on what is usually a very brief prose statement by the relevant character (as in poem 3 discussed above);
- (2) it follows that there is seldom ‘equivalency’ between prose and poetry; and

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<sup>80</sup> Heinrichs (1997) pp.270-271

- (3) there is not a single example in *Zīr Sālim* of the quoting of a poetic parallel (unlike other *siyar*).

So there are only very slight elements of the above roles in the poetry in *Zīr Sālim*. It is significant that Werner Caskel, in his study of the *Ayyām*, found that there was only a loose connection between prose and poetry (the poetry tending to be grouped together at the end of the prose). Poems might refer to events described in the prose, but in doing so their role was not to advance the action but to provide scholarly support for the reported facts.<sup>81</sup> The poetry in *Zīr Sālim* can be seen to be fundamentally different from this, since it is not separate from, or secondary to, the prose. It is an essential part of the work alongside the prose. It is the principal means of communication between the characters and the means through which their characters are revealed. It is, essentially, the means by which characters affirm their identity and existence, as stressed by the formulas with which they open their poems. As will be found in the other *siyar*, poetry has a role and status in its own right in *Zīr Sālim*: it is the tool, alongside their weapons, which people use to achieve their objectives. And as Kulayb comments to the defeated Tubba' (in poem 15<sup>82</sup>): 'words are mightier than swords' (كلام أشد من ضرب الهناد).

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<sup>81</sup> Caskel (1928) pp.59-77

<sup>82</sup> *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* p.29

## Chapter 3

### *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*

## A. Introduction

Tales of the exploits of the Banī Hilāl have been transmitted in various forms and compilations, oral and written. The oral versions of the tales consist solely of verse and their performance, which has continued until the present day, has been analysed by Dwight Reynolds in *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes*.<sup>83</sup> The printed texts consist of two cycles, or collections of stories, which are generally known as *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* (which Malcolm Lyons refers to as *Banī Hilāl al-Kubrā*<sup>84</sup>) and *Taghrībat Banī Hilāl*. The former covers the earlier part of the tribe's history, from the birth of Abu Zayd until the tribe's decision to emigrate from Najd when it has been devastated by drought, while the latter chronicles the tribe's struggles to establish a new homeland in North Africa.

This chapter deals with the poetry in *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*. It is a continuation of the story told in *Sīrat Zīr Sālim*, whose death is explicitly referred to as the starting-point of the *sīrah*.<sup>85</sup> The two *siyar* have much in common: poetry forms a large and central part of each text and the form, subject-matter and role of the poetry in each *sīrah* share many common features which are not found in the other *siyar*.

Svetozár Pantucek has discussed the different manuscripts of the written *sīrah* in his 1970 study of the work and includes a some brief comments on the poetry<sup>86</sup> which will be mentioned below.

NB: All references to the text of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* are to the edition published by *al-Maktabah al-Thaqāfiyah* in Beirut (undated)

Poems are numbered as shown in Appendix 4.

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<sup>83</sup> Reynolds (1995)

<sup>84</sup> Lyons (1995)

<sup>85</sup> *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* p.5

<sup>86</sup> Pantucek (1970) pp.121-125

## B. Section chosen for analysis

### (i) Volume and distribution of verse

The *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* consists of 393 printed pages and contains 324 pieces of verse amounting to a total of 2,378 lines. The verse is approximately 26.3% of the total text (measured in lines), which is very similar to the proportion of 27% found in *Zīr Sālim*. The average length of the poems is 7.3 lines, which is also similar to *Zīr Sālim*'s average of 8.8 lines.

The length of the poems varies between 2 and 36 lines. The following table shows the breakdown of the lengths of all the poems:

<u>number of lines</u>	<u>number of poems</u>	<u>% of total</u>
1-2	3	1%
3-5	120	37%
6-10	159	49%
11-20	35	11%
20+	7	2%

The section chosen for detailed examination is pages 5 to 57, which contain the first two stories (each section of the 31 sections of the work is described in its title as a *قصة*): the *Story of Jābir and Jubair* (pages 5-26) and the *Story of Khadrā* (pages 27-57). It contains 78 pieces of verse, amounting to 490 lines. The verse is approximately 40% of the total text (which is significantly higher than the average for the whole work of 26.3% - a phenomenon noted also in *Zīr Sālim*).

The length of the poems in the chosen section varies between 3 and 17 lines, with an average length of 6.3 lines, comparable to the average of 7.3 lines for the *sīrah* as a whole.

(ii) **Synopsis of section's plot**

A detailed outline of the plot can be found in Appendix 4: 'Placement of poems in *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* (pp.5-57)'. The following are brief summaries of the two stories.

(a) The story of Jābir and Jubair

This story relates events in the lives of the first two generations of the Banī Hilāl, shortly after the coming of Islam. The founder of the tribe, Hilāl, becomes leader of the Arabs after assisting the Prophet in his struggles with Mecca. He fathers a son, Mundhir, who grows up as a mighty warrior but falls out with his father, leaves home and becomes an outlaw. He seeks refuge with King Muhadhhab of Shīkh, marries Muhadhhab's daughter, Hadhbā, and assumes the kingship. After failing to produce a son, he marries a second wife, Adhbā, after which both wives produce sons: Hadhbā - Jābir and Adhbā - Jubair. Mundhir favours Jābir until eventually Adhbā and Jubair leave. Jābir hates Jubair and warns neighbouring rulers not to help him, but Jubair is welcomed by al-Nu'mān, the ruler of Najd, after saving al-Nu'mān from defeat by a neighbouring tribe. He marries al-Nu'mān's daughter, assumes the kingship and acquires a reputation for generosity. He becomes reconciled with his father, Mundhir, but not with his brother Jābir.

(b) The story of Khaḍrā

This story deals with the birth and early life of the *sīrah*'s hero, Abū Zayd, whose father, Rizq, is a great-great-grandson of Jābir.

Rizq's uncle, Hāzim, who is the leader of the Banī Hilāl, is asked to send help by the Emir of Mecca, Qirḍāb, who is threatened with invasion by al-Absha', the King of Rūm. An army is sent under the command of Rizq and Sirhān (Hāzim's son) and routs the invaders after Rizq kills al-Absha'. In gratitude, Qirḍāb gives his daughter Khaḍrā as a wife to Rizq, who returns with her to the Banī Hilāl. In due course Khaḍrā gives birth: first to a beautiful girl and then to a son whose colour is black. Sirhān suggests that he must be the son of a black slave and Rizq divorces Khaḍrā

on the spot (despite an earlier warning from Qirdab that Khaḍrā's ancestors were black). Khaḍrā leaves with her son, Barakāt, and seeks refuge with King Zaḥlān. Barakāt grows up as a good scholar as well as warrior. He wins Zaḥlān's trust by dealing with a brigand extorting money from him and is appointed commander of the army and as Zaḥlān's successor.

Meanwhile the Banī Hilāl's land has become barren and they try to move on to Zaḥlān's land. Barakāt opposes this and fights Rizq, without their realising that they are father and son. When the truth comes out in the course of the fight, Barakāt is furious. He defeats Rizq and only spares his life at the request of his mother and Zaḥlān. Barakāt is reconciled with the Banī Hilāl and they call him 'Abu Zayd' (because he was greater than them). He marries one of Zaḥlān's daughters and succeeds to the throne. Rizq has admitted his injustice towards Khaḍrā and is reconciled with her.

### C. Example: poem 59<sup>87</sup>

#### (i) Introduction

Poem 59 has been chosen as a text to be analysed because formally it is a good example of the features found in all the *sīrah*'s poetry (to be discussed in D below) and because its content is important in the context of the story.

Poem 59 is spoken by Khaḍrā to King Zaḥlān as she pleads for his support at a moment of great tension. Having been divorced and sent back to her family by Rizq, and fearing that her dishonour will result in her death, she has persuaded her escort to take her instead to the land of King Zaḥlān who is renowned for his generosity. She has received a friendly welcome and set up her tent, when Zaḥlān visits her and sees writing on the tent which suggests that she is from a hostile tribe, the Duraidī. This poem is Khaḍrā's attempt to explain her predicament and to win his support.

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<sup>87</sup> *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* p.43

## (ii) Text

دھري ضناني يا أمير وهانني	1
أنا الملك الابشع يهدم بلادنا	2
فأرسل أبي إلى هلال وجابهم	3
وزوجني أبي لرزق وجابني	4
جبت له بنت مليحة زمانها	5
وبعد سبعة أعوام جبت بعدها	6
ولكنه باللون يا أمير أسمر	7
أما الامير سرحان لما شافه	8
فقال رزق تكون خضرا طالقة	9
وقال يا قايد روح وديها	10
فقلت يدروا بحالي ويقتلوني	11
فجيت لعندك استظل بظلك	12

This can be translated as:

- 1 My life has worn me out O Prince and brought me low  
and my heart is oppressed with care and sorrows

King al-Absha' came to destroy our country  
to destroy our temples and all our lands

my father sent to the Hilāl and brought them  
and they killed al-Absha' with the point of the lance

my father married me to Rizq and he brought me  
to his tribe the Hilāl and this is what happened

- 5 I brought to him the most beautiful of girls  
I named her Shīḥah openly

and after seven years I brought after her  
a male child the finest of boys

but his colour O Prince was dark  
and all the Arabs felicitated Rizq on him

but the prince Sirḥān when he saw him  
saw his likeness to a black slave

Rizq said Khaḍrā is divorced  
and gave me to the rabble and the herdsmen

10 he said O Qāyid go and return her  
to her family rightfully and openly

so I said when they know my position they will kill me  
while my child is being suckled O worthy Zaḥlān

so I came to you to seek your protection  
and my heart on seeing you has become joyful.

[ for ease of consultation, the Arabic text  
of the poem is shown also in Appendix 5 ]

### (iii) Analysis

The content of the poem divides neatly into three equal sections: after the first 4 lines have described how Khaḍrā came to marry Rizq, the central 4 lines tell the story of the marriage up to the birth of her black son and the final 4 lines deal with the aftermath.

There is no introductory formula at the start of the poem, such as is usual in the *sīrah* (and was found in almost all of the poems in *Zīr Sālim*). This reflects the urgency of what Khaḍrā has to say. The first hemistich is used instead to highlight her predicament. Indeed the opening word, دهري (my life or destiny), is a sign of the gravity of what she has to say. Her subject, as well as what is at stake for her, is nothing less than her life. Her position is summed up in the two verbs which dominate the hemistich: هانني and ضناني. Life has worn her out and brought her low. Extra stress is provided by the repetition of four *ī* and three *ā* sounds in the hemistich: *dahrī ḍanānī yā amīr wa-hanānī*. The 1<sup>st</sup> person possessive suffix in دهري at the start of the first hemistich is mirrored by قلبي at the start of the second. The two verbs of the first hemistich are replaced by two nouns, which express the state of her heart: الهم (distress) and الاحزان (sorrows). The *ī* and *ā* sounds are repeated to increase the unity of the whole line.

The first third of the poem, lines 1-4, tells the story of how Khaḍrā came to marry Rizq. It is told simply, without adornment, but words are repeated to stress the key elements of the narrative. In line 2, the verb هدم (to destroy) occurs in each hemistich as she describes the threat faced by her father, Qirḍāb. Then the verb جاب (to bring, come with) is repeated at the end of each first hemistich of lines 3 and 4. The lines contrast Qirḍāb's sending for the Banī Hilāl in line 3 with Rizq's taking his bride home in line 4.

The narrative of Khaḍrā's story in the first section has been swept along by the force of the verbs which have opened each of lines 2-4: أرسلا - أتانانا. Line 5 starts the second section with another verb, جبت, to describe the delivery of Khaḍrā's daughter, echoing its use in lines 3 and 4. And the verb is repeated in line 6 for the delivery of her son seven years later. The verb جاب has thus linked all the key elements in the story: the coming of the Banī Hilāl, Khaḍrā's marriage and the births of her two children.

The focus in lines 6-8 shifts to the second hemistich of each line, where the opening words of the hemistich reflect the decline in Khaḍrā's fortune: in line 6 she delivers

a male child (ولد ذكر), in line 7 Rizq is congratulated on his child (هنوا به) but in line 8 the baby is likened to a black slave (شبهه بالعبد من السودان). The structure of the first 4 lines is echoed by repetitions: in line 7 the apostrophic يا امير of line 1 is repeated to add emphasis to the key word that follows: أسمر, and سائر in the second hemistich echoes the سائر in line 2.

Lines 9-11 all start with the verb قال, and the stress is put on the words at the end of each of the first hemistiches, which encapsulate the key events as Khaḍrā's life falls apart: in line 9 she is divorced (طالقة), in line 10 she is sent home (وديعها) and in line 11 she is in fear of her life (يقتلونني). Line 10 ends with the words بلا كتمان (openly), echoing the ending of line 5 and serving to contrast the former celebration of Khaḍrā's first child with her current disgrace.

The final line starts with another verb, which brings the action up to the present: فجيت لعندك (so I came to you). The repetition of ظل at the end of the hemistich, in استظل بظلك (I seek your protection) reinforces the urgency of her request for a refuge. And the final hemistich rounds off the poem by echoing the second hemistich of the first line, starting with the same words, وقلبي, and highlighting the difference between Khaḍrā's mood before and after meeting Zaḥlān: the first line ending in sorrow (الاحزان) and the last line in joy (فرحان).

#### D. Form and structure of the poetry

##### (i) Form and structure of poem 59

The poem complies with the conventions of classical Arabic poetry in consisting of lines of 2 hemistiches and in using a 'monorhyme', but metrically it follows the example of the poetry in *Zir Sālim* by using a 4-stress rhythm which does not comply with any of the classical metres.

It is similar to the poetry in *Zir Sālim* also in the simplicity of its language and the lack of imagery. Its structure, however, is far from simple. It was noted above that

the poem falls into three sections dealing respectively with Khaḍrā's marriage, the birth of her children and the aftermath. It is also possible to define the structure as falling into two halves, whose centre is the birth of the son: the first half leads up to the birth and the second deals with the consequences. The structure is completed by the linking of the ending to the beginning through the contrasting of Khaḍrā's mood before and after seeking refuge with Zaḥlān. These features all point to the existence of a 'ring structure'.

In her study of 'ring composition', Mary Douglas states: 'The minimum criterion for a ring composition is for the ending to join up with the beginning'.<sup>88</sup> But she lists additional features which add to the effectiveness of the structure. These include the splitting of the work into two halves and the existence of a 'central place'. And she comments: 'Ring composition is parallelism with an important difference.... the structure is chiasmic; it depends on the 'crossing over' or change of direction of the movement at the middle point'.<sup>89</sup>

The splitting of the poem into two halves, the existence of a 'central place' and the joining of the ending to the beginning have all been noted. Also striking is the chiasmic arrangement of the two halves of the poem. In lines 2 and 11, the threatened destruction of Qirḍāb's land is matched by the threat to Khaḍrā's life; in lines 3 and 10, the sending for the Banī Hilāl is matched by the sending away of Khaḍrā; in lines 4 and 9, Khaḍrā's marriage is matched by her divorce, and her being brought to the Hilāl by her being given away to the rabble; and in lines 5 and 8, the birth of a beautiful girl is matched by Sirḥān's insinuation about the son. The 'central place' is provided by lines 6 and 7, where the birth of a male child is matched by the fact of its dark colour.

The chiasmic parallelism can be illustrated by the following diagram:

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<sup>88</sup> Douglas (2007) p.1

<sup>89</sup> *ibid* p.6

<i>line 1</i>	I need a refuge	<i>line 12</i>
sorrowful		joyful
<i>line 2</i> threat to destroy our land		<i>line 11</i> threat to my life
<i>line 3</i> sends for Bani Hilāl		<i>line 10</i> sends away Khaḍrā
<i>line 4</i> married to Rizq and brought to the Hilāl		<i>line 9</i> divorced by Rizq and given away to the rabble
<i>line 5</i> birth of beautiful girl		<i>line 8</i> Sirḥān's insinuation about black son
<i>line 6</i> birth of son	BUT	<i>line 7</i> his colour is black

(ii) **Formal characteristics of the poetry as a whole**

The formal characteristics of the poetry as a whole are similar to those found in poem 59 (and in the poetry of *Zīr Sālim*). Almost all of the poems comply with the conventions of classical Arabic in consisting of lines of 2 equal hemistiches and in having a consistent end-rhyme or monorhyme. There is, however, one poem whose

rhyme scheme is far from conventional. That is poem 71<sup>90</sup>, which is set out in 2-hemistich lines, whose hemistiches rhyme according to the following scheme:

a	-	a
b	-	a
c	-	a
d	-	d
a	-	d
d	-	d
e	-	c
c	-	c
c	-	a
f	-	a
g	-	g
b	-	h
h	-	a.

There is no strophic, or even consistent, pattern discernible here. It may, however, be significant that this poem occurs at a moment of intense emotion. It is spoken by Khaḍrā when her son, Barakāt, has fallen dead at her feet and is addressed to him: *بركات يا خليفة الحزين* (O Barakāt child of sorrow!). The disturbed rhyme scheme can therefore be seen as a deliberate way of conveying the turmoil of Khaḍrā's emotions.

There are four examples of strophic forms to be found in later sections of the *sīrah*<sup>91</sup>. They are all *musammāt* and form a conversation in the *Story of Shammā and Zahr al-Bān*, when Shammā and Zahr al-Bān have appeared to Sirḥān, who is in a state of bewilderment after being transformed from a swine-herd to a cosseted protégé of the king's, and have challenged him to say who they are (he has just spent 20 days and nights closeted with Zahr al-Bān, but is too confused to recognise her in new finery). The use of these unusual strophic forms, at this point in the *sīrah*, may be explained by the strange, other-worldly experience which the story's hero, Sirḥān, is undergoing. The unusual versification can be seen as a reflection of

<sup>90</sup> *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* p.51

<sup>91</sup> *ibid* pp.91-93

his disturbed state of mind, in the same way that poem 71 could be seen as reflecting the shock experienced by Khaḍrā.

Like poem 59 (and *Zīr Sālim*), none of the poems has a metre which is identifiable as one of the 16 canonical metres of classical Arabic poetry, but there is a consistent 4-stress rhythm if *i'rāb* is omitted as normal in colloquial speech (also many of the lines contain exactly four words).

### (iii) Structure, style and imagery of the poetry as a whole

The language of the verse is similar to that of the prose, using a 'middle' level of Arabic combining classical and colloquial grammar and vocabulary. The vocabulary, like the style, is simple. There is an almost complete lack of imagery and the few images are conventional: the reputation of the Banī Hilāl is كالمسك فايح (like sweet-smelling musk) (poem 2)<sup>92</sup>; horses are كالطيور الطائرات (like flying birds) (poem 33);<sup>93</sup> Rizq is كالسبع كاسر (like a rapacious lion) (poem 55)<sup>94</sup>; Barakāt is مثل سبع الغاب (like the lion of the forest) (poem 63)<sup>95</sup> and Rizq is مثل طير مقصوص جناح (like a bird with clipped wings) (poem 75).<sup>96</sup>

Again as in *Zīr Sālim*, the simplicity of the language and the absence of imagery are offset by the use of the bipartite structure to achieve parallelism and antithesis, as well as by the use of internal rhyme. The main rhetorical device is parallelism, which extends to the structure of many of the poems as well as to the binary structure of the individual lines. Many of the poems use a ring structure, although often it is not as complete as the example analysed above.

An example of a simple ring structure is found in poem 17<sup>97</sup>, in which Adhbā reproaches Mufliḥ as she says farewell to him. The poem is only 6 lines long. The

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<sup>92</sup> ibid p.6

<sup>93</sup> ibid p.30

<sup>94</sup> ibid p.40

<sup>95</sup> ibid p.45

<sup>96</sup> ibid p.54

<sup>97</sup> ibid p.17

first and last lines, 1 and 6, are linked through references to Adhbā's 'pained heart' (فؤاد موجه). The middle lines, 3 and 4, contain the main message of the poem: where Adhbā tells Muflīḥ طردتنا (you have driven us away) and comments that God has been kinder than him. The remaining two lines, 2 and 5, are also linked: in line 2 Adhbā and Jubair have **come** to Muflīḥ for a **refuge**, while in line 5 they are **departing** to find somewhere to **settle** with people of nobility. As well as being formed of three chiasmic pairs of lines, the poem also falls into two halves (the refugees coming to Muflīḥ in the first half and departing from him in the second), thereby displaying one of the key features of the ring structure, namely that it should be split into two halves by what Mary Douglas calls the 'mid-turn'.<sup>98</sup>

It is typical that the links between the lines should contain antithetical as well as similar references. This is particularly striking in poem 54<sup>99</sup>, where Rizq explains to Khaḍrā why he has divorced her. The first and last lines, 1 and 8, contrast the request for a son in line 1 with the dismissal of the son in line 8. The celebration of the birth in line 2 is contrasted with the divorce in line 7. The congratulations of the princes in line 3 are contrasted with their winks and laughter in line 6. The central lines contrast the baby wrapped in silk in line 4 with the fact of the baby's black colour in line 5.

The frequency of the ring structure, whether complex or simple, suggests that it is an integral feature of the *sīrah*'s verse. It has been suggested that the popularity of the ring structure in oral poetry is due to 'mnemonic necessity', as an aid to memory<sup>100</sup>, but Mary Douglas attaches more importance to what she calls its 'exegetical function', whose use stresses the importance of what is being said. As Douglas states: 'The elaboration is not just for fun; it is the way to say that something is important, something serious needs to be said, there is a message that must be heard'<sup>101</sup>.

<sup>98</sup> Douglas (2007) p.45

<sup>99</sup> *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* (n.d.) p.40

<sup>100</sup> Parks, W.W., in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Preminger and Brogan, Princeton, 1993, pp.1072-1073

<sup>101</sup> Douglas (2007) p.27

### E. Introductory formulas

Most of the poems start with a formula similar to that found in *Zīr Sālīm*: the speaker introduces himself with words such as *يقول* or *قال* followed by his name. This is particularly the case in the first story, where there is only one exception: poem 9, which starts with *أوصيك* (I advise you) and which is the only case where the first person is used and no name is given. In the second story, the formula is much less frequent and there are 20 exceptions (out of the total of 52 verse passages). There is no obvious pattern in the use or non-use of the formula, but it is generally replaced by opening vocative words such as *أيا ملك* (O King) (poem 40)<sup>102</sup> or *يا ولدي* (O my child) (poem 61).<sup>103</sup>

Indeed almost all of the poems contain words in the vocative case naming the person, or his title, to whom the poem is addressed (although these words are often not included in the opening line of the poem). There are only 11 exceptions out of the total of 78 poems, of which one is a soliloquy and five are letters, which tend to use only the 3<sup>rd</sup> person in asking the messenger to convey the message to the recipient.

The openings of the poems also usually contain words which indicate the mood of the speakers, generally in the second hemistich of the first line. Examples include:

poem 2: *ولي قلب زاد اليوم بالاجاع* (my heart has increased today in passion);<sup>104</sup>

poem 4: *ونيران قلبي زادات وقود* (the fire of my heart has increased in intensity);<sup>105</sup> and

poem 41: *ودمع الفرح هل على الوجنت* (tears of joy have appeared on my cheeks).<sup>106</sup>

The opening formulas in *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* are very similar to those in *Zīr Sālīm* and they can be seen as contributing to poetry's role both as an affirmation of identity

<sup>102</sup> *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* p.34

<sup>103</sup> *ibid* p.44

<sup>104</sup> *ibid* p.6

<sup>105</sup> *ibid* p.8

<sup>106</sup> *ibid* p.34

and existence and as the essential means of inter-personal communication. The openings of the poems play a crucial role in establishing the status, in the speaker's view, of both speaker and addressee: a status which is fundamental to the dialogic nature of the verse. An extreme example is poem 64<sup>107</sup>, where the positional manoeuvring forms the entire substance of the two speeches which form the poem (divided by an intervention from the narrator, see F (ii) (b) below). In the first speech, Abū Jūd presents himself as 'the fearsome prince' (الامير المرجفي) and Barakāt as 'the dog of the Arabs' (كلب العرب). In the second speech, Barakāt does not describe Abū Jūd beyond observing that he and his army will be wiped out, but he presents himself with the words: 'don't regard me as a slave, I am a champion in battle' (لا تحسبوني عبداً أنا بطل اللقا). The dialogic nature of the verse will be discussed further in F below.

## F. Content and role of the poetry

### (i) Content and role of poem 59

If the content and role of poem 59, whose form and structure has been considered above, are examined in the context of the narrative surrounding it, the following features can be identified:

- it is spoken by one major character, Khaḍrā, to another major character, Zaḥlān;
- it occurs at a key moment of great tension, when Khaḍrā is seeking Zaḥlān's protection in the face of his hostile attitude, and the audience is wondering whether he will agree to help her;
- the content of the poem is both narrative and emotional. It tells the story of how Khaḍrā has arrived at her current predicament and at the same time it conveys her emotional distress;

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<sup>107</sup> ibid p.46

- it portrays the speaker's character. Khaḍrā's strength of character and intelligence are apparent in a skilful plea where she explains how she has been wronged and, in case this does not sway Zaḥlān sufficiently, makes the point that the fate of her baby child is also at stake;
- it is carefully designed to achieve its purpose and to fit its audience. Khaḍrā is addressing a powerful king, from whom she is soliciting a favour, while she herself is both nobly born and a refugee who has been divorced for adultery. As well as presenting herself as the daughter of a ruler, she portrays the 'worthy Zaḥlān' as a protector at the sight of whom she is filled with joy. The success of her diplomacy is shown in Zaḥlān's reply (using the same rhyme), in which he twice addresses her as 'O noble lady' while offering her what she wants.

These features are shared by many of the poems in the chosen section. A feature which is less common is that Khaḍrā has chosen to speak in verse without any prior statement in prose beyond a formal greeting: 'she greeted him and turned to him saying...'. It will be noted in (ii) below that poems are often restatements of what has already been said, or reported, in prose, albeit with important differences of emphasis.

## (ii) Content and role of the poems as a whole

### (a) introduction

The narrative context of all the poems in the section is shown in Appendix 4: 'Placement of poems in *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* (pp.5-57)'. It can be seen from this that the verse passages occur regularly and frequently throughout the two stories. Indeed, the poems are so regular and frequent that it would be possible to follow most of the plot without reading the prose. There are very few passages of even a single page not interrupted by verse. Exceptions include the beginning and ending

of the stories, when the narrator is setting the scene or tying up the loose ends of the plot, such as the genealogical passage on p. 27 which starts *The Story of Khaḍrā*. Other exceptions occur when general *mêlécs* take place in the battle scenes: for example, the battle between al-Nu‘mān’s and al-Jalīfi’s armies on p.18, the battle scene between the Banī Hilāl and al-Absha‘’s army on page 32 and the battle scene between Abū Jūd’s and Barakāt’s armies on page 45. Unlike the single combats, which are invariably excuses for poems from the combatants before the start (for example, the exchange between Rizq and al-Absha‘ in poems 39 and 40<sup>108</sup>), the general *mêlécs* provide no occasion for personal expression and verse would merely interfere with the excitement of the action once it has started.

All the poems follow the example of poem 59 in being spoken by one of the characters. As was found in *Zīr Sālīm*, there are no passages of verse spoken directly by the narrator, without the mediation of one of the characters (apart from two interjections in poems 64<sup>109</sup> and 67<sup>110</sup>, of a line and a hemistich respectively, where the narrator is simply providing a link between pieces of verse spoken by two different characters). It will be seen that this is one of the features which differentiate *Zīr Sālīm* and *Banī Hilāl* from the other *siyar*.

(b) descriptive verse

There is only one example of descriptive verse in the section. That is poem 42<sup>111</sup>, where Rizq replies to Qirḍāb’s invitation to choose one of his two daughters, Khaḍījah and Khaḍrā, as a bride. After the first line of formulaic introduction, in line 2 Rizq states that he loves Khaḍrā. In line 3, he follows a new, but presumably related, train of thought by referring to the facts of his cousinhood with Qirḍāb’s family and of their families’ living in Filāt.<sup>112</sup> In the next four lines, he recalls this place as somewhere of great natural beauty, describing the wonderful fruits:

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<sup>108</sup> *ibid* pp.33-34

<sup>109</sup> *ibid* p.46

<sup>110</sup> *ibid* p.48

<sup>111</sup> *ibid* p.35

<sup>112</sup> There is no record of any place of this name, so it may be a misprint for *filā* (desert), although this

would hardly be consistent with the fertility which the poem goes on to describe.

فيها سفرجان مع لوز وفستق وجوز وعناب كومات  
 including quince with almonds and pistachios  
 and walnuts and jujubes beautiful to see,

and the creatures to be found there:

فيها أجمل الوحوش تمرح بارضها والطير يغرد على الشجرات  
 there were the most beautiful wild animals enjoying the land  
 and birds warbling in the trees.

The poem ends with Rizq contrasting these natural beauties with the Najd and ‘the rest of the desert’ (سائر الملا).

The poem is another example of a simple ‘ring structure’, leaving aside the introductory line 1. Lines 2 and 9 both refer to the gift of Khadrā which Rizq is seeking: stressing in line 2 the benefits it will bring to Qirḍāb and in line 9 line the benefits to Rizq. Lines 3 and 8 both refer to the tribal desert home. These lines ring, and so highlight, the central four lines, 4-7, which contain the description of the land’s beauties.

The mention of Najd is particularly significant in placing the poem in what Jaroslav Stetkevych has called ‘the topology of nostalgia’.<sup>113</sup> In his study of the classical Arabic *nasīb*, Stetkevych points to the symbolic importance of Najd in the ‘*Udhri*’ phase of Arabic poetry and he talks of ‘the Bedouin poet’s passion and yearning for the places and landscape of his home and youth, usually in Najd.’<sup>114</sup>

The description of the fertile home-land which they inhabit is emblematic of a lost paradise, although the loss has not yet occurred in the story of the Banī Hilāl. The fact that it is the only emblematic verse in the section suggests its significance. It points to what will be the thread running through the whole of the Banī Hilāl *sīrah*,

<sup>113</sup> Stetkevych (1993) p.114

<sup>114</sup> *ibid* p.145

including *Taghrībat Banī Hilāl*: the tribe's search for a new homeland to replace the one which they have lost.

(c) dialogue

(i) introduction

In common with *Zīr Sālim*, and in contrast to the other *siyar*, *Banī Hilāl* displays a lack not only of emblematic verse (apart from poem 42 above) but also of soliloquies. It is intrinsic to the role of the verse that it should be part of a dialogue. On the three occasions when characters are alone and not addressing their verse to another character, they are praying to God (poems 10<sup>115</sup>, 50<sup>116</sup> and 51<sup>117</sup>, where Mundhir, Rizq and Khaḍrā respectively pray for the birth of sons).

(ii) different roles of prose and verse

Speech is by no means confined to verse and the main message in any piece of verse will often have been first expressed, or at least reported, in prose. It is therefore instructive to examine how prose and verse are used to play different roles in exactly similar circumstances. The differences can be observed in an examination of the first few poems of the *sīrah* :

poem 1:<sup>118</sup> This poem is the culmination of a passage where the narrator has described how Hilāl's son, Mundhir, has fallen out with his father and become an outlaw plundering his fellow-tribesmen and assaulting their women. In the poem, the tribesmen's spokesman, Naṣṣār, remonstrates with Hilāl about his son's actions, contrasting the son's behaviour with Hilāl's, and the tribe's, noble traditions. The poem employs a chiasmic ring structure and antithesis to make its points. The first and last lines

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<sup>115</sup> *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* p.11

<sup>116</sup> *ibid* p.38

<sup>117</sup> *ibid* p.39

<sup>118</sup> *ibid*.p.6

contrast Hilāl, as a prince ‘from a noble family’ in line 1, with his son who deserves death in line 6. Lines 2 and 5 contrast the Hilālī, who are generous and ‘the best and most illustrious’ (من خيار الناس ومن) (خاص العيال) in line 2, with his son who ‘has wronged us and slighted our women’ (قد أذانا وهاب نسانا) in line 5. The central lines contrast the king’s habit of **sending for** his knights in time of trouble, in line 3, with their **coming to** him with ten herdsmen in line 4.

Although the passage is only 6 lines long, it has been carefully structured so that the lines echo and reinforce each other. It has to be compared with the very simple prose statement which precedes it: ‘...they went to Prince Hilāl and greeted him and kissed his hands and complained to him about the deeds of his son Mundhir, while their leader Naṣṣār spoke as the age of the listeners lengthened.....’. It can also be compared with the previous speech in prose, when the chief of the tribesmen addresses his men: ‘...their prince said to them: come on, we will go to his father and complain to him about our situation. If his son’s bad and frivolous behaviour is restrained, we will forgive him out of respect for his father, but otherwise we will take our revenge against al-Mundhir’. The style and content of this speech is quite different from the verse, whose focus is on the emotional and moral dimensions of the situation: the ignoble behaviour of the scion of a noble family. Despite the drama of the situation, the prose speech remains a very matter-of-fact statement of intent.

The prose speech is also extremely blunt, as indicated by the use of words such as ردع (to forcibly restrain), غيه وطيشه (his sin and frivolity) and ثأر (blood vengeance). It throws into relief the diplomatic wording of the poem and the inter-personal skills which it displays. Naṣṣār devotes the first half of the poem to a respectful greeting and to praise of Hilāl and his illustrious forbears, before introducing himself and his companions in humble

terms as ‘ten herdsmen and vassals’. It is only in the fifth line of the poem that he tackles the issue of Mundhir’s behaviour and he does so in moderate terms: ‘he has wronged us and slighted our women’. Then he concludes in the last line by stressing the respect for Hilāl which has governed their actions: ‘if he was not your son O King...’. It is noteworthy that there is no reference to what Hilāl should do to correct his son’s behaviour, nor to the need for vengeance, which featured in his speech to his fellow-tribesmen.

As the first piece of verse in the *sīrah*, this poem serves to set the moral tone for the *sīrah*. Actions must be judged by the high standards of the Hilālī as set by their ancestors.

poem 2:<sup>119</sup> This poem, in which Hilāl writes to reproach Mundhir for his behaviour, is only separated from poem 1 by 3 lines. These contain Hilāl’s response to Naṣṣār, which is a model of succinct precision: ‘he said to Naṣṣār: “Be reassured! I will compensate you for what you have lost”’. It confirms that Naṣṣār’s poem has been effective in achieving its purpose, as does the Narrator’s description of Hilāl’s reaction to it: ‘he was greatly moved’. The verse which follows is not prefigured in any speech or statement. After an opening line in the usual form, containing a reference to the pain in Hilāl’s heart, lines 2 and 3 form a strong statement of the standards set by the tribe, whose reputation is described, in a rare image, as being like ‘sweet-smelling musk’. Line 2 refers to their bravery and line 3 states: ‘we do not produce cowards or bad men’. Lines 4 and 5 contain a formulaic instruction to the messenger to ride with all speed in delivering his message. The main substance of the poem, the message to his errant son, is contained in lines 5 to 12, which are carefully structured as a unit. The first 3 lines, 6 to 8, set out the complaint (‘the Banū Saḥīm

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<sup>119</sup> *ibid* p.6

have come...’), the central line 9 contains the judgement (‘you have disgraced our land...’) and the final 3 lines, 10- to 12, deliver the sentence (‘so return their possessions...’).

As was the case with poem 1, this poem contains a moral and emotional dimension lacking in the prose speech. Also as was the case with poem 1, the tone and the content of the poem have been perfectly suited to the situation and the poem’s target. The first four lines are dignified and restrained, while Hilāl is leading up to stating his instructions to his messenger, but when, in line 5, he starts the message to be delivered to Mundhir, the tone becomes increasingly tough and authoritarian as befits a king addressing a rebellious subject and a king addressing a disobedient son. After rehearsing Naṣṣār’s complaint, he delivers the harsh verdict: ‘you have disgraced my land O wicked one with your deeds’, orders him peremptorily to return obediently and ends with a warning that, if he does not do so, ‘I will kill you at once’.

poem 3<sup>120</sup>: Mundhir’s reaction to Hilāl’s letter is described very briefly in prose: ‘he tore it up and threw it away’. This suggests that Hilāl’s message has not been effective, but it is true to life as the likely reaction of a rebellious youth to a paternal rebuke. In any case, his reply in poem 3 is again couched in terms appropriate to the impression which he wants to make on his father. There is, however, no expression of anger to match his action in tearing up the letter and no discourtesy. He is not looking for a quarrel with his father, but he is presenting himself as standing his ground and unafraid of the consequences.

poem 4<sup>121</sup>: After three verse passages in rapid succession, separated by no more than 3 to 4 lines of prose, there is a gap of

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<sup>120</sup> *ibid* p.7

<sup>121</sup> *ibid* p.8

half a page between poems 3 and 4. This is filled with action as Naṣṣār's troops defeat Mundhir, who is forced to write to his father seeking pardon. The passage contains one prose speech, in which Hilāl issues instructions to Naṣṣār: 'Take your men and wage war against my son. Try to take him prisoner, but otherwise kill him and seize all his possessions.' Again this prose speech is very simple and practical, containing no emotional or moral elements. It has to be compared with poem 4, where Hilāl responds to Mundhir's request for pardon (whose text is not given).

The 8 lines of the poem are full of emotion and drama. In line 1, Hilāl opens with the usual formula but reminds Mundhir of his ancestry by adding a reference to his grand-father, 'Āmir, and he expresses his fury: 'the fire in my heart is intensifying'. He follows this up in the body of the poem by ordering Mundhir to stay away in line 2, accusing him of acting perfidiously and of defying God in line 3 and of ignoring his commands in line 4. Having described Mundhir's sins in the first half of the poem, in the next two lines he gloats over Mundhir's defeat, including how he received 'the treatment of Nimrod' (ميلة النمروذ) and how a slave had reported how he was helpless and afraid. The final line links with line 2 in warning Mundhir to stay away.

The fire and passion of the poem is, once again, very different from the low-key functional nature of the prose speech. There are many similar comparisons to be made between prose and verse in relation to other poems in the section. In defining the different roles of prose and verse in the *sīrah*, Svetozár Pantucek states that only the prose contains information about the actions of the characters and contrasts that with the role of the verse: 'In Versen sind die Reden der Helden und Briefe enthalten, weche vielmehr als ein aufhaltendes Mittel wirken; in Versen kommt der Erzähler auf die Handlung zurück, welche bereits abgeleufen war, und ergänzt hiemit verschiedene Einzelheiten, zu denen ausser anderender Lob der Heldentaten

gehört'<sup>122</sup> (the poetry contains the speeches and letters of the heroes, which act rather as a delaying factor; in the poems, the Narrator returns to past actions, and expands on different aspects of them, such as praise of heroic deeds). The above examples show that this assessment may underestimate the role of the poetry, whose power and subtlety - in contrast to the prose - plays an important part in the action of the *sīrah*.

(iii) structural characteristics

The special nature of the dialogue found in the poems is stressed by the form, as well as the content, of the poems. In all seventeen cases where poems are directly and immediately exchanged between two characters (including those where messages are exchanged by letter), the second piece of verse employs the same monorhyme as the first piece.<sup>123</sup> Similarity may also extend to the structure of the poem. Poem 60, for example, which is Zaḥlān's answer to Khaḍrā's plea in poem 59 (examined in C above), copies the earlier poem in using a ring structure (as well as the same monorhyme). Lines 1 and 5 are linked through the concept of 'gifts': in line 1 Zaḥlān is offering a home to Khaḍrā and in line 5 arms and a horse to Barakāt. Lines 2 and 4 are linked by 'joy': in line 2 Khaḍrā's arrival has driven away Zaḥlān's cares, while in line 4 she is told by Zaḥlān not to worry any more. The central line 3 contains the main message, which is the answer to Khaḍrā's plea for help in poem 59: Zaḥlān begs her to stay and invokes God (الواحد الديان). As normal in a ring, this line marks the 'mid-turn' between two halves: the first half was concerned with the past (Khaḍrā's arrival) while the second looks to the future (Zaḥlān's offer of security). Not only does the poem answer Khaḍrā's question, but it also echoes her main themes. Poem 59 is bracketed by the 'cares and sorrows' of line 1 and the 'joy' of line 12; so poem 60, in line 2, repeats the reference to cares and sorrows (الهم) (زالاحزان) and to joy (السعد). So too both poems move from a consideration

<sup>122</sup> Pantucek (1970) p.121

<sup>123</sup> Poems 2/3, 4/5, 12/13, 27/28, 30/31, 34/35, 36/37, 39/40, 41/42, 46/47, 48/49, 54/55, 59/60, 64 (2 speakers in 1 poem), 65/66, 67 (2 speakers in 1 poem) and 72/73

of the past to a view of the future.

The use of the ring structure here can be seen to play an important role in the dialogic nature of the two poems, adding an extra dimension to the inter-personal communication between Khadrā and Zahlān.

(d) tools of the plot

Poems 21-24<sup>124</sup> are poems of *madīh* spoken by professional poets to extract gifts from Jubair and Jābir. As such, they fall outside the usual category of dialogue between the main characters and can be categorised as ‘tools of the plot’. Their purpose is to expose the difference in character between Jubair and Jābir, the former being much the more generous, and to be yet another cause of friction between them.

It will be seen that there are cases in other *siyar* where poems are used as tools of the plot, but they are spoken always by people pretending to be poets for the purpose of deceit. There are also cases where ‘real’ historical poets, such as ‘Antarah, recite their poems, or where major characters, such as Jundabah in *Zīr Sālīm*, are presented as renowned poets as well as warriors. However, these poets can be described as ‘amateur’: their poetry is often the product of emotion and its only reward is the relief which it affords or the influence which it exerts. The poets in *Banī Hilāl* provide perhaps the only case in the *siyar*, apart from the episode of the hanging of the *mu‘allaqāt* in *Sīrat ‘Antarah*, where truly professional poets appear as such in the action of the *sīrah* and provide examples of their craft. It is therefore interesting to note that they are presented in a very different light from what might be called the ‘hero poets’ of the *siyar*. They perform to instructions and their main concern is the size of their financial reward.

As to be expected from such professionals, their poems are *madīh* of the person who can reward them and their praise is routine in character. The poet’s praise of Jubair in poem 21 is very general, not to say perfunctory, in nature: it refers simply to his

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<sup>124</sup> *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* pp.22-23

‘generosity’ (جودك), ‘reputation’ (صيتك) and ‘liberality’ (مكارمك). The poet is also refreshingly open about his motives, which he admits are ‘undeniable’ (بلا إنكار). The poet praising Mundhir and Jābir in poem 22 is no more impressive in his *madīh*, referring again (twice) to their generosity and stressing that they have come ‘hoping for gifts from you’ (رجو العطا منكم). But in the first line he provides what might be an epitaph for the professional poet: ‘all my life I speak to the generous’ (من طول عمري في الكرام أقول).

Despite the mundane nature of the praise, the poems are both well structured as ‘rings’. In poem 21, lines 1 and 6 focus on the poet’s target: in line 1 he says that from a young age he has aimed at princes, while in line 6 he addresses the king as ‘O mighty knight’. Lines 2 and 5 focus on what the poet wants: in line 2 he ‘cannot deny’ that they want gifts, while in line 5 he asks for ‘an abundance of gifts’. The central lines 3 and 4 focus on ‘generosity’ and contain the heart of the poem: they have come because they had heard of Jubair’s generosity. In poem 22, lines 1 and 6 are linked through the concept of ‘length’: in line 1 the poet has been speaking to generous people ‘all my life’, while the final words of the poem in line 6 describe Jābir’s arm as reaching ‘the whole length’. Lines 2 and 5 focus on the addressees: in line 2 he addresses the king and praises his and Jābir’s generosity, while in line 5 he describes the king’s power. The central lines again contain the heart of the poem: in line 3 he says that they have come hoping for gifts and in line 4 he asks for them.

In poem 23, one of the poets tells Jābir of Jubair’s generosity to them. In poem 24, one of the thirty poets, sent by Jābir to test Jubair’s generosity to the limit, seeks to stimulate it not through *madīh* of Jubair but through praising the generosity of Mundhir and Jābir. The praise is again unexceptional, but both poems adopt ring structures (in both cases, ignoring an opening line of introduction).

The significance of the careful structuring of these four poems is that it presents the poets as having poetic skills. The art of poetry is not being denigrated by their performance, but it throws into relief the use to which they are putting it. It seems very likely that there is satirical intent in the poems, aimed at elitist professional poets and highlighting their unashamed flattery and greed.

## G. Conclusion

It has been noted above that the verse in *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* is similar to the verse in *Zīr Sālim* in a number of respects, with regard both to form and content. This is not surprising, in view of the fact that *Banī Hilāl* is a continuation of the story begun in *Zīr Sālim*. It is also relevant that the verse in each *sīrah* is ‘bespoke’, written to fit the characters and the situation, rather than being imported from other (classical) sources. This fact is reflected in the failure of the verse to comply with classical metrical requirements. The relative simplicity of the language and the lack of imagery are also consistent with the non-classical nature of the verse. The frequent use of a ‘ring structure’ for the poems confirms that the verse, if simple, is also carefully and expertly structured.

The use of the ring structure is also indicative of the importance and the special role of poetry in the *sīrah*. There are two aspects to this role, which are closely linked. The first is the dialogic nature of the verse; the second is its moral and emotional content.

The dialogic quality of the verse has been observed in the openings of the poems and in the deliberate and skilful way in which poems are structured and aimed to hit their targets (as in poems 1-4, considered above). Inter-personal communication lies at the heart of the poetry. It may be relevant to this aspect of the verse that the language is different from that of classical poetry: its more colloquial quality enables it to avoid the monologic quality of what Bakhtin called ‘a poetic language’ and which he described as ‘yet another expression of that Ptolemaic conception of the linguistic and stylistic world’.<sup>125</sup> It has been noted in D above that poetry in the *sīrah* is used to add a moral and emotional dimension to the narrative, which contrasts with the functional role of prose. It was noted, in relation to *Zīr Sālim*, that this difference between prose and verse dialogue could be described in terms of the distinction which Bakhtin draws between ‘authoritative’ discourse and ‘internally persuasive’ discourse. The verse in *Banī Hilāl* is another example of this dialogic quality.

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<sup>125</sup> Bakhtin (1981) p.288 as quoted in Eskin (2000) p.384

## Chapter 4

*Sīrat al-Amīrah Dhāt al-Himmah*

## A. Introduction

*Dhāt al-Himmah* is one of the longest of the Arabic popular epics. In almost 6,000 printed pages it tells the story of the *Banī Kilāb* over a period of approximately 200 years (650-850 AD) when they are engaged in two epic struggles: firstly with their fellow *Qaysite* tribe, the Banī Sulaym, and subsequently as participants in the Muslim expedition against Constantinople and the lengthy Muslim/Byzantine war which followed. Although they are fighting alongside the Banī Sulaym against the Christians, the inter-tribal rivalry remains a running issue throughout the whole saga and the greatest enemy of the Banī Kilāb, and of the Muslim cause as a whole, is a member of the Banī Sulaym. That is the arch-villain ‘Uqbah, a hidden convert to Christianity, who devises constant plots against Islam and whose eventual crucifixion is the major event of the *sīrah*’s final section.

The main subject of the *sīrah* is warfare, whether inter-tribal or inter-religious. The *sīrah* abounds in scenes of battles and single combats, and the conventional ‘heroes’ are the leaders of the Banī Kilāb who are mighty warriors: particularly Ṣaḥṣāḥ and his grand-daughter Fāṭimah, who is known as Dhāt al-Himmah, and her son ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. However the most striking characters are less conventional: they are the villainous ‘Uqbah and his no less cunning opponent for the Banī Kilāb, al-Baṭṭāl. Their rivalry, carried out through an endless series of stratagems and tricks, is a source of considerable humour as well as of suspense and excitement.

The *sīrah* has been the subject of two interesting studies by Udo Steinbach<sup>126</sup> and Claudia Ott<sup>127</sup>. The focus of Steinbach’s work is conveyed in its subtitle, ‘kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu einem arabischen Volksroman’ (historico-cultural investigations of an Arabic folk romance), but it contains a short section on the *sīrah*’s ‘stylistic devices’ which is mainly concerned with the ‘function of the poetry’. Ott’s work is a study of the live performance of the *sīrah* in Tunis and includes, as its subtitle indicates, a discussion of the *sīrah*’s status ‘zwischen schriftlichkeit und mündlichkeit’ (between literariness and orality).

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<sup>126</sup> Steinbach (1972)

<sup>127</sup> Ott (2003)

NB: All references to the text of *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* are to the edition published in seven volumes in Beirut in 1980.

Poems are numbered as shown in Appendix 6.

## B. Section chosen for analysis

### (i) Volume and distribution of verse

The seven volumes of *Dhāt al-Himmah* contain 1,167 verse passages, amounting to a total of 7,410 lines. The distribution of the poems between the volumes is as follows:

<u>vol</u>	<u>pages</u>	<u>poems</u>	<u>lines</u>	<u>verse as % of text*</u>	<u>ave.lines per poem</u>
1	946	398	2,380	10.1%	6.0
2	938	169	860	3.7%	5.1
3	858	145	728	3.4%	5.2
4	727	155	1,036	5.7%	6.7
5	742	119	669	3.6%	5.6
6	749	92	646	3.4%	7.0
7	1,011	89	1,091	4.3%	12.3
total:	5,971	1,167	7,410	5.0%	6.3

\* measured in lines, assuming 25 lines per printed page

The most striking feature revealed by this schedule is the large number of poems and lines of verse contained in the first volume, which is more than double what is found in the later volumes of the *sīrah*. This feature will be discussed in F below.

The section chosen for detailed analysis is the opening section of the work, pp. 5-114 of volume 1. It contains 84 pieces of verse. Their average length is approximately 7 lines, but the length varies between 1 and 26 lines. They can be broken down into the following categories of length:

<u>no. of lines</u>	<u>no. of poems</u>
1 - 2	13
3 - 5	25
6 - 10	31
11 - 15	9
16 - 20	4
20 +	2

The number of poems of only 1 or 2 lines contrasts strongly with the lack of such poems in *Zīr Sālīm* and *Banī Hilāl*. It will be seen that it results from the large number of emblematic quotations.

## (ii) Synopsis of section's plot

A detailed summary of the plot, and of how the poems fit into it, is contained in Appendix 6: 'Placement of Poems in *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* (vol.1, pp. 1-112)'. The role of the section within the *sīrah* as a whole is to introduce one of the leading characters of the first half of the *sīrah*: Ṣaḥṣāḥ, the grand-father of Dhāt al-Himmah. The final pages of the section describe his birth and upbringing, his falling in love with his cousin Laylā, his first exploits as a warrior and his setting out to seek an independent fortune. However the bulk of the self-contained section is concerned with the story of his father, Jundabah, from his violent birth, as his mother is killed by a lustful slave, until his sad and lonely death after being wounded in battle and replaced as tribal leader. At the same time, the main action of the section concerns a series of attempts by a succession of (ugly) horse-thieves to steal Jundabah's horse, Muznah, whose renown leads other tribal leaders to offer their (unwilling) daughters as a reward to anyone who brings Muznah to them. Indeed, the main character or hero of the section, apart from Jundabah, is Maymūn, a horse-thief whose single-minded and successful quest for Muznah is achieved by his amputating his own foot in order to escape with the horse (loss of blood eventually robbing him of his prize when he dies in the arms of his employer's (very relieved) daughter).

C. Example: poem 64 <sup>128</sup>

(i) Introduction

Poem 64 is a soliloquy. It is a short poem, at only 9 lines, but is well crafted to achieve its effect. It consists of Jundabah's final words, when he has been rejected by his tribe and is alone, reflecting on the past and his impending death. It has been chosen as the subject for a close reading, because both its content and its form are typical and significant: the theme of death and rebirth is one which underlies all the *siyar* and it is reinforced by the formal structure of a 'ring', which is also found frequently in this and the other *siyar*.

(ii) Text

تولت نعمتي ومضى زماني	1
فيوم العز كنت أعز قومي	2
ومذ فارقت مزنة عاد عزمي	3
عدمت ركوبها فعدمت صبري	4
ترى قبل الممات أرى قبائي	5
ويرزقني الاله فتى كريما	6
ويأخذ من عدانا التار قهرا	7
ويأخذ مزنة من تحت خصمي	8
انا المغبون في هزلي وجدي	9
وها انا قد بقيت كما تراني	
وأسبقهم الى نيل الاماني	
الى ذل يجدد بالهوان	
وبان تجلدي وهي جناني	
رفيعات العوامد والمباني	
يصول على الفوارس بالطعان	
بضرب السيف مع طعن السنان	
ويقهر من يعاند في الزمان	
فيا مولاي جد لي بالاماني	

This can be translated as:

My happiness has gone away and my time is spent  
and here I remain as you see me

<sup>128</sup> *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* p.96

in the time of power I was the most powerful of my people  
and I excelled them in fulfilling hopes

since I parted from Muznah my power has changed  
into ignominy fuelled by scorn

I have lacked riding her so I have lacked endurance  
and I have lost my strength for she was my life-blood

5 I wonder if I shall see my dome [of glory] before I die  
with its lofty pillars and buildings

and if I will be blessed by God with a boy in his generosity  
who will be a mighty warrior

who will take violent vengeance on our enemies  
with the blow of a sword and the thrust of a lance

who will seize Muznah from under my enemy  
and destroy whoever opposes his progress

I am someone who is wronged in all circumstances  
so my Lord grant my hopes.

[ for ease of consultation, the Arabic text of  
the poem is shown also in Appendix 7 ]

### (iii) Analysis

The poem falls into two sections, each of four lines, divided by the central line 5. In the first half Jundabah is looking back at his life, while in the second half he is looking forward to the future.

The first line sets the tone: his pleasure has gone and his time has passed, the two verbs being stressed through the grammatically parallel structure of the first hemistich. The second hemistich opens with stress on *ها انا*, and the verb *بقيت* is in antithesis to the *مضى* of the first hemistich: his time has passed but he has remained. The internal rhyme of four repeated *ī* sounds provides an additional link between the hemistiches.

In line 2 he remembers his past power, each hemistich dominated by the superlatives: *أعز* (the root *عز* being repeated for the second time in the first hemistich) and *أسبق*. Line 3 parallels line 2 in starting with a temporal phrase: *ومذ* *فارقت* (since I parted) contrasts with *فيوم العز* (in the time of power) in line 2, underlining the change which has taken place in Junadabah's status. Then, in lines 3 and 4, the first hemistiches both use parallel structures with two verbs to convey his sense of decline: in line 3, Muznah has left and his power has gone, while in line 4 the repetition of *عدمت* (I have lost), in grammatically parallel phrases in the first hemistich, stresses his feeling of loss (of his horse and of his fortitude). The stress in the second hemistiches is on the rhyme-words: in line 3, his condition is summed up in the word *هوان* (ignominy), while in line 4 his loss of Muznah is the loss of *جناني* (my heart). The repetition of four *ī* sounds again provides linking internal rhymes in line 4.

Line 5 is the central line of the poem, in which Jundabah begins to think of the future and of his impending death. The mood is set in the opening words: *ترى قبل* *الممات* (I wonder (if) before my death..). Jundabah is still speaking in the present tense: "I wonder..", but his thoughts are turning to the future and all the verbs which follow in this and the next three lines will be in the future tense. The opening

ترى, and the following أرى in the first hemistich, link back to the rhyme-word of the first line: تراني.

Given the importance of line 5 as the centre of the poem, the choice of words is significant. The word ending the first hemistich, قبابي, could take three forms: *qubbābī*, *qabbābī* or *qibābī*, meaning respectively ‘my sword’, ‘my lion’ or ‘my shrine’. The latter meaning is confirmed by the requirements of the *wāfir* metre, but the other meanings are implicit and are relevant to the context, where Jundabah is caught between looking back at his own valiant past and looking forward to his hoped-for son’s valiant future. It is also relevant that *qabbun*, the verbal noun formed from the root *q-b-b*, means the hole made for a pivot, which is perfectly appropriate for the exact centre of the poem (the final word of the first hemistich of the central line).

The second hemistich opens with the word رفيعات, referring to the loftiness of the shrine. Coupled with the word المباني, it carries clear echoes of Labīd’s *mu‘allaqah*: فينى لنا بيتا رفيعا سمكه (he built for us a house with a lofty roof), where the image of a lofty building is used to represent the security and permanence of the tribal community. Here it represents the certainty and security of death (reflecting the change to a post-Islamic world). Again رفيعه has a secondary meaning, referring to the legal case which may be made against someone, and this is relevant in connoting the judgement which awaits Jundabah when he dies.

In the following lines a change of mood is signified by a change in grammatical structure: lines 6, 7 and 8 all start with grammatically parallel verbs in the 3rd person singular (ويأخذ - ويأخذ - ويرزقني). The gloom is relieved by the hope in line 6 that God will give him a son who, in line 7, will avenge him with his might as a warrior and, in line 8, will recover Muznah. The thought of his son’s prowess is emphasized by the use of طعن in line 7, echoing the rhyme-word بالطعان in line 6, and يقهر in line 8 echoing قهرا in line 7. The final word of line 8, الزمان echoes زماني in line 1, highlighting the point that his son’s time is to come although his own has finished.

The last line brings the poem back to the present, marked by a grammatical shift back to the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular. The first hemistich echoes Jundabah's lament at his present condition in the first hemistich of the poem and this is reinforced by the opening *انا*, which echoes the *انا* in the first line. The poem ends with a request for his hopes to be granted, the final word appropriately being *الاماني* (hopes), echoing the rhyme-word in line 2, as well as the reference to his hope for glory in the central line 5, and emphasizing the difference between the hopes which he now requests and the hopes which he used to fulfill in the days of his pomp. The effect of the last line is enhanced by six repeated *ī* sounds climaxing in the final *amānī*.

#### D. Form and structure of the poetry

##### (i) Form and structure of poem 64

The poem is similar in form to the poetry of *Zīr Sālim* and *Banī Hilāl*, in consisting of 2-hemistich lines and using monorhyme, but differs in its use of a classical metre: *wāfir*. It is almost strophic in structure, since the first hemistiches all enjoy a rhyming system of their own (although it is assonance rather than a full rhyme). The language is simple and there is no use of imagery, but the use of repetition and parallelism adds to the great effectiveness of the poem.

The analysis above has highlighted a number of parallels and oppositions between lines, including the echoes between the first and last lines. When these are all considered alongside the 2-part structure of the poem, it becomes clear that there is a carefully crafted 'ring-structure', which complies with the features discussed on p.60 above: namely, a link between ending and beginning, a 'central place', a division into two halves, as well as a chiasmic structure of the lines. The structure can best be demonstrated in tabular form, as follows:

*line 1*

My condition is wretched

I am stuck here  
as you see me*line 9*Grant my  
hopes*line 2*I used to be  
powerful*line 8*who will be  
all-powerful*line 3*I receive  
scorn*line 7*who will  
give vengeance*line 4*I have lost my  
strength*line 6*I will have a  
mighty son*line 5*Will I see my glory  
restored before I die?

This illustrates the complex interplay of themes in the poem: of power and decline, despair and hope. After the lament of line 1, reflecting on his current misery, line 2 looks back on his past power, line 3 comments on how he now receives scorn and line 4 on his lack of strength. Line 5 is the ‘central space’, where Jundabah acknowledges his coming death and looks forward for the first time. The change of direction is shown in the following 3 lines, which discuss the possibility of his having a son and which reflect lines 2 to 4 in inverse order: line 6 contrasts his son’s might with his own loss of strength in line 4, line 7 contrasts his son’s dealing out vengeance with himself receiving scorn in line 3 and line 8 contrasts his son’s future power with his own past glory in line 2. The decline of Jundabah has been matched by the birth and ascent of his son. In the final line, Jundabah repeats the

lament of the first line, but this time it is accompanied by a reference to his hopes for his son in the future. The central line 5 can be seen to play its proper role in the structure by containing elements of both parts of the poem: there is reference to the coming of death, but also an element of comfort and hope in the vision of the ‘dome of glory’.

## (ii) Formal characteristics of the poetry as a whole

As was the case in the *siyar* previously examined, the formal characteristics of the poetry are generally consistent between all the poems. All the verse passages consist of lines of two equal hemistiches and have one consistent end-rhyme, or ‘monorhyme’. The monorhyme complies with classical usage and, unlike *Zīr Sālim*, does not rely on a consistent final long vowel. Another difference from *Zīr Sālim* is that repetition of the same rhyme-word in a poem is very rare, occurring only 17 times in 575 lines. When it does occur, it is often done to achieve particular stress, as in the repetition of *الاماني* (hopes) noted in poem 64 above.

Similar rhyme-words are often found in successive poems, when they are part of a dialogue and sharing the same rhyme and metre. For example, in poem 25<sup>129</sup>, where Qattālah is responding to Jundabah’s apologia in poem 24, her use of *ظالم* as the rhyme-word for the first hemistich echoes Jundabah’s use of it to end his poem. She is thus showing her acceptance of what he said: ‘you are not unjust’ (*ما انت ظالم*).

Again unlike *Zīr Sālim* and *Banī Hilāl*, all the poems in this section of *Dhāt al-Himmah* use one of the canonical classical metres (although there are frequent examples of lines where the scansion depends on omitting one or more of the diacritics). By far the most frequent metres are *tawīl* and *wāfir*, which account for 56% of the poems. ). Jamel Eddine Bencheikh has pointed out that *tawīl* and *wāfir* share the characteristic of the *ictus* falling on the initial foot, and that ‘Ces mètres .....qu’ils soient simples ou composées, leur rythme est ascendant, nettement marquée. Cette simplicité de structure, la position forte des accents, expliquent la

<sup>129</sup> *ibid* p.36

vogue du *tawīl* – issu du *mutaqārib* et du *hazaj* – et du *wāfir*,<sup>130</sup>. These characteristics of strong, rising accents and simplicity may explain the popularity of these metres in the *sīrah*, where they would assist the narrator's performance.

### (iii) Structure, style and imagery of the poetry as a whole

Generally the poems share the characteristics noted in poem 64 above. The language is simple, avoiding abstruse vocabulary, and the use of imagery is very rare and confined usually to very basic similes. The only poems to contain elaborate or unusual similes are the quotations; otherwise, the similes consist almost entirely of likening warriors to lions and love to fire. Poem 22 is typical, where Qattālah calls Jundabah a 'lion-like warrior' and describes herself as surrounded by 'a troop of lions'. In view of the carefully crafted structure of many of the poems, and the skilful use of parallelism, again as noted in poem 64, it is arguable that the decision to avoid imagery (and other rhetorical devices) is a deliberate artistic choice rather than a result of ignorance or inadequacy. Its use in the quotations, but not elsewhere, suggests that it is seen as appropriate for emblematic verse but not for the speech of the participants in the action. This view could be based on a feeling that ornamentation would damage the 'realism' of the dialogue and the ability of the audience to identify with the characters.

By far the most frequent rhetorical device used in the poetry is parallelism, which is consistent with the binary syntactic structure of the 2-hemistich verse.

A majority of the poems also share a ring structure. This is often not as clear or complete as will be noted in poem 64, but consists at least of what Mary Douglas has described as the essential element of the structure: namely, that the ending should join up with the beginning, as well as having a 'central space' which contains the main message of the poem.

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<sup>130</sup> Bencheikh (1989) p.244

### E. Introductory formulas

There is no consistent form of introductory formula within the poems, such as was found in *Zīr Sālīm* and *Banī Hilāl*, but almost all the poems, which are not soliloquies or quotations, start with a form of acknowledgement of whom they are addressing. This is often very simple, such as Dārim's son's opening words in poem 10: 'O Shamtā'<sup>131</sup>, but can be more elaborate such as the Minister's greeting to Dārim in poem 8<sup>132</sup>:

يا مليكا علا على السادات وسمي دارما له سطوات  
O king who are on top of the people  
named Dārim and possessing authority.

There are only three cases where the speaker introduces himself (poems 14, 26, 27)<sup>133</sup>. There also three openings which consist of an invocation of God (poems 13, 24, 39)<sup>134</sup>, such as the opening line of Jundabah's to Qattālah in poem 24:

وحق اله مالك الملك دائم اله بأسرار الخلائق عالم  
in the name of God your everlasting Ruler  
God who knows the secrets of the Creation.

Soliloquies tend to open with a line which summarises the content or sets the mood of what is to follow. An example of the latter is poem 30<sup>135</sup>, where Jundabah is lamenting the loss of Qattālah on his return from Damascus and starts:

أسير وفي قلبي من الوجد لوعة ودمعي جرى من مقلتي فوق جنتي  
I travel with the passion of love in my heart  
and my tears flow from my eyes down my cheeks.

<sup>131</sup> *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* p.20

<sup>132</sup> *ibid* p.16

<sup>133</sup> *ibid* pp.22, 38, 40

<sup>134</sup> *ibid* pp.22, 35, 64

<sup>135</sup> *ibid* p.48

Sometimes the mood is set by a gnomic comment, as in poems 52 and 53<sup>136</sup>, both spoken by a dying Maymūn. For example, poem 53 starts:

كل وجود يفضي الى العدم

Every existence leads to nothingness.

Whatever the type of the opening, it is frequently the case that the first line, or occasionally the first two lines, are preliminary to the main body of the poem, so that the real theme of the poem only commences in line 2 or 3. This is reflected not only in the content of the poem but also in the structure. In those cases the ring-structure, which is frequently found in the poems (see (ii) below), is based on a relationship between the second (or third) line, rather than the first line, and the last line and the centre of the poem has to be calculated accordingly. An example of this is poem 17, which is examined in F (ii) (d) below.

Finally there is a recurrent feature of the *sīrah* which, although not a part of the poems, is an important element in the way poems are presented and received. That is the prose description of the motivation behind a poem, which is stated in the words leading up to the poem. This is especially prominent in the poems expressing strong emotion, where the speaker is often described as being overwhelmed by his feelings. This feature is examined in greater detail in section F below.

It is also noteworthy that, unlike *Zīr Sālim*, most of the poems are preceded by a religious formula (the most common wording being: صلوا على سيد السادات). Claudia Ott has pointed out that these formulas are seldom found except before the start of a poem and she views them as ‘eine versicherung des Priorität des Propheten’ (an affirmation of the Prophet’s superiority), which is designed to warn the audience not to allow the beauty of the poem to make them forget the greater beauty of Islam.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> *ibid* p.78

<sup>137</sup> Ott (2003) p.158

## F. Content and role of the poetry

### (i) Content and role of poem 64

There are a number of features which poem 64 shares with other poems in the section. These are:

- The poem provides a subjective element to the objective prose which has preceded it. The prose has described how, after being replaced as leader, Jundabah ‘remained isolated in his tent, separated from the tribe, wore coarse clothes and fell ill.’<sup>138</sup> It is the poem which provides the only account of Jundabah’s feelings about what has befallen him.
- The poem is a mixture of emotion and idealism, of reflection on the happiness which ‘has gone away’ and of his hopes for the future of his race.
- Poetry is shown to be powerful, because that very night Jundabah has a dream where a messenger from God tells him that his prayer will be answered: ‘It is certain that God will grant you a son who will succeed you and will rule the country’<sup>139</sup>.

### (ii) Content and role of poetry in chosen section

#### (a) introduction

The content and role of the poetry is not significant only in its difference from prose. There are significant differences also between the types of poetry to be found in the *sīrah*. In order to define these differences, the approach to the poetry needs to be ‘dialogic’ in a Bakhtinian sense, so that the poetry is examined in its context and

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<sup>138</sup> *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* p.96

<sup>139</sup> *ibid* p.97

with reference to motivation and response. To this end, it is proposed to split the examination of the poems in the chosen section between the typical situations in which, or the reasons for which, they arise, namely:

- (a) to illustrate a point, to be ‘emblematic’;
- (b) as a preliminary ritual before ‘single combat’;
- (c) at a moment of overwhelming emotion;
- (d) at a key moment of stress or difficulty; and
- (e) when a character is in communion with his own soul or with God.

There is one other category of a very different type, which inter-reacts with some of the above. That is

- (f) poems whose apparent motivation (which may fall into one of the above categories) is false and which are motivated purely by an intention to deceive and trick the hearers.

(b) emblematic poems:

There are 13 poems which can be described as ‘illustrative’ or ‘emblematic’. They are all quotations, 10 cited by the Narrator and 3 by characters in the *sīrah*; 9 are descriptive and 4 gnomic. The former, which are all cited by the Narrator, include descriptions of scenery (poems 23 and 76)<sup>140</sup>, women (poems 21, 36, 66, 67, 68)<sup>141</sup>, a horse (poem 31)<sup>142</sup>, and an ugly man (poem 55)<sup>143</sup>. Only two of the quotations are ascribed to named poets: poem 31 to ‘Amīr bin Ya‘qūb and poem 66 to Ibn al-Tharīyā. The gnomic quotations (of which only one is cited by the Narrator) consist of three 1-line proverbs (poems 19, 45 and 49)<sup>144</sup> and a comment on tribal values (poem 43)<sup>145</sup>.

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<sup>140</sup> *ibid* pp.34 and 105

<sup>141</sup> *ibid* pp. 30, 62, 98, 99 and 99

<sup>142</sup> *ibid* p.50

<sup>143</sup> *ibid* p.83

<sup>144</sup> *ibid* pp.27, 68 and 71

<sup>145</sup> *ibid* p.67

The nature of these emblematic quotations can be seen by examining one of them in more detail. Poem 23<sup>146</sup>, a poem of 9 lines attributed to الشاعر, is quoted by the Narrator after he has described in prose how Jundabah and Qattālah have arrived at a beautiful campsite after fleeing following Jundabah's killing of Sallām. The verse has to be considered in the context of the action of the *sīrah* and of the prose description which precedes it. Jundabah and Qattālah have been travelling for three days and nights, fleeing from danger, when they come across 'a pleasant area, well-guarded from view, with springs and flowers'. As they explore it further, they find a 'mountain like white snow' and a valley 'with plenty of flowers and green slopes', full of lofty pavilions and tents. The prose description thus stresses the ideal nature of the scene with its combination of springs and flowers, of mountain and valley and the poem which follows can be seen as contributing to the ideal nature of the scene. The poem's description is not specific to the scene already described in prose, but rather it is emblematic of the essential qualities of the scene; it conveys not only the physical beauty of the scene through its description of a camp which is 'spacious and blooming' (رحيب مزهر) and where the women are 'like gazelles' (مثل الظبا), but also what it represents as a safe haven, guarded by 'men like lions' (رجالهم) (مثل الاسود) and where people move 'happily with untroubled serenity' (فرها بصنفو ليس) (فيه تكدر).

Udo Steinbach has pointed out that the only object of the descriptive verse in *Dhāt al-Himmah* is to add rhetorical enhancement to the prose without adding any subjective or lyrical element: 'So wird nicht eine lyrische Haltung des Menschen eingefangen, sondern die Umgebung selbst lyrisch erhöht. In einem Wort: der Gehalt der Verse bleibt gänzlich auf das Objekt beschränkt'<sup>147</sup> (It does not give a lyrical view of the people, but rather it is the background itself whose lyricism is heightened. In a word: the content of the verse is wholly objective in its focus). However it is arguable that descriptive verse such as the above achieves an emblematic role which encompasses more than the scenery itself. It raises the place to a symbolic *locus amoenus*<sup>148</sup> and

<sup>146</sup> ibid p.34

<sup>147</sup> Steinbach (1972) p.122

<sup>148</sup> the *topos* of the *locus amoenus* as a feature of the 'ideal landscape' is discussed in Curtius (1953) pp.183-202

conveys the essence of what it means to Jundabah and Qattālah as well as its objective beauty. Poetry is the means of adding this extra dimension to the description.

The quotations by the Narrator form the rare occasions when the Narrator speaks to his listeners/readers personally, rather than *qua* narrator, and their dialogic content has to be understood in that context. There is one other example of an emblematic quotation by the Narrator, which demonstrates the role which such interventions play. That is the very first poem in the *sīrah*<sup>149</sup>, which is a quotation of a poem by Jundabah about himself. The Narrator uses the quotation to describe the qualities of Jundabah and of the Banī Kilāb: it praises good judgement, service and generosity, while condemning the pursuit of money for its own sake as well as miserliness and treachery. The Narrator is using the poem to set out the standards by which characters in the *sīrah* are going to be judged and he is also establishing his own position vis-à-vis the audience, as someone who is not only omniscient but who can also comment on the moral issues raised by the *sīrah*.

(c) pre-combat poems:

In the *siyar*, single combats (as opposed to general battles) are almost invariably an occasion for the exchange of boasts, threats or insults, in verse, between the combatants. There are 10 such pieces in the section (poems 10, 11, 14, 15, 20, 27, 28, 29, 62 and 63),<sup>150</sup> four of them delivered by Jundabah. They form part of the ritual of combat, a sort of hostile exchange of greetings between the two opponents. They are therefore usually found in pairs and the second poem always employs the same rhyme and metre as the first. The motivation for the poems lies in the confrontational crisis which the protagonists are facing and the wish of each of them to boost their own confidence and to dent their opponent's.

<sup>149</sup> *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* p.6

<sup>150</sup> *ibid* pp.20, 20, 22, 23, 29, 40, 41, 95 and 95

Typical examples are poems 14 and 15, where al-Shamṭā' and Jundabah swap poems before they fight. Poem 14 contains its key statements in the first line, when al-Shamṭā' says:

انا الشمطاء دونك والتقيني وفي يوم الوغى لا تزدريني

I am al-Shamṭā' beware of meeting me!

On the day of battle don't disdain me!

The remaining five and a half lines are a continuation of the warning, as al-Shamṭā' reminds Jundabah of how she has already defeated his father and his brothers and expands on the fate of death or imprisonment which is awaiting him, although the warning is accompanied by an unusual level of sympathy in view of her admiration for Jundabah's youth and courage. The poem follows the usual pattern of pre-battle poems in containing two distinct elements: as well as the warning or boast, the poem contains also a statement of identity in its opening words. It is a ritual of politeness, where the fighter introduces herself to her opponent.

In Poem 15, Jundabah does not need to introduce himself, but he plays on the theme of identity and mirrors the first line of poem 14 in his own first line:

أيا شمطاء دونك واعرفيني وفي يوم الوغى لا تزدريني

O Shamṭā' take care and know me!

On the day of battle don't disdain me!

While al-Shamṭā' ends her poem with a reference to *الدهر* (life), Jundabah ends with a reference to God, *رب العالمين* (master of the world), with whose help he will be victorious. Both poems use the *wāfīr* metre and share *nūn* as a rhyme letter.

The ritual, conventional nature of these poems is emphasized by the one which is an exception, poem 20.<sup>151</sup> The youth, whom Jundabah meets in a beautiful glade (who turns out to be Qattālah disguised as a man), attacks him without a word and is reproached by him: 'Begin with a greeting before a fight because it is the custom of

<sup>151</sup> *ibid* p.29

noble people'. The reproach is ignored and battle commences as Jundabah breaks into verse, addressing it in the first line to a knight 'who wanted battle before greetings' (ورام الحرب من قبل السلام).

The main theme of Jundabah's 7-line poem is not the usual boast or threat, which is confined to the final line of the poem:

انا ادعى بجندبة الكلابي      أصيد الاسد في وسط الاجام

I am called Jundabah al-Kilābī

I hunt the lion in the middle of the jungle.

Instead the poem focuses on Jundabah as a poet. In the central line of the poem, Jundabah challenges the unknown knight to reply to his poem in poetry using the same metre 'if you are indeed from the family of poets' ( اذا قد كنت من اهل النظام). This portrays metre as a weapon and poets as a special category of people, whose qualities are summarized in the following line as 'courage and eloquence' ( الشجاعة والفصاحة). This highlights a theme which runs through the whole of the *sīrah*, or indeed through the *siyar* as a whole: poetry and valour go hand in hand and are both essential elements of a noble character.

It follows that the role of the pre-battle poems is more complex than may seem to be the case at first glance. As well as the obvious narrative motivation of the battle, which causes the wish to lower the opponent's morale, and the obvious result in the outcome of the fight, the poems are also making an important statement about the role of poetry as an essential element, alongside valour and other qualities such as generosity, in what might be called a 'complete person'. This is a theme which will recur in examining the other types of poetry to be found in the *sīrah*.

(d) poems at moments of great emotion:

One of the reasons for characters breaking into verse is the force of emotion. The poetry is forced out of them by the strength of their feelings. There are 13 such

poems (poems 30, 35, 42, 56, 69, 70, 72, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 83).<sup>152</sup> They are usually preceded by words indicating the emotional pressure under which the speaker is suffering: words such as *هيجه الغرام* (he was excited by passion).

Poem 30 is typical. When Qattālah has been kidnapped by the Caliph's son in Damascus, Jundabah is forced to return home and leave her behind. It is related that, on the journey home, 'Jundabah missed his wife terribly, weeping for her day and night, and when his passion mounted he recited these lines...' It is clear that poetry is the medium required for the expression of feelings of such intensity, as reflected in the first hemistich of the poem: *أسير وفي قلبي من الوجد لوعة*: (I travel with the passion of love in my heart). The poem is a soliloquy in which Jundabah first recalls Qattālah's beauty and courage (lines 1-6), then recounts the misfortunes of his ill-fated trip to Damascus (lines 7-12) and ends with a vow of vengeance and an appeal to God (lines 13-16).

Another poem motivated by strong emotion is poem 35<sup>153</sup>, spoken by Fātik, who has agreed to steal Muznah from Jundabah in return for his master Salih's daughter, Su'dā, whom Fātik has described as 'lovely and beautiful, pure and perfect for the delights of love'. As Fātik travels towards Jundabah's camp, he thinks about Su'dā and is excited by passion (*هيجه الغرام*) to break into verse. As in poem 30, the speaker's feelings are revealed in the first hemistich, reflecting their force: *لقد هام الفؤاد بحب سعدي* (the heart has been consumed with love of Su'dā). The poem is composed in two equal parts divided by the central line, and employs a 'ring structure'. The first 5 lines describe Fātik's love for Su'dā, while the last 5 lines appeal to God for help in his quest. The central line 6 states the reason and purpose for Fātik's journey:

وأبذل اجتهادي في هواها      وأخذ مزنة وأنا لي قصدي

I spend my energy in loving her

I will seize Muznah and obtain my wish.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid* pp.48, 57, 66, 83, 100, 100, 102, 104, 106, 110, 110, 111, 113.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid* p.57

The final words of the poem provide a satisfying conclusion by echoing the final words of the first hemistich: حبي لسعدى (my love for Su‘dā). It is noteworthy that this poem, which is carefully crafted and full of lofty sentiments about love and God, is spoken by a slave who is becoming a horse-thief in order to have a chance of satisfying his lust, and who plays a very brief and minor role in the story. The fact that he is far from being a major or heroic figure suggests that the poetry is justified by, and arises purely from, the strength of his emotion. This is a point which will recur in considering other poems in the mouths of the lesser and baser characters.

(e) poems at key moments:

The motivation for some poems arises from the importance of the occasion or from the existence of a problem which the poem helps to resolve. The motivation is far more calculating and less spontaneous than the emotional poems discussed above. Such a poem is designed to achieve a specific result and it is usually part of a dialogue of at least two poems: a statement and a response. The poem seldom adds significantly to the content of what has already been stated in prose, but the situation calls for verse: that is, for a different and weightier form of communication.

There are 30 poems in the section which can be placed in this category.<sup>154</sup>

Examples are poems 17 and 18<sup>155</sup> which form a dialogue between Dārim and Jundabah. Poem 17 follows a row between them: Dārim has grown to resent Jundabah’s growing fame after being rescued by him from Shamṭā’s clutches and he tells Jundabah: ‘I don’t like what I see of your behavior.....you have got a high opinion of yourself’. Jundabah reacts angrily and storms off, while Dārim calls together his family and the tribe’s elders. The words leading up to poem 17 are: ‘..when they were assembled, he informed them of what he wanted them to do. He indicated his wishes by reciting these lines...’ These words are significant for the way poetry is regarded and used at such important and stressful moments.

Information can be communicated in a low-key way, in prose, but the words ‘he

<sup>154</sup> poems 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 22, 24, 25, 26, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 53, 54, 59, 61, 65, 71, 73, 74, 82

<sup>155</sup> *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* pp.25 and 26

indicated his wishes' imply more than mere information; he is mounting an argument in order to persuade his hearers to follow a course of action. That requires poetry.

The poem is tightly structured and employs a 'ring structure'. The opening line is introductory, greeting his audience and explaining that he has called them together because 'my anxiety has grown' (قد زاد همي). The remaining 8 lines are divided into an account of how Jundabah was found and rescued (lines 2-4) and an explanation of how he has expelled him from the tribe (lines 7-9); these two sections are divided by the central 2 lines which describe the problem which needs to be resolved, namely that Jundabah has been raised by them and has become arrogant (lines 5-6). The unifying theme in the poem is 'family': just as the opening line refers to 'my family and cousins' (عزوتي وأولاد عمي), and the poem recounts how Jundabah 'knew no father' (لا أب له), so the final line repeats Dārim's words to Jundabah:

وانت لقيت ثم رديء اصل      ولا انت ابني ولا ابن عمي  
 you are a foundling and so of bad origin  
 and you are neither my son nor my cousin.

Jundabah is not present while this poem is being spoken, but it is repeated to him and poem 18 is his response to it, as evidenced by the use of the same rhyme letter (*mīm*) and metre (*wāfir*). Again the poem employs a 'ring structure', largely copying the structure of poem 17. The first line is introductory, describing how 'your words have increased my misery and grief' (كلامك زاد تنكيدي وغمي). The poem is then, like poem 17, divided into two parts divided by a key central message. In lines 2-4, Jundabah acknowledges his debt to Dārim and his status as a foundling, and in lines 6-8 he announces his decision to travel in search of his own people. The central line 5 sums up the argument:

ومن حين أن بغضتموني دعوني      لاترك ارضكم والا اكون مغمي  
 but since you hate me let me  
 leave your land or I will be oppressed.

Again ‘family’ is the theme of the poem. Just as, in line 2, Jundabah says how he regarded Dārim as a father and Ḥusnā as a mother, so in the final line he states his hopes:

لعلي ان ارى حسبي ونسبي وأعرف من انا وابي وامي

so that I may see my family origins

and know who I am and who are my father and mother.

Poems 22 and 24 have been included in this category, although it is questionable whether they qualify as happening at ‘key moments’ of crisis or stress. They are exceptional in both being narratives: in poem 22<sup>156</sup> Qattālah tells the story of how she came to be living as a knight disguised as a man (a story otherwise unknown to the reader) and in poem 24<sup>157</sup> Jundabah explains to Qattālah why he killed Sallām by recounting the circumstances of his mother’s death and his own birth (a story already known to the reader). Poem 22 is especially interesting for the way it is introduced. Having declined to say anything to Jundabah before their fight, as discussed above, when Qattālah decides to speak, following her defeat, she asks Jundabah: ‘Shall I tell you my story in prose or poetry?’ Jundabah replies emphatically: ‘I want to hear from you only poetry’. This refers back to Jundabah’s challenge to her in poem 20 to reply to him in poetry if she is one of the special category of ‘the people of poetry’ (اهل النظم). He wants Qattālah to speak in poetry because it will prove her quality and status. He may also be linking poetry to truth and suggesting that now he wants to hear only the truth as compared with the previous deception of her disguise. If poetry is linked to truth, that could also explain Qattālah’s reluctance to address Jundabah before the fight, because it would have been inconsistent with the falsehood of her disguise. This issue of the link between truth and poetry will be examined further below.

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<sup>156</sup> ibid p.31

<sup>157</sup> ibid p.35

(f) confessionals:

There is a small category of poems which could be included in the above categories, but which have a distinct nature and role of their own. They are soliloquies, motivated not just by emotion or by the stress of a key moment, although these factors usually play a part, but primarily by a need for the speaker to comment on his own plight or actions, perhaps when facing death. Their nature could be called ‘confessional’ and they are sometimes addressed directly to God. There are 10 such poems.<sup>158</sup> An example is poem 64<sup>159</sup>, examined in C above, where Jundabah reflects on his past life, and wonders about the future, before begging God to ‘grant my hopes’.

The other poems addressed to God are by al-Rabāb (poem 4<sup>160</sup>) and Ṣaḥṣāḥ (poem 78<sup>161</sup>). However there are some notable ‘confessional’ poems spoken by the two horse-thieves, Maymūn (poems 52, 53<sup>162</sup>) and Jamrah (poems 57,60<sup>163</sup>). When he soliloquizes in poem 52, Maymūn has almost succeeded in his mission to bring Muznah to al-Ghatrīf, but he is bleeding from his amputated foot and knows that he is near death. He has just used the power of poetry falsely (in poem 51<sup>164</sup>), in order to reduce his pursuer, ‘Awf, to tears of sympathy and so to lull his distrust before treacherously killing him. Now in poem 52 he reflects on his predicament with great sincerity. In a gnomic opening hemistich, he acknowledges the inevitability of death: ‘there is no escape from the decisive judge’ (ليس ينجو من القضاء (المجيب). But his mood remains defiant: he is proud of his success for ‘I have not missed my goal’ (ما فاتني المطلوب). He admits that he killed the Prince by a trick, but he is not apologetic about it and points out that ‘war is full of cheating’ (أي وللحرب (خدعة). He knows that ‘death is seeking me’ (المنايا لها بوجهي طلب) and the three negative particles of line 1 (ولا - لا - ليس) are echoed in the final hemistich (ولا - فلا). The poem serves the purpose of elevating Maymūn into a figure whose death can arouse sympathy.

<sup>158</sup> poems 4, 32, 33, 50, 52, 57, 60, 64, 78, 84

<sup>159</sup> *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* p.96

<sup>160</sup> *ibid* p.10

<sup>161</sup> *ibid* p.107

<sup>162</sup> *ibid* p.78

<sup>163</sup> *ibid* pp.87 and 91

<sup>164</sup> *ibid* p.76

(g) dissembling poems:

There are a number of poems whose motivation is false. Although they may appear to fall into one of the above categories, perhaps being spoken at a key moment or from an excess of emotion, the sentiments expressed by the speaker are not genuine and their only true motivation is to deceive and trick the hearers. The poems can perhaps best be called ‘tools of the plot’ and similar examples will be found in other *siyar*. There are 7 such poems<sup>165</sup>, all spoken by one or other of the horse-thieves.

For poem 34<sup>166</sup>, Jaffāl has assumed the disguise of a travelling religious mystic with ‘a shock of white hair and pleasantly grave demeanour, wearing a black monk’s robe and keeping his head covered’. The poem is designed to support this image: he preaches ‘hell-fire’, using grand gnomic language to warn his listeners to ‘wake up before the day of calamity’, for

يا غافلين عن الفنا ليس الفنا عنكم بغافل

O people who are unmindful of extinction  
extinction is not unmindful of you.

For this poem, Jaffāl has chosen an appropriate theme from the *zuhdiyya* canon<sup>167</sup>: the topos of *ubi sunt qui ante nos in mundo fuerunt?*<sup>168</sup> His role also fits a stock character of medieval literature: that of the ‘false preacher’, who crops up so frequently in the *Maqamāt* of al-Hamadhāni and al-Harīri. The audience would no doubt have appreciated the fact that Jaffāl succeeded in fooling Jundabah’s men, who describe him as ‘one of the solitary stalwarts of the earth, one of the solitary hermits obeying God’s will’.

<sup>165</sup> poems 34, 44, 46, 47, 48, 51, 58

<sup>166</sup> *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* p.53

<sup>167</sup> see Sperl (1989) pp. 72-79, where the *zuhdiyya* canon and its origins in pre-Islamic poetry are discussed

<sup>168</sup> see Becker (1924) for a discussion of this *topos* and its origins in both Christian and Muslim poetry .

Poems 44, 46, 47 and 48<sup>169</sup> are all spoken by Maymūn when he arrives at the camp of the Banī Kilāb, pretending to be a travelling poet and a pious man. After a sententious quotation (poem 43), he tries to ingratiate himself with praise of the Banī Kilāb and ‘the bold knight Jundabah’ in poem 44. He fools everyone but Jundabah, who replies with an apt quotation in poem 45:

ان اردتم حوائجا من اناس فتهيوا الى الوجوه الصباح

If you want things from people, smile pleasantly.

Accordingly Maymūn steps up the praise in poem 46, describing Jundabah as ‘the noblest man who stepped, the best of all alive’. Although the warriors and elders are described as ‘delighted’, Jundabah is furious at being taken for a fool and criticizes the verse as ‘drivel’ (هذيان) and ‘prattle’ (شققشة). The poor quality of the verse is also signalled by the fact that it uses a *rajaz* metre.

Having been seized and bound on Jundabah’s orders, Maymūn concentrates on his guards in poems 47 and 48. It is not clear from the text whether 47 is a quotation or Maymūn’s own composition, but it is a collection of gnomic lines, strung together to promote his image as a wise, venerable man, while poem 48 is devoted to explaining how he has been misunderstood by Jundabah, summed up in its central line:

أتيت امنح خير الناس جندبة أرجو نوالا من الاحزان ينقذني

I came to offer (praise) to the best of people Jundabah

hoping for a gift which will save me from sorrows.

Now that his audience does not include Jundabah, but merely the credulous guards, his poems achieve their effect, for when he finishes ‘there was not a single one of the Banī Kilāb who was not weeping’. Maymūn’s final ‘dissembling’ poem, no. 51, is addressed to his pursuer, ‘Awf, when he has caught up with him. Again he explains how he has acted from good intentions and been misunderstood, and again his verse is effective so that ‘Awf wept and ‘took pity on him’, thereby giving

<sup>169</sup> *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* pp.68, 68, 70 and 70

Maymūn an opportunity to kill him. ‘Awf shows how he fails to match Jundabah’s qualities through his inability to recognize the lack of sincerity.

The final ‘dissembling’ poem, no. 58, is spoken by Shuwāsh, when he arrives at al-Laith’s camp in the guise of an itinerant poet. It is a conventional example of *madīh*, which has the desired effect of winning al-Laith’s hospitality and confidence.

It is interesting to compare these ‘dissembling’ poems with the 8 poems, also spoken by the horse-thieves, which are included in categories (a) to (e) above because their sentiments are genuine and they involve no deception. An example is poem 35<sup>170</sup>, in which Fātik speaks of his love for Sa‘dā, which is discussed in (b) above. It is significant that the genuineness of Fātik’s emotions is evidenced by the description of how the poem was forced out of him (هيجه الغرام). Another example is poem 42<sup>171</sup>, where Maymūn is soliloquizing as he rides on his way to attempt to capture Muznah for al-Ghatrīf. The words leading up to the poem describe how his thoughts were ‘boiling in his mind’ (فجاس الشعر في خاطره فياح بما في ضمائره). The emotion and excitement of the poem are summed up in its central line:

فاما يقال باني أموت      واما أفوز ولم أنكب

(either it will be said that I am dead

or I have triumphed and have not been brought down).

There is ample evidence in this poem, as in poem 35 considered above, that the nature and quality of the verse is not necessarily affected by the status, or identity, of the speaker (including their gender). Rather it depends on the motivation and emotions underlying the poem. That is reflected in the poor quality of ‘dissembling’ poems, such as poem 46 which Jundabah criticizes so forthrightly.

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<sup>170</sup> ibid p.57

<sup>171</sup> ibid p.66

## G. Conclusion

The above survey suggests that there are three main roles for poetry in the narrative of the *sīrah*:

- (a) The first and most obvious one is that it highlights key moments in the action: for example, the exchange of poems between al-Rabāb and Sallām when the latter is attempting to rape her (poems 5 and 6<sup>172</sup>), as well as the pre-combat poems.
- (b) The second is that it expresses the feelings and character of the main participants, as seen for example in poem 64 above. This is the role described by Udo Steinbach in his comments on the function of poetry in the *sīrah*, when he says about the characters that in the prose ‘sie bleiben schemenhafte Puppen, die am roten Faden ihrer Rolle geführt werden. Im Vers aber sprechen sie selbst, und zwar von sich selbst’<sup>173</sup> (they remain shadowy puppets, who are led by the red string of their role. But in the verse they speak themselves, and indeed for themselves).
- (c) The third, which is closely linked to (b), is to express and highlight the moral themes and ideals of the *sīrah*. This was seen in poem 64, Jundabah’s last poem, and is also clear in his very first poem (poem 13<sup>174</sup>) where Jundabah responds to his foster-mother’s reproach that he has been away while Dārim and his sons have been captured by al-Shamṭā’. Although only 4 lines long, Jundabah’s reply reveals him to be devout (he swears by God and his prophet), a confident protector of those in trouble: أخلص أبي (I will free my father), and proud of his lineage for if he fails he is ‘not of the stock of Dārim’ ( ما انا..من نسل دارم ), while his good nature is shown by his failing to react to the injustice of his foster-

<sup>172</sup> *ibid* p.12

<sup>173</sup> Steinbach (1972) p.124

<sup>174</sup> *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* p.22

mother's reproaches. Jundabah's subsequent poems are similarly revealing both of his character and of the *sīrah*'s ideals, particularly in poems such as poem 20 (see p.97 above), where he is presented as both a warrior and a poet and he expresses what might be called the highest ideals of the *sīrah*: الشجاعة والفصاحة (courage and eloquence).

The proportion of poetry in *Dhāt al-Himmah* is on a very different level to the *siyar* previously examined, being only 5% of the text as compared with 27% and 26-3%. Instead of being almost the sole medium for speech by the main characters, poetry plays a far more limited role which is focused on its principal objective. That is to depict character and, in so doing, to set the moral tone of the work. It is therefore not surprising that the proportion of poetry reduces sharply as the *sīrah* progresses, as characters and tone need less development.

A special element in *Dhāt al-Himmah*, which was absent from *Zīr Sālim* but will be found in other *siyar*, is the prominence given to the role and status of poetry in itself. Poetry is presented as an essential virtue, alongside courage, and is endowed with a moral as well as an artistic quality. Poetry can be said to be setting the moral tone of the *sīrah*. This is reflected in the very first poem, where the Narrator quotes a poem by Jundabah to describe the virtues of the *Banī Kilāb* and thereby sets out his moral criteria for the story to come (see p.100 above).

The special status and quality of poetry are apparent from the many references to poetry which have been noted in discussing the poems in F above. Poetry is linked to truth as well as valour, as shown by the words leading up to poem 24, where Jundabah insists on Qattālah's speaking 'only poetry' (see [p. ] above). Poetry is a weapon, as shown in the pre-combat exchanges in similar rhymes and metres. And poetry achieves results, as seen for example with poem 64.

The 'dissembling' poems spoken by the horse-thieves have to be seen in the light of poetry's role as a source of truth and power. It is remarkable that poetry can be at the same time both false and effective: an example is poem 51, where Maymūn uses

verse to save himself by persuading his pursuer, ‘Awf, that his actions have all been on his behalf, with the result that ‘Awf ‘wept bitterly ..and took pity on him..<sup>175</sup> This suggests that poetry, like any weapon, may be used virtuously or badly and that its power is independent of its motivation. It is noteworthy that the ‘false’ poetry is usually powerful against characters who may be described as less than heroic: apart from the above example of ‘Awf’s credulity, which is consistent with his previous misjudgement of Maymūn, other examples of ‘false’ poems being effective are Maymūn’s successful attempts to suborn Jundabah’s servants (poems 44, 46, 47, 48)<sup>176</sup> when Jundabah has rightly declared him to be a liar. However Jundabah himself is not immune from being misled by false poetry, as is shown by his reaction to Jaffāl’s hypocrisy in poem 34, when ‘he wept at his warning and the beauty of his expression’.<sup>177</sup> The ‘false’ poems therefore, demonstrate that the power of verse is both great and potentially dangerous. They add an element of complexity to the portrayal of poetry by reminding the audience of the need for poetry to be linked to a moral code as represented by ‘valour’ (شجاعة).

In his study of narrative and history, Hayden White seeks to identify the elements which turn a bare statement of facts into a ‘narrative’ and refers to Hegel’s argument that (in White’s words): ‘The reality which lends itself to narrative representation is the *conflict* between desire, on the one side, and the law, on the other’. White concludes that: ‘Where there is no rule of law, there can be neither a subject nor the kind of event which lends itself to narrative representation’.<sup>178</sup> This necessity for a law or code to make sense of events is relevant to the role of poetry in *Dhāt al-Himmah*. The concept of ‘law’ is present in the twin codes which are highlighted in the poetry: the code of noble behavior, exemplified by شجاعة and the code of poetic quality, exemplified by فصاحة. They provide the criteria against which the characters’ actions are judged.

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<sup>175</sup> ibid p.76

<sup>176</sup> ibid pp.68, 68, 70, 70

<sup>177</sup> ibid p.53

<sup>178</sup> Hayden White (1980) p.16

## Chapter 5

*Sīrat ‘Antarah bin Shaddād*

## A. Introduction

*Sīrat ‘Antarah* is perhaps the most famous of the *siyar*, both inside and outside Arabia. Its fame in Arabia must rest partly on the fact that it is based on the life (however shadowy) of one of the great pre-Islamic poets, whose renown as the composer of one of the *mu‘allaqāt* is assured. The romance of his life, as recounted in the *sīrah*, has remained alive through regular adaptations, in film and television as well as in writing. Its fame outside Arabia has been described by Harry Norris in his study of the *sīrah*, including its discovery by Hammer-Pugstall in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its partial translation by Terrick Hamilton and its rapturous acclamation by Lamartine and Renan in France.<sup>179</sup>

The impact of the *sīrah* must depend on the character and actions of its hero, for the work is exceptionally focused, being almost wholly concerned with the life and deeds of ‘Antarah, the *Abū ‘I-Fawāris*. Apart from 80 pages of prologue and 200 pages at the end dealing with his son’s vengeance, ‘Antarah strides the stage for the other 4,786 pages which describe his exploits from birth to death. The plot consists of a series of wars in which ‘Antarah plays a leading role, either on behalf of his tribe, the Banu ‘Abs, against other tribes (such as the war of Dahis and Ghabra), or on behalf of wider coalitions of Arabs against foreign enemies (in which the Persians and the Byzantines are at different times both foes and allies). Although the action is set before the coming of Islam, and the *sīrah* concludes with the coming of Mohammed, the spirit of Islam is anachronistically present in the way religion is presented as well as in the way that Christians are depicted as natural opponents.

Other major elements of the plot include ‘Antarah’s passion for ‘Ablah, which remains unrequited for the first third of the *sīrah*, and the episode of his hanging his *mu‘allaqah* on the *Ka‘bah*.<sup>180</sup> And there is one theme which runs right through the work and provides an important unifying element: that is the blackness of ‘Antarah’s skin which, together with his birth as a bastard slave, makes him of

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<sup>179</sup> Norris (1980) p.1

<sup>180</sup> *Sīrat ‘Antarah*, vol.5 pp.190-310

inferior status to his fellow tribesmen and an object of scorn for them. This provides the motivation for many of his exploits.<sup>181</sup>

It may be a result of *Sīrat ‘Antarah’*’s relative renown that it has probably received more scholarly attention than the other *siyar*. However this attention has not, until recently, focused on the literary aspects of the work. The pioneering works by Harry Norris<sup>182</sup> and Bernard Heller<sup>183</sup> were more concerned with historical aspects of the *sīrah* and external influences on it (as well as including translations of specimen sections). In his own seminal work, ‘The Thirsty sword, *Sīrat ‘Antar* and the Arabic Popular Epic’, Peter Heath sets out to study ‘*Sīrat ‘Antar*’s literary dimensions: its compositional structures, narrative strategies, pseudo-historiographical rhetoric, and aesthetic goals’<sup>184</sup>. The core of his book consists of a detailed analysis of the narrative technique of what he calls the *sīrah*’s ‘Heroic Cycle’, including the formulaic ‘compositional models’. He includes a detailed analysis of the episode of ‘Antarah’s hanging his *mu‘allaqah* (discussed in G below), in which he discusses the broad use of poetry in the *sīrah*<sup>185</sup>, but he includes poetry as one of the subjects listed in his final chapter as requiring further research.<sup>186</sup>

Recent works on the *sīrah* have included Driss Cherkaoui’s ‘*Le Roman de ‘Antar, perspective littéraire et historique*’<sup>187</sup>, whose text is divided into 3 roughly equal portions: a summary of the plot, a review of the historical background with a comparison of different treatments of the events recounted in the *sīrah* and a study of the characters in the *sīrah* from a literary perspective (covered in 3 groups: ‘the heroic triad’, ‘the triad of enemies’ and ‘the female characters’). There is no discussion of the poetry, other than a reference to the thesis by Bernoussi Saltani in

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<sup>181</sup> Dover (1954). Cedric Dover’s study of the *Black Knight* highlights ‘Antarah’s role as a symbol of resistance against racial discrimination and describes ‘Antarah as ‘a lineal giant among that virile band of mulattoes whose lives have helped to sustain hope and endeavour through the centuries’. It is, however, not entirely clear whether he is referring to the ‘historical’ or the fictitious ‘Antarah.

<sup>182</sup> Norris (1980)

<sup>183</sup> Heller (1932)

<sup>184</sup> Heath (1996) p.21

<sup>185</sup> *ibid* pp.142-148

<sup>186</sup> *ibid* p.167

<sup>187</sup> Cherkaoui (2001)

1987 on '*L'Univers Poétique dans Sīrat 'Antar*'<sup>188</sup>, which Cherkaoui describes as 'consacrée a la poésie dans le *Roman de 'Antar*'. This is slightly misleading, since Saltani's very long thesis (basic text over 800 pages) deals with all aspects of the text. Nonetheless there are 60 pages devoted solely to the poetry, which fall into three parts: statistics, a discussion of the 'pragmatic' qualities of the poetry (referred to in F(ii) below) and a discussion of poetry's role in the plot (particularly with reference to the episode of the hanging of 'Antarah's *mu'allaqah*). There is no detailed discussion of any individual poems.

*Sīrat 'Antarah* is different from *Zīr Sālim* and *Dhāt al-Himmah* in two respects which have an important impact on the nature and role of poetry in the *sīrah*. The first is the concentration of attention on the person and actions of its hero, as noted above. The second is the fact that this hero is a famous poet and, furthermore, a poet whose *dīwān* has been published. These two facts help to explain the high proportion of verse which is put in the mouth of the hero (see B (i) below) as well as the relative lack of diversity in the nature and subject-matter of the verse (see F below). They also explain the major role which poetry itself plays in the plot of the *sīrah*, notably in the episode of the hanging of 'Antarah's *mu'allaqah*.

NB: all references to the text of *Sīrat 'Antarah* are to the edition published in 8 volumes by al-Maktabah al-Thaqāfiyah in Beirut (undated).

Poems are numbered as shown in Appendix 8.

## **B. Section chosen for analysis**

### **(i) Volume and distribution of verse**

The eight volumes of *Sīrat 'Antarah* contain 1,299 verse passages, amounting to a total of 12,998 lines. The distribution of poems between the volumes is as follows:

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<sup>188</sup> Saltani (1987)

<u>vol</u>	<u>pages</u>	<u>poems</u>	<u>lines of verse</u>	<u>verse as % of text*</u>	<u>ave.lines per poem</u>
1	661	206	1,730	10.9%	8.4
2	695	188	1,922	11.5%	10.2
3	706	198	1,828	10.8%	9.2
4	696	106	1,098	6.6%	10.4
5	627	123	1,688	11.2%	13.7
6	652	239	2,354	15.0%	9.8
7	494	131	1,460	12.3%	11.1
8	535	108	918	7.1%	8.5
Total:	5,066	1,299	12,998	10.7%	10.0

\* measured in lines, assuming 24 lines per printed page of text

The number of poems is similar to *Dhāt al-Himmah's* 1,167, but the average length of poem is significantly greater at 10 lines compared with 6.3 and verse forms 10.7% of the total text compared with 5% in *Dhāt al-Himmah*.

A remarkable feature of the verse is the amount, almost half the total, spoken by 'Antarah himself. This is shown in the following summary:

	<u>number of poems</u>	<u>number of lines</u>	<u>lines spoken by 'Antarah</u>	<u>'Antarah's lines as % of total</u>
Vol 1	206	1,730	1,187	69%
2	188	1,922	1,002	52%
3	198	1,828	577	31%
4	106	1,098	435	40%
5	123	1,688	719	42%
6	239	2,354	940	40%
7	131	1,460	830	57%
8	108	918	452	49%
Total:	1,299	12,998	6,142	47%

The section chosen for analysis is the opening two sections of the work, pp. 5-224 of volume 1. It contains 55 pieces of verse. Their length varies between 2 and 36 lines, the average length being 8.2 lines. They can be broken down into the following categories of length:

<u>number of lines</u>	<u>number of poems</u>
1 - 2	5
3 - 5	15
6 - 10	19
11- 15	11
16- 20	3
20 +	2

Ignoring the first 80 pages, which form a prologue to the *sīrah* and contain no verse, the average verse per page is 3.2 lines, which compares with averages of 7 and 1.2 lines in the sections previously examined in *Zīr Sālim* and *Dhāt al-Himmah*. The remarkable feature of the poetry in this section is that 75% of the total is spoken by ‘Antarah; this compares with the overall average for the *sīrah* of 47%. It can be argued that the section chosen for analysis is therefore unrepresentative, since later sections contain a much lower proportion of verse spoken by ‘Antarah, but he remains by far the leading speaker of verse throughout the *sīrah* and the same themes remain dominant.

## (ii) Synopsis of section’s plot

A detailed summary of the plot, and of how the poems fit into it, is contained in Appendix 8: ‘Placement of Poems in the plot of *Sīrat ‘Antarah* pp. 5-224’.

Following a prologue, the section covers the birth and upbringing of ‘Antarah, his falling in love with ‘Ablah and his development into being a mighty warrior.

Following a lengthy account of the history of the world between Noah’s flood and the start of the *sīrah*’s action (pp. 5-76), shortly before the war of Basūs, the section recounts the tribal exploits of the Banī ‘Abs under their king Zuhair, particularly their skirmishes with the Banī Qaḥṭān. It describes the birth of ‘Antarah, following his father Shaddād’s capture of his mother Zabībah, an Abyssinian slave-girl, in the course of a raid, and describes his turbulent boyhood when he terrorises the other slaves and earns the lasting enmity of Zuhair’s son Shās and of Mālik ibn Qurād with whose daughter, ‘Ablah, he falls desperately in love. ‘Antarah performs

prodigious feats as a warrior, as he attempts to win the love of ‘Ablah and to obtain formal recognition of his birth from his father Shaddād (so as to overcome his inferior status as both a slave and black). He obtains powerful support and protection from one of Zuhair’s sons, Prince Mālik.

**C. Example: poem 41<sup>189</sup>**

(a) introduction

Poem 41 is a soliloquy by ‘Antarah. He has just made a fool of himself at a feast given in his honour by Zuhair after a victory over al-Mutaghatri, by getting drunk and speaking disrespectfully to Shaddād about his paternity. After expressing his remorse to his protector, Prince Mālik, ‘Antarah is alone in the desert as he reflects on fate, his lack of status within the tribe and the problems he faces in pursuing his love for ‘Ablah.

The poem has been selected for analysis, because it is in many ways typical of the poetry in the *sīrah* and it contains all the main themes of ‘Antarah’s poetry (and hence of his character). It is also of interest as being one of the 8 poems in this section<sup>190</sup> which are included in ‘Antarah’s published *dīwān*<sup>191</sup> (although all of those poems contain more or less significant differences from the versions in the *dīwān*). A copy of the text of the poem from the *dīwān* is shown and discussed in (d) below.

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<sup>189</sup> *Sīrat ‘Antarah*, vol.1, p.185

<sup>190</sup> the others are poems 13 (p.130), 16 (p.136), 40 (p.184), 44 (p.196), 50 (p.210), 51 (p.212) and 53 (p.216).

<sup>191</sup> Antarah (1981)

(b) text

اعاتب دهرأ لا يلين بعاتب	وأطلب امنا من صروف النوايب	1
وتوعدني الايام وعداً مزخرفاً	واعلم حقا أنه وعد كاذب	2
خدمت اناساً واتخذت اقاربا	وعونا لدھري عند حكم التجارب	3
ينادونني في السلم يا ابن زبببة	وعند لقا الابطال يا بن الاطايب	4
ولو لا الهوى ما ذل مثلي لمتلكم	ولا روعت أسد الشرى بالثعالب	5
ستذكرني قومي اذا الخيل اقبلت	تجهل بها الابطال من كل جانب	6
إذا ما نسوني فالقواضب والقنا	تذكرهم فعلي ووقع المضارب	7
فيا ليت ان الدهر يدني احبتي	كما أنه مدن لكل المصائب	8
ويأتي خيال منك يا عبلة زائراً	يرى فيض جفني بالدموع السواكب	9
سارحل حتى تستريح عواذلي	واعلم اعدائي بتلك الجوانب	10
انك في افق السماء محله	وكفي قصير عن مثل الكواكب	11
وإن قدر الله العظيم بلطفه	فلا غرو من اني انال مطالبني	12
واكد كل الحاسدين واحتوي	على بغيتي قهرا بحد القواضب	13

This can be translated as:

I censure fate which does not relent to a censurer  
and I ask for safety from the vicissitudes of fortune

fate made me an enticing promise  
and I know for certain that it was a false promise

I have served people and I have taken my relations  
as protection against my fortune in the trial by ordeal

in time of peace they call me O son of Zabābah  
and in time of war O son of the noble

5 if it was not for love someone like me would not humble  
 himself to someone like you  
 indeed the lions of the desert do not fear the fox

my people will think of me when the (armed) horsemen arrive  
 and the warriors are jostling on all sides

whenever they forget me the blows of the swords and lances  
 will remind them of my deeds and the impact of the blows

would that fate brought my love closer  
 in the same way that it brings all calamities near

and that your spirit would come to visit me O ‘Ablah  
 and see the torrent of tears falling from my eyelids

10 I will depart until my censurers have subsided  
 and I know [who are] my enemies in these parts

your place is far off in the skies  
 and my hand cannot reach up to the like of the stars

if Almighty God willed in his goodness  
 it would be no wonder if I obtained my desire

I would make all the envious people sick when I took possession  
 of my desire by force through the edge of my blows.

[ for ease of consultation, the Arabic text of the  
 poem is shown also in Appendix 9 ]

(c) analysis

The first line provides a striking opening to the poem, expressing ‘Antarah’s feeling of helplessness in the face of his destiny. It is summed up in the 1st hemistich: he blames a fate which is not susceptible to blame. The point is repeated in the 2nd hemistich, where he seeks security from the ‘vicissitudes of fate’ (صروف النوائب). This hemistich uses antithesis to make its point, by juxtaposing امنا (security) with صروف النوائب, since it is intrinsic to the meaning of ‘vicissitudes of fate’ that they cannot offer security. The point is stressed by the binary, parallel structure of the two hemistiches, each opening with a 1<sup>st</sup> person verb followed by an indefinite object (امنا - دهرا), as well as by the repeated end-rhyme.

The focus remains on fate in line 2, where الايام (fate) occurs in the same position in the 1st hemistich as دهرا in the first line, following an initial verb, but this time the speaker is the object of the verb rather than the subject. Again there is an indefinite object, وعدا مزخرفت (a deceiving promise), but delayed until the end of the hemistich. In the 2nd hemistich, the grammatical structure reverts to be parallel with the first line: an initial 1<sup>st</sup> person verb followed by an indefinite object: واعلم حقا (I know for certain). Fate is again portrayed as offering no consolation, for its promise is misleading and false (كاذب and مزخرف), the adjectives stressed by coming at the end of the two hemistiches.

In line 3, ‘Antarah describes how he has served people and fostered relationships as a protection against fate. The 1st hemistich mirrors the grammatical structure of the first line, but the 2nd hemistich changes the structure to highlight both a repetition of دهر and the final phrase: عند حكم التجارب (in trial by ordeal) which is how he views his troubled existence. Lines 3 and 4 form a pair, in the same way that lines 1 and 2 do, and the 1st hemistich of line 4 mirrors line 2 in starting with a verb which has a 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun as its object. Just as line 2 commented on the futility of ‘Antarah’s requesting security from fate in line 1, so line 4 points out that his efforts to protect himself through his close relationships have not worked since people only value him in time of war. The binary structure of the line serves to make the point very effectively, both hemistiches ending with vocative phrases

as he compares being addressed as ابن زبيبة (the son of Zabībah): that is, as the son of a black slave, in the 1st hemistich, with being addressed as بن الاطيب (son of the best) in the 2nd hemistich.<sup>192</sup>

Line 5 introduces the theme of his love for the first time, when he gives it as his reason for putting up with his treatment by his fellow tribesmen, and he compares himself with a lion of the desert submitting to foxes. The parallel sentiments of the two hemistiches are reflected in their openings: ولا ولو لا and لا. The final word of the first hemistich, لمثلکم

(someone like you) appears to be a misprint: the *dīwān* version has a more appropriate لمثلهم (someone like them), referring to ‘Antarah’s fellow tribesmen who are not present and therefore cannot be addressed directly.

After this introduction of the new element of ‘love’, lines 6 and 7 form another pair. They echo the sentiment of line 4, that ‘Antarah will (only) be valued in time of war. The two lines are parallel and antithetical: line 6 opens with ستذكرني (they will **remember** me), while line 7 opens with إذا ما نسوني (whenever they **forget** me). The opening word of the 2nd hemistich, تجهل (is ignorant), makes no sense and appears to be a misprint for تجول (roams), as found in the *dīwān* version.

These lines form the centre of the poem and mark the end of the first section, which has concentrated on ‘Antarah’s relationship with his tribe. The second half of the poem moves on to focus on his love for ‘Ablah. Line 8 provides a neat *takhalluṣ*, by contrasting the approach of love in the first hemistich with the approach of calamities in the second. This echoes the arrival of (armed) horsemen in line 6. Fate (دهر) is mentioned again in the 1st hemistich and links back to the start of the poem. Once again, these two lines form a pair and there is partial *enjambement* between the lines which are both governed by فيا ليت (would that) at the start of line 8. In line 9 ‘Antarah addresses the absent ‘Ablah for the first time and the rest of the poem is spoken as if to her.

<sup>192</sup> this neat antithesis calls to mind Rudyard Kipling’s expression of a similar sentiment in his poem *Tommy Atkins*:

‘O It’s Tommy this, an’ Tommy that, an’ “Tommy, go away”;  
But it’s “Thank you, Mister Atkins,” when the band begins to play.’

Line 10 stands on its own. It is the one forward-looking statement, where ‘Antarah stops reflecting on his problems and states what he is going to do: that is, to go away until his critics have fallen silent and things become clearer. His statement of intent in line 10 is followed by another two lines which form a pair. In line 11, he acknowledges the problem he faces: ‘Ablah is beyond his reach, but line 12 is optimistic in asserting that, with God’s help, anything is possible.

Line 13 concludes the poem by combining the theme of his love for ‘Ablah with the theme of his resentment at his treatment, as he reflects that his winning ‘Ablah (with God’s help) will be a major blow to his detractors. Thus the poem finishes by returning to its main theme, which, as noted above, is expressed in its central lines: that is, ‘Antarah’s resentment at being treated as inferior. It is a theme which constantly reasserts itself in the *sīrah* as a whole, just as it does here in this poem.

(d) comparison with the version in ‘Antarah’s *dīwān*

There are a number of differences between the texts of the poem in the *sīrah* and the *dīwān*. The following is the *dīwān* text with the differences underlined:<sup>193</sup>

وأطلب امنا من صروف النوايب	أعاتب دهرا لا يلين لعاتب
وأعلم حقا أنه وعد كاذب	وتوعدني الأيام وعدا <u>تغرني</u>
<u>لعوني ولكن أصبحوا كالعقارب</u>	خدمت أناسا وأتخذت أقاربا
وعند <u>صدام الخيل</u> يا ابن الأطايب	ينادونني في السلم يا ابن زبيبة
ولا <u>خدعت</u> أسد <u>ال فلا</u> للتعالب	ولو لا الهوى ما ذل مثلي لمثقم
<u>تجول</u> بها <u>الفرسان</u> بين المضارب	سيذكرني قومي إذا <u>ال خيل</u> أصبحت
تذكرهم فعلي ووقع مضاربي	<u>فان هم</u> نسوني <u>فالصوارم</u> والقنا
<u>إلى</u> كما <u>يدبي</u> إلى مصائبي	فيا ليت أن الدهر يدني أحبتي
يرى فيض جفني بالدموع السواكب	<u>وليت</u> خيالا منك يا <u>عبل</u> طارقا
<u>وحتى</u> <u>يضج</u> الصبر بين جوانبي	<u>سأصبر</u> حتى <u>تطرحنى</u> عوادلي
<u>وباعى</u> قصير عن <u>نوال</u> الكواكب	<u>مقامك</u> في <u>جو</u> السماء <u>مكانك</u>

<sup>193</sup> Antarah (1981) pp. 31-33

Additionally, the final 2 lines of the *sīrah* version are missing from the *dīwān*.

The main difference in the *sīrah* text is the addition of the final two lines.

Otherwise it can be seen that the differences are not significant. Some are obvious clerical errors, such as those noted above: لمثلهم for لمثلكم in line 5, and تجول for تجهل in line 6. Others are little more than the substitution of synonyms: examples are عند لقاء الأبطال (in time of war) for عند صدام الخيل (when horses clash) in line 4, and الأبطال من كل جانب (warriors on all sides) for الفرسان بين المضارب (the knights fighting) in line 6. A more material change occurs in line 3, where وعونا لدهري عند حكم التجارب (as protection against my fortune in the trial by ordeal) replaces لعونى ولكن أصبحوا كالعقارب (for my protection but they became like scorpions), but both versions fit perfectly well with the context of the poem.

The addition of two extra lines is more interesting. Line 12 introduces two new elements: it is the first mention of God and it takes a more optimistic view of the future for ‘Antarah, who will achieve his goal with God’s help. It has to be seen as a deliberate change to the thrust and meaning of the poem: a change which could be interpreted as the narrator’s playing to his audience’s wish for a less despairing tone. If the poem ended at line 12, it would provide a neat antithesis with the opening of the poem, contrasting the absolute power of God with the vicissitudes of a fickle fate. However, this effect is undercut by the addition also of line 13 with its return to the more bitter tone of the first half of the poem. This suggests that the narrator of the *sīrah* wants to stress his hero’s obsession with his inferior status. It is a confirmation therefore of the key importance of that theme to the *sīrah*.

There is no way of establishing whether, or which of, the poems included in ‘Antarah’s *dīwān* are genuine compositions by the historical ‘Antarah. Equally, it is not possible to determine whether many of the differences between the texts are due to the mistakes of scribes or to the faulty memories or the deliberate artistic choices of narrators. However it is tempting to see the deliberate hand of an ‘author’ at work, wishing to alter the tone of the poem to support the portrayal of the hero’s character as portrayed in the fictitious *sīrah*.

## D. Form and structure of the poetry

### (i) Form and structure of poem 41

The poem is in the classical *tawīl* metre and complies with the monorhyme convention of classical poetry, including the use of the rhyme also at the end of the first hemistich of line 1. The language is simple and the poem makes no use of metaphor or rhetorical devices such as *tajnīs*. However, as noted in (b) above, the binary structure of the lines is used to achieve frequent parallelism and antithesis. There is one example of *hikma* in the second hemistich of line 5 and there are a number of images or *topoi* of a conventional, classical kind. These include:

- line 1 - the vicissitudes of fortune;
- line 9 - the spirit of the beloved visiting the lover;  
- torrents of tears falling from the lover's eyelids; and
- line 11 - the beloved far off in the skies.

The poem uses a 'ring' structure, under which the main message of the poem is contained in the central lines and there is a clear link between the end and the beginning of the poem. It is also typical of a ring structure that the poem falls into two halves, as noted above. In line 1 of the poem, 'Antarah presents himself as helpless against the vicissitudes of fortune, but in the final line 13, after discussing his prowess and the roles of love and God in his life, he asserts his ability to take possession of his desire 'through the edge of my blows'. These two lines are linked also by the theme of desire: the 2<sup>st</sup> hemistich of line 1 expresses a wish (...الطلب), while the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich of line 13 states that he will achieve his desire (بغيتي). In the central lines 6-8, he states his main point about how a soldier is regarded by the community: that is, appreciated only in times of danger. Calamities and not love are his normal lot. The problems of a warrior's life are set out in the first half, while love and God occupy the second half, and the two halves are largely chiasmic. Lines 6 and 8, either side of the central line 7, both contain the image of 'arrival' (armed horsemen in line 6, love and calamities in line 8), love is a theme in lines 5 and 9,

lines 4 and 10 discuss the fickle status of the warrior and his censurers and lines 2 and 12 contrast fate's deceiving promise with God's goodness and willingness to grant his desire.

(ii) **Formal characteristics of the poetry as a whole**

All the poems consist of lines of two equal hemistiches and have a consistent end-rhyme or 'monorhyme'. 25 of the 55 poems also comply with the classical requirement for the 1st hemistich to share the end-rhyme (if poems of less than 5 lines are excluded, the compliance figure becomes 22 out of 39 poems).

There are occasional repetitions of rhyme-words within poems. They do not appear to be deliberate attempts to achieve effect and this view is supported by the fact that they occur mainly in the longer poems, which suggests that they may result from the narrator's lack of memory or invention.

There are two poems which have stanzaic characteristics:

- poem 3<sup>194</sup>: where the rhyme scheme between the 10 hemistiches of the 5-line poem shows the pattern: a-a, b-a, c-c, b-a, c-c., suggesting that it is a *musammaṭ*; and
- poem 21<sup>195</sup>: where the 1st hemistiches of the 22 lines all end in  $\bar{a}n$  (similar to the end-rhyme),  $\bar{i}$ ,  $\bar{a}$  or  $\bar{a}(x)$ .

There are also two poems, 9 and 32<sup>196</sup>, where the 1st hemistiches all share the same end-rhyme as the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistiches.

All the poems in this section use one of the canonical classical metres (although, as was the case with *Dhāt al-Himmah*, there are frequent examples where the scansion depends on omitting one or more of the diacritics).

<sup>194</sup> *Sīrat 'Antarah*, vol 1, p.96

<sup>195</sup> *ibid* p.143

<sup>196</sup> *ibid* pp.124 and 160

(iii) Structure, style and imagery of the poems as a whole

The structure of the poems is generally very simple. A number of the poems contain elements of a ‘ring structure’, but this seldom aims to achieve more than linking the end of the poem to its beginning. Central lines are seldom given any special significance.

An exception is poem 11, the first of ‘Antarah’s poems of any length (11 lines), which is unusual in being a narrative poem (without *fakhr*), in which he tells Prince Mālik how he came to kill his fellow-slave Dājī. The first and last lines are both concerned with Mālik, praising him and wishing him well respectively, while the body of the poem falls into 2 sections of 4 lines, either side of the central line 6 which contains the account of ‘Antarah’s action:

قبضت مراقبه بعزم وقوة      وجندلته في الأرض ملقى الى الحشر

I seized his lofty observation post with force and strength  
and threw him on the ground sending him to the Day of Resurrection.

The first section explains why he acted thus (to protect the old lady), while the second section describes the aftermath (all the other slaves turned on him).

The imagery and style of the poetry are equally simple, the former being largely confined to the love poetry apart from frequent descriptions of warriors as ‘lions’. It is noteworthy that by far the most imagery is found in the love-poems which are included in ‘Antarah’s *dīwān*, although even in these cases the imagery remains entirely conventional. An example is poem 13<sup>197</sup>, where every line contains an image:

line 1: رمت الفؤاد مليحة عذراء يسهام (a virgin has shot an arrow at the heart);

line 2: maidens are مثل الشمس لحاظهن ضياء (like suns with their glances of

<sup>197</sup> ibid p.130

- light);
- line 3: the poet is اغتالني سقمى الذي في باطني أخفيتة (killed by an illness hidden inside him);
- line 4: the beloved could be mistaken for قضيب بان (the branch of a willow-tree);
- line 5: she could be mistaken for غزالة مذعرة (an alarmed gazelle);
- line 6: she could be mistaken for الشمس حقاً وجهها (the sun's face);
- line 7: she could be mistaken for البدر ليلة ثمة (the moon on a night when it is full); and
- line 8: when she smiles, لاح الضيا من ثغرها (light shone from her mouth).

There are few rhetorical devices to be found in the poetry. A rare exception is the *tajnīs* in the first line of poem 22<sup>198</sup>, where the theme of ‘Antarah’s black skin is stressed by the contrast of سوادى (my blackness) with لى سود (is my source of authority). The rhetorical effects of the poems are achieved mainly (as in poem 41 examined in C above) by skilful exploitation of the binary structure of the 2-hemistich line through parallelism and antithesis.

#### E. Introductory formulas

No introductory formulas are found within the texts of the poems (such as were found in *Zīr Sālim* and *Banī Hilāl*). However, the ‘pretextual’ introduction (i.e the lines leading up to a verse passage) often describes the motivation for the verse which follows and sets a strong emotional tone.

11 of ‘Antarah’s poems occur in the heat of battle: either before (poems 36, 38, 48 and 55), during (poems 18, 21, 30, 34 and 50) or after battle (poems 29 and 47). And 2 poems are made in response to requests: to answer a question (poem 11) and to recite a poem (poem 26). In all other cases, the motivation for ‘Antarah’s breaking into verse is explicitly stated and in every case the poetry is being forced out by his emotions. The most common formulas are ‘the poetry boiled up in his

<sup>198</sup> ibid p.145

mind' (جاش الشعر في خاطوه) (e.g. poem 8<sup>199</sup>) and phrases starting زاد به followed by الغيظ (anger) (e.g. poem 10<sup>200</sup>), الوجد (passion) (e.g. poem 22) or الهيام (burning love) (e.g. poem 39<sup>201</sup>). The most complete formula, which encapsulates the reasons for 'Antarah's using poetry, is found before poem 31<sup>202</sup>: 'poetry boiled up in his mind and there appeared what was hidden deep inside him' (جاش الشعر في خاطره وظهر منه ما كان يخفيه في ضمائره).

## F. Content and role of the poetry

### (i) Content and role of poem 41

There are three features of poem 41 which make it typical of most of the poetry in the *sīrah* (other than the quotations, as considered separately below). They are:

- the poem is a soliloquy spoken by 'Antarah;
- the verse is forced out of him by the strength of his feelings; and
- its themes are a combination of *fakhr*, love and resentment at his inferior status.

### (ii) Content and role of the poems as a whole

#### (a) introduction

The poems have to be seen in their narrative context, as shown in Appendix 8: 'Placement of poems in *Sīrat 'Antarah* (vol.1, pp.1-224)'. The poems share the characteristic, found in the *siyar* previously examined, of occurring regularly and frequently (apart from in the first 95 pages). However, there is much less variety in the identities of the speakers since, as noted above, 75% of the lines (other than the quotations) are spoken by 'Antarah. This reflects the very dominant role which

<sup>199</sup> ibid p.115

<sup>200</sup> ibid p.124

<sup>201</sup> ibid p.176

<sup>202</sup> ibid p.158

‘Antarah plays in the action of the *sīrah*. He is almost continually ‘on stage’ and at the centre of the action. It will be seen that, as in poem 41 above, the poetry reflects his character and preoccupations.

The poetry in this section can best be considered in three categories: quotations, poems spoken by ‘Antarah and poems spoken by others.

(b) quotations

There are fifteen quotations, of which fourteen are spoken by the Narrator and one by ‘Antarah. They fall into three sub-categories:

- (1) descriptive: there are thirteen quotations which can be called descriptive. Nine of them are describing physical objects, such as a horse (poems 42, 45 and 46)<sup>203</sup>, a lion (poem 17)<sup>204</sup>, a child (poem 7)<sup>205</sup>, a woman (poem 6)<sup>206</sup>, scenery (poems 1 and 19)<sup>207</sup> and a band of girls (poem 27)<sup>208</sup>. The other four are describing the concepts of love (poems 2, 3 and 4)<sup>209</sup> and valour (poem 49)<sup>210</sup>.

They are all emblematic rather than realistic in tone. Typical is the quotation used by the Narrator, in poem 46, to describe ‘Antarah’s horse, Abjar, which includes the line:

وقد خلف البراق في أثره      يسائله ريح الصبا أين حل  
the lightning flash followed behind his track  
the East wind asks him where he is going.

<sup>203</sup> ibid pp. 191, 199 and 199

<sup>204</sup> ibid p.138

<sup>205</sup> ibid p.110

<sup>206</sup> ibid p.108

<sup>207</sup> ibid pp. 78 and 142

<sup>208</sup> ibid p.152

<sup>209</sup> ibid pp.96, 96 and 101

<sup>210</sup> ibid p.208

(ii) gnomic: there are two quotations which are gnomic:

- poem 9:<sup>211</sup> this provides a fine example of what Andras Hamori has called ‘the first task’ of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīdah*, namely ‘facing death head-on’.<sup>212</sup> Its theme is the inevitability of death and the need to face it bravely:

والعمر محتوم وإن جاء السبب      فلتصبري صبر الكرام ذوي النسب  
death is certain however it comes  
so endure (it) with the resolution of one nobly born.

The quotation is used after an account of one of ‘Antarah’s first tests as a warrior, when he is attacked by the other slaves after his killing Dājī. The quotation serves, at this very early stage of the *sīrah*, to elevate ‘Antarah to the status of a pre-Islamic hero.

- poem 52:<sup>213</sup> this is quoted by ‘Antarah when he apologises to Shaddād for his behaviour when he had drunk too much at Zuhair’s feast and insulted Shaddād. It is a deft touch by the Narrator that the quotation forms the whole of ‘Antarah’s apology, for it is entirely in keeping with ‘Antarah’s proud and prickly personality that he would have found it very difficult to make the apology in his own words. The second line is also decidedly ambivalent in its humility:

فالسيف يبنو وجواد الفلا      أيضاً إذا زاد عجباً كبا  
for the sword and the war horse  
stumble also when arrogance increases.

<sup>211</sup> *ibid* p.124

<sup>212</sup> Hamori (1974) p.8

<sup>213</sup> *Sīrat ‘Antarah* vol 1, p.214

(c) poems spoken by ‘Antarah

Poem 41, which was examined in D above, is representative of the poems spoken by ‘Antarah, since it combines themes of *fakhr* and love, as well as ‘Antarah’s sense of the injustice of his inferior status as a black, bastard slave. Of the 32 poems spoken by ‘Antarah in the chosen section, fourteen are concerned primarily with *fakhr*<sup>214</sup> and ten with love<sup>215</sup> (although many poems combine both). The subject of ‘Antarah’s black skin is specifically raised in 6 poems<sup>216</sup> and the injustice of his treatment is also a topic in 3 other poems<sup>217</sup>.

There are two striking features of the poetry, which make it very different from the poetry in the *siyar* examined previously. Driven by battle or emotion (as shown by the discussion of their introductions above), the poems almost never form part of any dialogue and are not motivated by achieving any specific purpose. Rare exceptions are ‘Antarah’s expression of thanks to Samīah for pleading his case to Shaddād (poem 24<sup>218</sup>), his explanation of his action in killing Dājī to Prince Mālik (poem 11) and his pleading his love for ‘Ablah to her and her mother (poem 31). Equally, verse is by no means the major medium for characters’ speech and dialogues are almost all in prose.

Although the poems may not be deliberately aimed to achieve a purpose, they have an emotional impact on their hearers in the same way that they have an emotional motivation. The reactions of the hearers are nearly always recorded at the end of each poem. A frequent reaction is astonishment, presumably at the eloquence (although not often stated explicitly - an exception is poem 51<sup>219</sup>, where Mālik congratulates ‘Antarah on فصاحته) as well as the content of the poem. Typical examples are the reactions to poem 10<sup>220</sup>: ‘Prince Malik was amazed’, or poem 34<sup>221</sup>: ‘they were overcome by stupefaction’ (لحقهم الانذهال). Sometimes astonishment

<sup>214</sup> poems 8, 10, 18, 21, 22, 26, 29, 34, 36, 38, 39, 47, 48 and 55

<sup>215</sup> poems 12, 13, 16, 25, 31, 32, 37, 40, 51 and 53

<sup>216</sup> poems 16, 22, 29, 36, 50 and 55

<sup>217</sup> poems 38, 41 and 51).

<sup>218</sup> *ibid* p.148

<sup>219</sup> *ibid* p.212

<sup>220</sup> *ibid* p.124

<sup>221</sup> *ibid* p.165

is mixed with other emotions, as in ‘Ablah’s reaction to ‘Antarah’s description of her loveliness in poem 13<sup>222</sup>: ‘her joy and astonishment increased’.

Nor do the poems necessarily mark key moments in the plot, as they do in the *siyar* examined previously. For example, there is no poetry at all between pages 177 and 184, despite their containing two important scenes charged with drama: first, ‘Antarah’s discussing his father’s identity and his own predicament with his mother, and then ‘Antarah’s getting drunk at Zuhair’s feast and confronting Shaddād about his paternity.

It is impossible to agree with Bernoussi Saltani’s comment on the role of poetry in *Sīrat ‘Antar*, when he writes: ‘Dans tous les cas, le discours poétique rythme le déroulement de la vie (la diagèse); il n’y a pas un seul événement, grand ou infinitésimal, qui ne soit repris dans un poème’<sup>223</sup> (in every case, the poetic discourse provides the rhythm for the unfolding of life (the diagesis); there is not a single event, big or small, which is not captured in a poem). This is consistent with his description of the poetry in the *sīrah* as ‘pragmatic’, which he explains in the words: ‘Bref tous les états d’ame où le poète se trouve sont pragmatiques, en ce sens qu’ils s’articulent directement, presque sans médiation, sur la vie de la tribu, sauf peut-être cet état d’extase où le poète semble entrer en contact avec la muse’<sup>224</sup> (in short, the frames of mind in which the poet finds himself are pragmatic, in the sense that they express themselves directly, almost without mediation, on the life of the tribe, except perhaps that state of ecstasy where the poet seems to enter into contact with the muse).

Contrary to this view, the poems in the chosen section are remarkably focused on the very limited themes and situations which matter to ‘Antarah himself. The main thrust and purpose of the poetry seems to be to present ‘Antarah as the epitome of a pre-Islamic warrior. As usual in the *siyar*, his first poem (poem 8<sup>225</sup>) sets the tone for what is to follow. It is spoken by him when, at the age of eight, he is guarding

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<sup>222</sup> *ibid* p.130

<sup>223</sup> Saltani (1987) pp.680-681

<sup>224</sup> *ibid* p.684

<sup>225</sup> *Sīrat ‘Antarah*, vol.1, p.115

the tribe's flocks and they have been threatened by a marauding wolf. After throttling the wolf with his bare hands and tearing it apart, he returns to lean against a tree and 'poetry welled up inside him and he revealed what was in his mind, reciting.....' a poem in which he apostrophises the foolishness of the wolf in attacking his cattle for 'I am a lion who does not stop fighting..' (أني هزير لا ازال) (ضروب). The poem provides a miniature portrait of 'Antarah as the warrior to come. He will fight ferociously to protect what he regards as under his care, so that fighting strength is allied to chivalrous motives.

The image of the warrior is further enhanced by the exchange of verse which, as usual in the *siyar*, precedes his first single combat (poems 35 and 36<sup>226</sup>). It occurs when 'Antarah is challenged by Ghālib, a warrior from a rival tribe whose brother he has killed in battle. Ghālib speaks first, choosing his words to cause maximum offence. Each line contains a reference to 'Antarah's lowly status: in line 1 he is 'a slave' (عبد), in line 2 'someone wretched' (عاجز), in line 3 both terms are repeated in referring to him as a 'wretched slave' (عبد سوء) and finally in line 4 his racial origins are stigmatised in calling him 'O son of Zabībah' (يا ابن زبيبة). 'Antarah's reply, using the same metre (*tawīl*) and rhyme, combines straightforward *fakhr* ('I am the lion attacking...') with responses to Ghālib's jibes about his birth and lowly status, as in the opening lines:

تعايرني يا ابن اللأم يا بني      كلون الدجا ها قد بليت بسعفه  
وإن كنت عبدا قد قتلت رجالكم      ورميتكم من ذا الزمان بصرفه

You abuse me you wretch you child

I am tormented by his vileness just as I am by the colour of darkness  
if I am a slave I will kill your men

and overthrow you with the vicissitudes of fate.

Two elements can be identified in these poems, which are typical of all pre-combat exchanges in the *siyar*. First, there is *fakhr* or boasting, which boosts the speaker's confidence and demoralises his opponent, such as Ghālib's description of himself as 'a warrior whom you cannot describe'. Secondly, there is *hijā* or disparagement,

<sup>226</sup> ibid pp.166-167

used for the same purpose as the *fakhr*, such as Ghālib's description of 'Antarah as a 'wretched slave'.

(d) poems spoken by others

There are eight short poems, which are neither quotations nor spoken by 'Antarah. Two are songs performed by groups of girls, at a picnic and party respectively (poems 20 and 28).<sup>227</sup> Three are expressions of *fakhr* by Ghālib (poems 33 and 35)<sup>228</sup> and Qays bin Dubyān (poem 54)<sup>229</sup>, before they fight 'Antarah. Two are descriptions of their horses by Shaddād (poem 5)<sup>230</sup> and al-Hārith (poem 43).<sup>231</sup>

The only poem of any length or consequence is poem 29<sup>232</sup>, where Samīah tells Shaddād how 'Antarah defended the camp in Shaddād's absence. The Narrator has already related how Samīah told Shaddād about 'Antarah's feat, but the poem is the only 'direct speech' by Samīah. It adds drama and detail to the account in a similar way to much of the poetry previously examined in *Zīr Sālim* and *Dhāt al-Himmah*. It is one of only two poems in this section of the *sīrah* to play this role (the other poem being poem 11, spoken by 'Antarah, as mentioned in (b) above).

**G. The role of poetry in the plot of *Sīrat 'Antarah***

(i) **Synopsis of episode of 'Antarah's *mu'allaqah***<sup>233</sup>

In view of 'Antarah's reputation as a pre-Islamic poet, and the fact that he is one of the seven poets whose poems were hung in the *Ka'bah* in acknowledgement of their excellence, it is not surprising that the *sīrah* includes a description of the hanging of the *mu'allaqah* (the hung [poem]). What is surprising, however, is the treatment of the episode and its equivocal attitude to war and poetry. In the poems

<sup>227</sup> *ibid* vol.1, pp.143 and 152

<sup>228</sup> *ibid* pp.161 and 166

<sup>229</sup> *ibid* p.220

<sup>230</sup> *ibid* p.104

<sup>231</sup> *ibid* p.193

<sup>232</sup> *ibid* p.154

<sup>233</sup> *Sīrat 'Antarah* vol.5 pp.190-310

examined above, poetry can be seen as a tool of war as well as a means of describing it. In the episode of the hanging of the *mu‘allaqah*, poetry and war become rivals and fight their own battle for supremacy. The outcome of this fight is far from clearcut.

The episode occurs at the start of the second half of the *sīrah*, in the middle of the fifth of the eight volumes. ‘Antarah’s tribe, the Banu ‘Abs, have gathered in Mecca and have decided to remain there for the ‘holy month’. They are spending their time in ‘drinking wine, socialising with the people of Mecca, circumambulating the holy building and reading the qasīdahs hanging on the pillars’.<sup>234</sup> They are discussing ‘Antarah’s fame as a warrior, when the comment is made that true fame can only be won by achieving eminence as a poet. A hostile tribesman, ‘Umārah, throws ‘Antarah’s inferior status in his face and comments that, despite his feats as a warrior, ‘Antarah will never lose the taint of servitude (*ismu ‘l-‘ubūdīyah*) unless he has a poem ‘hung’ in the *Ka‘bah*. The equivocal nature of the contest to come is implicit in ‘Umārah’s statement that, if ‘Antarah succeeds in ‘hanging’ a poem, ‘the men of the Banī ‘Abs will say that he is supreme among the leaders in eloquence, chivalry and courage’ (الفصاحة والفروسية والشجاعة)<sup>235</sup>. ‘Antarah is provoked to accept the challenge, so the motivation for his poetic ambition arises from the usual touchstone of his actions: his urge to overcome the disadvantages of his birth. Extra motivation is provided when ‘Ablah swears not to sleep with him until he has achieved his goal.<sup>236</sup>

The first step is for his follower Asyad to write down all of ‘Antarah’s poems in a notebook and then to ask ‘Antarah to select one to be hung and to check it. ‘Antarah refuses, saying: ‘By God, I don’t know what will work in this affair’, and he passes the decision to ‘Ablah.<sup>237</sup> After Asyad has read out all the poems to her, one after another, she picks the winner and it is written out in alternate lines of silver and gold. When the governor of Mecca, Sheikh Abdul al-Muṭṭalib<sup>238</sup> is

<sup>234</sup> ibid p.194

<sup>235</sup> ibid p.196

<sup>236</sup> This incident is cited by Remke Kruk as evidence of ‘Ablah’s strong and independent personality (Kruk (2006), p. 300

<sup>237</sup> *Sīrat ‘Antarah*, vol.5, p.200

<sup>238</sup> the Prophet’s grandfather

approached to consider ‘Antarah’s application to have his poem hung, he tries but fails to dissuade him in order to avoid trouble between the tribes. So the Sheikh calls all the tribes together at the ‘judgement bench’ and prepares to read the poem. The audience insists on first knowing the identity of the poet, whom they assume to be someone of high rank, and there is an uproar when ‘Antarah is introduced, despite an eloquent argument from the Sheikh that bravery and eloquence deserve respect regardless of rank. The response of the tribesmen is to call ‘Antarah ‘that evil bastard slave’ and to promise to kill him if he hangs his poem. A general brawl follows between ‘Antarah’s supporters and his opponents, which is finally stopped by ‘Antarah himself. He challenges everyone either to fight him or to ‘prostrate themselves’ in front of his poem, and he promises to fight anyone else who wants to hang a poem. Then he recites a few lines of poetry. One of his opponents describes the poetry as ‘drivel’ (*hadhayān*) and ‘Antarah promptly kills him. Further fights follow in which ‘Antarah kills a series of rash challengers.

Now is the time for the authors of the existing *mu‘allaqāt* to play their parts. They have witnessed the fights and are afraid that ‘Antarah is going to pull down their own poems. The first to speak is Ṭarafah, described as a ‘respected knight’, who tells ‘Antarah that he has the reputation of being brave but also of being base born (معلول النسب) which makes him unacceptable. Nonetheless Ṭarafah says that he would like to hear some of his poetry, so as to be able to judge it, and also to test him in battle. ‘Antarah is pleased, but suggests that Ṭarafah should recite his own poem first, because the depth of meaning in ‘Antarah’s poem might unsettle him.

Ṭarafah proceeds to recite his *mu‘allaqah* in full, which receives faint praise from ‘Antarah: ‘Your verse is not bad but, when my poem is hung, people will see the difference. You have compiled your piece for me over a long period of time, but I would like to hear something more spontaneous (شيء على البديعة) and after that we will fight and people will see which of us is supreme in valour and skill.’<sup>239</sup> Ṭarafah responds by improvising a poem, which ‘Antarah answers in the same metre and rhyme. Ṭarafah applauds his skill but repeats his view that ‘Antarah’s base birth is

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<sup>239</sup> *Sīrat ‘Antarah*, vol.5, p.218

an obstacle to his ‘hanging’ a poem. Then he and ‘Antarah fight until Ṭarafah is knocked down, tied up and removed from the scene.<sup>240</sup>

Very similar confrontations follow between ‘Antarah and authors of other *mu‘allaqāt*. Each of Zuhair, Labīd and ‘Amr bin Kulthūm recites his *mu‘allaqah* and is criticised for faults such as ‘rhetorical flourishes’ (زخاريف), ‘weakness’ (تعلل) and ‘absurdity’ (محال), before being defeated in combat, tied up and taken away. Finally Imru’ al-Qays recites his *mu‘allaqah* and is praised by ‘Antarah, but he suffers the same fate as the other poets when they fight.<sup>241</sup>

Eventually ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib thinks it is time to bring things to a conclusion and advises ‘Antarah to threaten his prisoners with torture and death if they do not support his poem. This strategy proves effective, but Imru’ al-Qays insists that they must first make sure that ‘Antarah has the right skills. Accordingly ‘Antarah is asked to list all the names of a series of objects and he duly provides 80 names for a sword, 42 names for a lance, 31 for armour, 48 for a horse, 59 for a camel, 45 for wine and 64 for a snake. ‘Antarah is acclaimed by Imru’ al-Qays, who announces to the audience: ‘We have admitted Prince ‘Antarah into our ranks and, by God, of us all he is the most eloquent, the strongest in combat and the most courageous in battle’.<sup>242</sup> Everyone makes peace and celebrates after the announcement and finally ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib asks a Meccan notable to read out ‘Antarah’s *qaṣīdah*. The reception of the poem, so long awaited, is described very briefly: ‘When [the reciter] had finished ‘Antarah’s poem, the connoisseurs were delighted and amazed by it, saying “it is right to give it the highest honour”.’ It is noteworthy that Goethe was to describe ‘Antarah’s *mu‘allaqah* as ‘*stolz, drohend, treffend, prächtig*’<sup>243</sup> (proud, threatening, striking, splendid), which could be taken as an accurate description of ‘Antarah’s character in the *sīrah*.

There is a further stage in the story of the *mu‘allaqah*, one volume later, when ‘Antarah returns from his expedition to the Sudan and hears that one of the Banī

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<sup>240</sup> ibid p.220

<sup>241</sup> ibid p.255

<sup>242</sup> ibid p.303

<sup>243</sup> Mommsen (1988), p. 63

Qaḥṭān has torn down his ode, because ‘Antarah is ‘only a slave’, and has hung one of his own odes in its place. This is seen as an insult to ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and to the whole of the Banī ‘Abs as well as to ‘Antarah, who hurries to Mecca, kills the culprit, routs the Banī Qaḥṭān and asks ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib to summon all the tribes together to witness the restoration of his own ode. Otherwise he will tear down all the other *mu‘allaqāt*. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib duly summons the tribes, reminding them of the possible consequences of offending ‘Antarah. When they arrive, ‘Antarah improves the occasion by reciting a new ode and hangs that as well as the old one, which he promotes to the top spot among the *mu‘allaqāt*.<sup>244</sup>

(ii) ‘Antarah’s *mu‘allaqah*

The text of the *mu‘allaqah* is considerably longer, at 110 lines, than the versions to be found in ‘Antarah’s *dīwān* (e.g. 86 lines<sup>245</sup>) or in editions of the collected *mu‘allaqāt* (e.g. 75 lines<sup>246</sup>). Most of the extra lines come in a passage of 23 lines added on to the end of the poem (the text of the passage is shown in Appendix 10).

This passage starts by describing a gory battle scene: blood flowing in the desert and horses slipping among the skulls. After 5 lines on this theme, the poet’s thoughts move on to his beloved, ‘Ablah: he thinks of her while he is in the middle of the battle and he wishes that she could see him in action. After 11 lines thus combining *fakhr* and love, the poet talks of his parents: Shaddād, whom he describes as الشجاع الضيغم (the brave lion), and Zabībah:

أمي زبيبة ليس انكر اسمها وأنا ابن قلاق الجماجم والدم  
my mother Zabībah whose name I do not disown  
while I am the milk-child of skulls and blood.

The final 5 lines are devoted to praising God.

<sup>244</sup> *Sīrat ‘Antarah* vol.6, pp. 640-652 and vol.7, 5-11

<sup>245</sup> *Antarah* (1981) p.83

<sup>246</sup> *Sharḥ al-mu‘allaqāt al-sab‘*, Dār Ṣāder, Beirut, 1998, p.137

It is noteworthy that these 23 lines are significantly different in style from the poetry examined in F above. The imagery is on a much higher level in both amount and quality. Examples include: الخيل تزلق بالجماجم والدم (the horses slipping in skulls and blood) (line 1), فوددت لثما للسيوف كأنها لمعت كبارق ثغرك المتبسم (I wanted to kiss the swords shining like a flash of your smile) (line 7), غريان الفلاة تنوشه يحجلن فوق بنانه (crows of the desert cling to it (his sword) hopping on his fingers) (line 13) as well as فلاق الجماجم mentioned above (line 18).

Although these lines seem much closer in style to the *mu'allaqah* than to the normal poetry in the *sīrah*, they fit well with 'Antarah's character and usual themes in the way they combine fighting and *fakhr* with love and the theme of his lineage and his black mother. It seems plausible to suggest that one of the 'authors' of the *sīrah* might have added these lines to the existing text of the *mu'allaqah* in order to give the whole poem a more convincing link with the character and passions of the *sīrah*'s hero, while ensuring that the style and language are consistent with those of the *mu'allaqah* rather than with those of the bulk of the poetry in the *sīrah*. This raises interesting (and unanswerable) questions as to the extent to which the relative simplicity of much of the poetry in this *sīrah* (and also in the other *siyar*) is a deliberate creative, artistic choice rather than merely a reflection of its authors' experience and skills.

### (iii) Significance of the episode

Peter Heath examines this episode at some length as an example of 'the compositional structure and narrative invention' to be found in *Sīrat 'Antarah*. He refers to the fact that the subjective poetry in the *sīrah* is 'largely ornamental, exerting little influence on the course of narrative events', and he points out that this posed a problem for the *sīrah*'s authors. In order to give the episode the prominence and drama which it deserved, it had to be made into a story which fitted with the *sīrah*'s 'pre-existent web of narrative patterns and structures: the story patterns of the Heroic Cycle and the prestructured scenes of its compositional models'. He goes on to analyse the narrative units of the story in detail, to show

how ‘*Sīrat ‘Antar* transforms a literary event into a war’ by using the poetry as an excuse for combats and battles.<sup>247</sup>

However, the narrative treatment of the episode does not detract from the significance of the way in which poetry is portrayed. Poetry is not just an excuse for fighting, but is portrayed as almost interchangeable with it as a means of settling differences and of displaying valour. It is relevant to consider why ‘Antarah decides to bid to have one of his poems ‘hung’. The honour of such an achievement had been mentioned to him first a long time before and he had considered the idea of aspiring to ‘hang’ one of his poems, but when he travels to Mecca, with the Banī ‘Abs, he does not have any such objective in mind. It is only when ‘Umārah taunts him about his inferior status that ‘Antarah becomes fixated on hanging one of his poems, particularly after ‘Umārah points out that fighting alone will not enable him to change that status.

The episode is also of interest in being one of the very few occasions in the *sīrah* where poetry attracts critical comments on its quality as opposed to its content, when ‘Antarah reacts to the existing *mu‘allaqāt* as they are recited by their authors. The comments, as noted in (i) above, are minimal, but stress the importance of spontaneity and he criticises the other poets for reciting poems which had been composed long before. It is difficult to square this with the fact that ‘Antarah’s own *mu‘allaqah* is also the recycling of an old poem, but it may explain why ‘Antarah subsequently recites a second *mu‘allaqah* in a spontaneous manner. The stress on spontaneity may be seen as a criticism of the elaborate creations of classical poetry in the post-Islamic period and an appeal to the simpler, more natural style of pre-Islamic poetry. It may also explain why, unlike the authors of the existing *mu‘allaqāt*, ‘Antarah does not recite his own poem, thereby stressing that he is not claiming spontaneity for it.

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<sup>247</sup> Heath (1996) pp.142-148

## H. Conclusion

The form of the poetry in *Sīrat ‘Antar* is not significantly different from that found in *Dhāt al-Himmah*. It complies broadly with classical conventions in metre and rhyme, while using simple language and very little other than the most basic imagery. Its rhetorical effects are achieved mainly by skilful exploitation of the binary structure of the 2-hemistich line through parallelism and antithesis.

The subject-matter of the poetry, consisting primarily of *fakhr* and love poetry, was also present in the *siyar* previously examined. However, a major difference is that there is very little of any other sort of poetry in *Sīrat ‘Antar*, apart from quotations used (as in the other *siyar*) primarily as emblematic interjections by the narrator. The enormous proportion of poetry put into ‘Antarah’s mouth (75% in the section examined above and 47% overall in the *sīrah*) highlights the fact that in this *sīrah* poetry is not used as a general means of dialogue or as a necessary marker for key moments in the action. It is far more closely linked to the projection of the main character and his role. It is the means by which ‘Antarah expresses his feelings as warrior and lover. It is also the means of stressing the theme of Muslim heroism and chivalry, which is central to the *sīrah*, as well as the underlying theme of ‘Antarah’s struggle against the racial and social handicaps of his birth.

But despite the prominence of the hero and his poetry, the portrayal of poetry in the *sīrah* remains interestingly equivocal as compared with its portrayal in *Dhāt al-Himmah*. Although ‘Antarah’s poetry is often acclaimed in the course of the saga, and he is occasionally asked to recite poems at tribal gatherings such as the victory feasts, there is no indication that he regards his poetry as being of importance when compared to his feats of arms. His wish to have his poem accepted as a *mu‘allaqah*, as noted above, was based on the benefits for his status rather than on any absolute merit of poetry itself.

In *Dhāt al-Himmah*, شجاعة and فصاحة are presented as twin, but separate, essential attributes of a valiant knight (as shown, for example, in Jundabah’s concern at the lack of a poetic greeting from the obviously brave Qattālah). In *Sīrat ‘Antarah*, the

two attributes have become almost indistinguishable and 'Antarah uses his bravery and fighting skills to establish the worth of his poetry. The conventional portrayal of poetry as a weapon (the pen as a sword) has been turned upside down and fighting becomes a form of poetry.

## Chapter 6

*Sīrat ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*

## A. Introduction

The inclusion of the *Tale of ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* as one of the texts to be studied in this thesis is based on the fact that its subject-matter and themes fall squarely within the category of the *siyar*, dealing with tribal, national and religious conflicts in medieval Arabia. However, *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* is typical of the *1001 Nights* in containing at least two other major tales within its frame. Neither of them would have any claim to fall into the category of *siyar* on its own, but both are essential to the theme and impact of the main story. One advantage of their inclusion is that they may fairly be described as more typical, than the main story, of the mass of stories in the *1001 Nights*. It may therefore be possible, by drawing comparisons between the roles of poetry in the different tales comprised within *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*, to conclude whether the poetry in the main tale is closer to the model of the *siyar* as a whole or to that of the *1001 Nights*.

There has been very little scholastic commentary on the poetry in *1001 Nights*, in marked contrast to the attention lavished on the work as a whole, but essays devoted to the subject include Wafid Munir's *al-Shi‘r fī Alf Laylah wa Laylah*<sup>248</sup>, Wolfhart Heinrichs' *The Function of Poetry in the Arabian Nights, Some Observations*<sup>249</sup> and Geert Jan van Gelder's *Poetry and the Arabian Nights*.<sup>250</sup> The poetry in *1001 Nights* has also been examined in two more specific and detailed studies of particular Tales by French scholars: of the poetry in the *Tale of Ajīb and Gharīb* by André Miquel in *Un Conte des 1001 Nuits, Ajīb et Gharīb*<sup>251</sup>, and of the poetry in *‘Azīz's Tale* by Jamel-Eddine Bencheikh in *La Volupté d'en mourir*<sup>252</sup>. Their views will be examined in F below.

The treatment of the *Tale of ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* is different from that of the other *siyar*, in that the relative brevity of the tale has avoided the need to concentrate only on a chosen section of it.

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<sup>248</sup> Munir (1985)

<sup>249</sup> Heinrichs (2007)

<sup>250</sup> *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, ed. U. Marzolph & R. van Leeuwen, Santa Barbara, 2004, pp.13-17.

<sup>251</sup> Miquel (1977)

<sup>252</sup> Bencheikh (1991)

NB: all references to the text of *1001 Nights* are to the text of the edition published in 2 volumes by *Dār Sadar* in Beirut in 1999, which is based on the Bulāq edition;  
 all references to the text of *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* are to the text of the tale in the above edition, volume 1, pp.162-339; and  
 translations of poetry are based on those by Malcolm Lyons in his translation of *1001 Nights* (Lyons (2008)).

Poems are numbered as shown in Appendix 11.

## B. The *Tale of ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*

### (i) Introduction

The *Tale of ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* is one of the longest tales in the *1001 Nights* and its recitation occupies exactly 100 nights. It contains three major tales: within the frame of the title tale, the *Tale of Tāj al-Mulūk and Princess Dunyā* is told as a story to divert the hero when he is depressed and, within the frame of that tale, *‘Azīz’s Tale* is told by one of the characters, *‘Azīz*, when he is asked to explain why he is so miserable. Neither tale has any connection with the events of the title tale, but there are, as always in the *Nights*, major points of thematic and moral similarity. In considering the different aspects of the poetry within the *Tale of ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*, the three stories will be treated separately as well as together.

### (ii) Synopses

A detailed summary of the tale can be found in Appendix 11: ‘Placement of poems in the *Tale of ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*’. The following are very brief synopses of the three stories.

(a) the main *Tale of ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*

The tale is an account of three generations of the family of ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān, a king who rules the Muslim world from Baghdad. It recounts the interlocked lives (including incestuous marriage and parenthood) of his sons Sharkān and Ḍaw’ al-Makān and his daughter Nuzhat al-Zamān, and ends after Ḍaw’s son, Kāna mā Kāna, and Nuzhat’s daughter, Quḍiya fa Kāna, have grown up and fallen in love. It is set against the background of the Muslim/Byzantine wars and much of the action takes place near Constantinople when it is being besieged by the Muslim army (there are obvious similarities to the action in *Dhāt al-Himmah*). Major characters who shape events include an Amazonian Christian princess, Ibrīzah, who fights for the Muslims after falling in love with Sharkān, but is then raped by ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān, and whose son, resulting from that rape, Rumzān, becomes king of Caeserea and plays a major part in the denouement of the story when he rescues all the main characters from death at the hands of the Christians, discovers that he is Kāna mā Kāna’s brother and agrees to rule jointly with him. The other major character is Dhāt al-Dawāhī, Ibrīzah’s evil grandmother, a mistress of trickery and disguise, who plots ceaselessly against the Muslims and succeeds in killing ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān through a plot of great ingenuity. The tale ends with her crucifixion on the Gate of Baghdad.

Richard Burton captures the varied fascinations of the tale when he writes that it has ‘... all the characteristics of eastern art: it is a phantasmagoria of Holy Places, palaces and harems; convents, castles and caverns, here restful with gentle landscapes and there bristling with furious battle-pictures and tales of princely prowess and knightly derring-do.’<sup>253</sup>

(b) ‘Azīz’s *Tale*

On the morning of his wedding to his cousin ‘Azīzah, ‘Azīz goes for a walk and falls hopelessly in love with a mysterious girl sitting in a window who communicates with him through a note dropped in her handkerchief from the

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<sup>253</sup> Burton (1885) p.147

window. He tells ‘Azīzah, who is heartbroken but devotes herself to helping him in his courtship. ‘Azīz is a pawn in the process and it is ‘Azīzah who drafts and interprets the cryptic communications between ‘Azīz and the girl (eventually revealed to be ‘the daughter of Daḥīlah the Crafty’) and tries to save ‘Azīz from great, but unstated, dangers, until she dies from grief. Without her guidance, ‘Azīz falls prey to another girl who forces him into marriage and keeps him captive for a year. When he escapes and returns to see Daḥīlah’s daughter, she is furious and has him castrated before throwing him out.

(c) *The Tale of Tāj al-Mulūk and Princess Dunyā*

Tāj al-Mulūk, a handsome prince, falls hopelessly in love with Princess Dunyā after hearing of her in the course of ‘Azīz’s *Tale*. Tāj travels to her country incognito as a silk merchant, in company with ‘Azīz, to seek an opportunity to press his suit, despite her well-known hatred of men (based on a dream she had as a child). He wins her love after an exchange of messages and a ruse to show how she has misinterpreted her dream. Light relief is provided by a Market Superintendent who has his own designs on Tāj and ‘Azīz.

(iii) **Volume and distribution of verse**

The 177 pages of the *Tale of ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* contain 165 poems for a total of 575 lines. The key statistics of the verse are as follows:

	main <i>Tale of</i> <i>‘Umar al-N.</i>	<i>Azīz’s</i> <i>Tale</i>	<i>Tale of</i> <i>Tāj al-M.</i>	Total
pages	125	30	22	177
poems	104	38	23	165
quotations	38	12	3	53
lines of verse	362	138	75	575
verse as % of text*	8.8%	13.9%	10.3%	9.8%
ave.lines per poem	3.5	3.6	3.3	3.5
poems with 1-2 lines	45	17	10	72
poems with 3-5 lines	42	16	10	68

poems with 6-9 lines	15	4	3	22
poems with 10+ lines	2	1	-	3

\* measured in lines, assuming 33 lines per printed page

Noteworthy features of these statistics include:

- the very large number of short passages of 1 or 2 lines. This is partly explained by the large number of quotations, which tend to be of 2 lines;
- the very small number of passages of any extended length. There are only 3 passages of more than 9 lines and the longest passage is only 15 lines; and
- the figures for the average length and frequency of the poems do not vary significantly between the three stories which are contained in *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*.

These points suggest that there are significant differences between the use of verse in the *siyar* previously examined and its use in *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*. The lack of any big difference between the three different stories in *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*, despite the fact that only the main tale can be regarded as a *sīrah*, suggests also that the difference from the verse previously examined rests on a difference between the *sīrah* genre and *1001 Nights* as a whole.

The question arises as to whether it is fair to use the example of *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* as a basis for any judgement on *1001 Nights* as a whole. In the whole of *1001 Nights*, there is a total of 1,280 poems, amounting to 4,449 lines, of which 484 poems are presented as quotations. If the statistical analysis shown above is applied to another Tale, also of greater than normal length, as well as to *1001 Nights* as a whole, the results are as follows:

	<i>Tale of 'Umar al-N.</i>	<i>Tale of Qamar al-Zaman</i>	Whole of <i>1001 Nights</i>
pages	177	80	1,464
poems	165	107	1,280
lines of verse	575	419	4,449
verse as % of text	9.8%	15.9%	9.2%
ave.lines per poem	3.5	3.9	3.5
quotations	53 (32%)	36 (34%)	484 (38%)
poems with 6-9 lines	22 (13%)	12 (11%)	125 (10%)
poems with 10+ lines	3 (1.8%)	8 (7.5%)	64 (5%)

It can be seen that the statistics of the *Tale of 'Umar al-Nu'mān* are broadly similar to those of *1001 Nights* as a whole. Although *1001 Nights* as a whole has a significantly higher number of poems of 10 lines or more, the percentage is still very low by comparison to the *siyar*. This suggests again that *'Umar al-Nu'mān* is closer to the model of *1001 Nights* than to that of the *siyar*.

### C. Example: poem 26<sup>254</sup>

#### (i) Introduction

This short poem is a soliloquy by Nuzhat after she has left Ḍaw' in Jerusalem in order to seek a means of earning some money for them both. She is lamenting her separation from her beloved brother, as stated in the words leading up to the poem: 'She began to weep as she went, not knowing where she was heading. Her thoughts were of her brother and her heart was full of her family and homeland. She began to implore Almighty God to drive these sufferings away and she recited these lines.....'.

It has been chosen as an example for analysis, because it is a good example of the love poetry which is at the heart of each of the three tales.

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<sup>254</sup> *'Umar al-Nu 'mān* p.191

## (ii) Text

والشوق حرك ما عندي من الألم	جن الظلام وهاج الوجد بالسقم	1
والوجد صيرني في حالة العدم	ولوعة البين في الأحشاء قد سكنت	2
والدمع باح بحب أي مكنتم	والحزن أفلقني والشوق أحرقتني	3
حتى تزحزح ما عندي من الألم	وليس لي حيلة في الوصل أعرفها	4
ومن لظاها يظل الصب في نغم	فنار قلبي بالأشواق موقدة	5
إني صيرت على ما خط بالقلم	يا من يلوم على ما حل بي وكفى	6
يمين أهل الهوى مبرورة القسم	أقسمت بالحب ما لي سلوة أبداً	7
واشهد بعلمك أني فيك لم أنم	يا ليل بلغ رواة الحب عن خبري	8

This has been translated by Malcolm Lyons as follows<sup>255</sup>:

The night is dark; passion has stirred up sickness  
while longing has aroused the pains I feel.

The pangs of parting settled in my heart -  
and thanks to passion nothing of me is left -

disturbing me, while longing burns my heart,  
as tears reveal the secret that was hidden.

I know no way by which I can reach union,  
so as to banish the pain I have.

The fire of my heart is kindled by this longing  
while its blaze leaves the lover in distress.

You blame me for my suffering; it is enough.  
I endure what the pen of destiny has decreed.

<sup>255</sup> Lyons (2008) vol.1, p.355

I swear by love that I shall never be consoled,  
and oaths that lovers take remain inviolate.

Night, carry news of me to those who tell of love;  
bear witness that you know I have not slept.

[ for ease of consultation the Arabic text  
of the poem is shown also in Appendix 12 ]

### (iii) Analysis

The poem falls into three short sections: two sections of three lines divided by a central pair of lines. A mood of despair in the opening lines is replaced by defiance in the last section, while the central pair summarise Nuzhat's predicament.

The mood is set at the very start of the poem: *جن الظلام* (darkness has fallen). Every word in the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich strikes a note of gloom and mental turmoil: the verbs *جن* and *هاج* (stirred), and the three nouns *ظلام*, *وجد* (passion) and *سقم* (illness). The 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich sums up Nuzhat's state of mind: tortured by love, as stressed by the first and last words of the hemistich: *الشوق* (love) and *الألم* (agony). The theme is pursued in the next two lines, where each of the four hemistiches starts with a noun or noun phrase setting the mood: *لوعة البين* (the anguish of parting), *الوجد* (passion), *الحنن* (grief) and *الدمع* (tears). Nuzhat's predicament is stressed by the antithesis in the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich of line 2: lovers are separated (*البين*) but sorrow has settled (*سكنت*). The key rhyme-words drive home the message: *الألم*, *العدم* (nothingness) and *مكتتم* (hidden).

The central lines 4 and 5 contain the main message of the poem. She acknowledges the hopelessness of her situation but cannot control her love even if it causes her distress. The mood is again set from the very first word, the negative *ليس* (there is not). In line 4, the unattainable 'union' (*وصل*), which she longs for, is in antithesis to the 'separation' of line 2 and the rhyme-word repeats the *الألم* of line 1. The image

of fire, which runs through the whole of line 5, links with the longing which ‘burnt’ (أحرقني) her in line 3. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich a succession of heavy consonants in *نظاها يظل الصب* are sounds of doom leading to the final rhyme-word *نقم*, which is translated by Malcolm Lyons as ‘distress’ but contains also the idea of retribution.

In the final three lines, 6-8, Nuzhat’s acceptance of her situation changes the mood from distress to defiance. In line 6, she states that she has borne calmly (إني صبرت) what the ‘pen of destiny has decreed’ (ما خط بالقلم), but in line 7 she swears that she will not be consoled and her love is steadfast. The sentiment is reinforced by the rhetorical device of *radd* ‘I-‘ajz ‘alā ‘I-ṣadr between the opening أقسمت (I have sworn) and the final القسم (oath). In line 8, Nuzhat goes beyond simple affirmation of her love by asking for it be made public with the two imperatives: ‘carry news!’ (بلغ) and ‘bear witness’ (أشهد). This contrasts with the hidden secret (مكتم) of line 3. The last hemistich refers to her sleeplessness, but this is now proud evidence of her love in contrast to the sickness and misery of her night in line 1.

#### D. Form and structure of the poetry

##### (i) Form and structure of poem 26

The poem is typical of all the verse in ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān* in using a conventional 2-hemistich line with monorhyme and one of the classical metres (*basīṭ*). The unconventional repetition of the rhyme-word in lines 1 and 4 is for deliberate effect, as noted above.

The poem has been carefully structured in its 3-2-3 pattern, using a simple ring structure in which the opening and closing lines are linked and there is a central section. It is also typical of a ring structure that the poem falls into two clear halves.

The imagery of sleeplessness and blazing fires is conventional love imagery, which is found throughout the *sīrah* and will be considered further in F (v) below.

(ii) **Formal characteristics of the poetry as a whole**

All the poems comply with classical convention, consisting of lines of 2 hemistiches, and with a monorhyme, apart from two passages with strophic characteristics, poems 69 and 86:

poem 69<sup>256</sup>: this poem (spoken by one of Sharkān's close friends as an oration over his grave) is laid out in the text as two stanzas, each consisting of two 2-hemistich lines followed by one 1-hemistich line. Each hemistich complies with the monorhyme (*rīm*) and it is arguable that this format is an arbitrary decision of the scribe or printer, and that the poem could equally well have been laid out as 10 shorter lines, which would have shown no difference from a normal classical poem. However the strophic form is validated by the use to which it is put by the poet in his presentation of its content. Both stanzas contain separate thoughts which are developed within the stanza, with enjambement used freely between hemistiches and lines, and the concluding half-line is used to make a neat conclusion.

The binary structure intrinsic to classical Arabic poetry is preserved, but applied not to the hemistiches in each line but to the lines in each stanza. For example, in the second stanza the first line runs:

ولله ما حدثت عنك ضمائري      ملا ولا خطر المصاب بخاطري  
by God I never told my inner heart of you  
nor did your grandeur ever cross my mind.

This statement appears shocking in the context of a funeral tribute, which then gives great force to the second line of the pair:

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<sup>256</sup> 'Umar al-Nu'mān p.258

إلا وقد جرح الدموع محاجري      وإذا صرفت إلى سواك نواظري  
 without tears wounding the sockets of my eyes  
 if I should look at anyone but you.

The final line rounds off the poem:

جذب الغرام عنان طرفي في الكرى  
 my passion tugs at their reins as I try to sleep.<sup>257</sup>

The image of passion tugging the reins of his eyes echoes the reference to Sharkān in the first stanza as ‘leader of the camel litters’, and the reference to his trying to sleep emphasizes the point that Sharkān is now in a sleep from which he will not awaken.

Finally, it is noteworthy that this image is of a sophistication unthinkable in the *siyar* previously examined. It reflects a move from the conventional images of pre-Islamic poetry to the subtlety of the Golden Age.

poem 86<sup>258</sup>: This poem is ‘Azīzah’s response to hearing Azīz’s story of how he missed his betrothal party because he has fallen hopelessly in love with a girl he saw in a window. It is a reflection on love’s delights and agonies. The strophic nature of the poem is clear from its rhyme scheme. The three stanzas have the pattern of a *musammaṭ* : a a a a b, c c c c b, d d d d b. It is the only poem in the Tale for which a metre has not been indicated in the text, but it seems to be in a variation of the iambic *rajaz* metre. Again the poet has made good use of the strophic form, each stanza making a separate point about the nature of love. The first stanza stresses that love is never a matter of choice and therefore, if genuine, can never be a source of shame; the second stanza describes the bitter / sweet nature of love; and the third stanza celebrates love and

<sup>257</sup> trans. Lyons (2008) p.474

<sup>258</sup> ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān p.269

lovers regardless of everything.

In each stanza, the theme is developed in the first four hemistich/lines and rounded off or summarised in the fifth. In the first stanza, for example, the argument is developed a stage in each of the first 4 lines, emphasized by the final words of each line: اختيار (choice), اضطرار (necessity), عار (shame) and أخبار (history or experience). The final line rounds it off:

ما زيفت على صحيح النقد

sound currency cannot be falsified<sup>259</sup>

Every piece of verse uses one of the conventional classical metres, of which the most frequent, unsurprisingly, are *tawīl*, *basīṭ*, *kāmil* and *wāfir*.

### (iii) Structure, style and imagery

#### (a) structure

The shortness of the verse passages tends not to allow elaborate structuring, but even the passages of 6 to 9 lines are consistently structured to emphasize the poem's main message and to achieve a satisfactory sense of completeness. This is normally achieved through a simple 'ring' structure, where the poem builds up to its principal message in the centre of the poem and the ending of the poem is tied in to its beginning. A typical example is poem 26 as examined above.

#### (b) style and imagery

The verse contains a lot of images typical of pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry, such as are found in the *siyar*: glances are like arrows (e.g. poems 2 and 8)<sup>260</sup> or

<sup>259</sup> trans. Lyons (2008) p.491

<sup>260</sup> 'Umar al-Nu'mān pp.166 and 171

swords (e.g. poems 55 and 142)<sup>261</sup>; warriors are lions (e.g. poems 17 and 63)<sup>262</sup>; beautiful women are moons (e.g. poem 5)<sup>263</sup> and their saliva is like wine (e.g. poems 73 and 133)<sup>264</sup>; and love or war are both raging fires (e.g. poems 26 and 62)<sup>265</sup>.

However, there is also a wealth of images which are more sophisticated and less physical, which is consistent with the fact that much of the verse is from a later period. Examples include the line in poem 68<sup>266</sup>, when Dandan says of Sharkān: ‘you have left transience and won immortality’ (تركك الذي يفنى ونلت الذي يبقى); or the comparison in poem 48<sup>267</sup> of wronged hearts to ‘shattered glass which cannot be repaired’ (مثل الزجاجه كسرها لا يجبر), and even Dhāt al-Dawāhī’s (admittedly tongue-in-cheek) encouragement to Sharkān and Ḍaw in poem 62<sup>268</sup>:

قرئ صدور العدى يوم الوغى سوراً      فإن سيفك في الأعناق آيات

read the lines of the enemy as *sūrah*s on the day of battle  
for your sword in their necks will serve as verses.

## E. Introductory formulas

### (i) Quotations

There are 48 verse passages in *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* that are presented as quotations. In his paper on the poetical quotations in *1001 Nights*<sup>269</sup>, Horovitz makes the point that *1001 Nights* contains a large number of poems which are quotations, in the sense that they have been ‘borrowed’ from different classical poets, without being presented as such. He gives examples of formulas used to indicate that passages are quotations, but he expresses the view that the absence of such a formula may be the

<sup>261</sup> *ibid* pp.234 and 313

<sup>262</sup> *ibid* pp.175 and 248

<sup>263</sup> *ibid* p.169

<sup>264</sup> *ibid* pp.263 and 311

<sup>265</sup> *ibid* pp.191 and 239

<sup>266</sup> *ibid* p.258, trans.Lyons (2008) p.474

<sup>267</sup> *ibid* p.219

<sup>268</sup> *ibid* p.239, trans. Lyons (2008) p.440

<sup>269</sup> Horovitz (1915)

result of carelessness rather than a true indication that the passage in question is not a quotation. It is, therefore, important to stress that the quotations in *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* are all very clearly indicated as such in the words leading up to them. For the 48 indicated quotations there are 29 different formulas, all of which refer to ‘the poet’ (الشاعر), to ‘someone’ (بعضهم), to ‘the speaker’ (القائل), to ‘someone else’ (الآخر) when quotations follow one another, or sometimes to an identified source (for example, Kuthaiyir for poem 10<sup>270</sup>, Jamīl for poem 12<sup>271</sup>). The words of these formulas may vary, but the indication of the verse being a quotation from a known or unknown poet is unmistakable. It is also significant that there are occasions where a string of quotations is interrupted by a non-quotation; that suggests a deliberate choice rather than carelessness, for the narrator could simply have carried on ascribing the verse to الآخر. This does not mean that Horovitz is wrong in his view that there are many more ‘undeclared’ borrowings, but it does suggest that the narrator’s decision to present certain passages as quotations, and not others, is a deliberate narrative choice. For the 22 quotations which are cited by the Narrator (strictly speaking, that is Shārazād), one of their purposes must be to enhance the Narrator’s profile.

It is noteworthy also that the words introducing a number of the quotations contain approbatory comments, the most frequent being <sup>272</sup>وما أحسن قول الشاعر (how beautifully the poet said..). It will be seen that this is a feature also of the quotations in *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, which is consistent with the fact that a large number of them are found also in *1001 Nights*.

## (ii) Non-quotations

Verse passages, which are not indicated to be quotations as above, are usually introduced by simple pre-textual formulas such as ‘he recited these verses...: (انشد هذه) or, in the case of written passages, ‘he recited’ is replaced by ‘he wrote’ (كتب), (سطر or رسم, رقم). However several of the verse passages in Hammad the Bedouin’s

<sup>270</sup> *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* p.172

<sup>271</sup> *ibid* p.172

<sup>272</sup> for example before poem 19 (*ibid* p.183)

tale use quite different formulas along the lines of ‘he answered her poetry with his words..’ (اجاب على شعرها بقوله) (poems 157, 158, 161, 163)<sup>273</sup> or ‘the youth said..’ (قال) (الشب) (poem 159)<sup>274</sup> or ‘he began to say..’ (جعل يقول) (poem 160)<sup>275</sup>, which, given the remarkable uniformity of the formulas used in the rest of the Tale, suggests that Hammad’s tale may have been added on to the original story of *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*.

The verse passages tend to be impersonal (as discussed further in F below), but the reasons for the verse, or the mood of the speaker, are generally stated or clear from the text leading up to the verse. The most frequent context is that the speaker is sighing and /or weeping, (particularly in the story of *‘Azīz and ‘Azīzah*, where every single piece of verse starts and ends with weeping). A typically explicit lead-in to a poem is the passage leading up to poem 37, where Ḍaw’ is travelling to Baghdad with the caravan and lamenting his loss of Nuzhat: ‘Ḍaw’ al-Makān thought of his sister Nuzhat al-Zamān and his father and his mother and his homeland and wondered; how could he return to his father without his sister? So he wept and groaned and lamented and his distress increased and he recited these lines...’.<sup>276</sup>

Although the reasons for each poem and its mood are generally explicit in this way, there is seldom any statement that poetry is being forced out by strength of feeling, such as was so often the case in the *siyar* previously examined. A rare exception, whose rarity adds to its humour, is the Market Superintendent’s inability to contain his enthusiasm at the sight of Tāj al-Mulūk’s and ‘Azīz’s buttocks in poem 111: ‘...when he saw their buttocks wobbling, his passion increased and he neighed and snorted and could not contain himself, so fixing his eyes on them he recited these two lines....’.<sup>277</sup>

<sup>273</sup> ibid pp.335, 336, 336 and 336

<sup>274</sup> ibid p.376

<sup>275</sup> ibid p.336

<sup>276</sup> ibid p.209, Lyons (2008) p.387

<sup>277</sup> ibid p.292, Lyons (2008) p.533

## F. Content and role of the poetry

### (i) Introduction

It is proposed to consider the content and role of the poetry separately for each of the three tales in the *Tale of 'Umar al-Nu'mān*. This will make it possible to see the considerable differences between the three tales as well as certain common factors. In each case the poetry will be examined according to a number of categorisations. The first split will be between (a) quotations and (b) non-quotations. These will then be considered in the following categories:

(i) quotations will be divided according to subject-matter:

- (a) physical description;
- (b) gnomic; and
- (c) other.

(ii) the non-quotations do not lend themselves easily to a typology based on subject-matter, since a vast proportion of the verse would fit into the two categories of 'love poem' and 'lament'. Indeed, these categories are often indistinguishable. It is therefore proposed to divide the poetry up according to its role, such as: descriptive and gnomic, dialogue and speech, soliloquies and 'tools of the plot'.

It will be seen that a high proportion of both quotations and non-quotations falls into the same broad category of 'emblematic' poetry.

(ii) The main tale of *'Umar al-Nu'mān*(a) quotations(1) descriptive

There are 15 quotations which fall into this category. 10 of them are descriptions of people, 3 of scenery and 2 of horses. All but 2 of them are quotations cited by the Narrator rather than by one of the characters in the Tale.

The first three quotations in the Tale (poems 1, 2 and 3)<sup>278</sup>, all spoken by the Narrator, provide a good example of the role played by these descriptive passages. After the Muslim army has set up camp for the night, Sharkān rides off on his horse to explore the area and falls asleep. When he awakes he hears women's voices and rides in their direction until he finds himself at the edge of a great meadow, described in prose as: 'He could see the stream, with birds singing gaily, gazelles roaming freely and wild beasts pasturing. Pleasure was expressed in the varied songs of the birds and the place was abloom with plants of all kinds, as a poet has described in these lines....'<sup>279</sup> The poem that follows (poem 1) consists of only two lines: the first describes the meadow, while the second states that it is the creation of 'Almighty God...the Giver of gifts' (الله العظيم...معطي العطايا). Sharkān looks again at the meadow and sees a convent and a castle with, standing in front of it, 'a lady in front of whom stood ten girls like moons, wearing ornaments and robes of all kinds such as dazzled the eyes. All of them were virgins, as the poet describes...'<sup>280</sup> There follows a passage of three lines of verse describing the virgins (poem 2). Sharkān notices one girl who stands out from the group, 'a girl like the full moon, with curling hair, a clear forehead, large black eyes and a curving forelock. She was perfect in all her delightful qualities, fitting the description of the poet...'<sup>281</sup> There follows another passage of three lines of verse describing the girl (poem 3).

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<sup>278</sup> ibid p.166

<sup>279</sup> trans. Lyons (2008) p.311

<sup>280</sup> ibid

<sup>281</sup> ibid

A special feature of these passages is the way they work together in adjusting the focus of the scene. Wafid Munīr has commented on how the descriptive verse in *1001 Nights* is used like a close-up in a film<sup>282</sup> and this scene provides a good example of this technique. It is as though the Narrator was a film director having the camera pan gradually in on the scene, moving from a wide-angle view of the meadow towards the group of girls and finally focusing on a close-up of the heroine at the heart of the scene.

Wolfhart Heinrichs discusses the role of the descriptive quotations in the *Nights* and suggests that they ‘might be seen to take the place of illustrations’, and he refers to ‘John Payne, who, already in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had pointed out the parallel between the poems and Western “engravings and woodcuts”’.<sup>283</sup> However, they are ‘illustrations’ with an extra, non-physical dimension. In poem 1, the physical description is very slight, limited to the first line, but the second line adds a broader dimension to the scene by stressing that it is ‘the creation of God’ (صنغ الله). Poem 2 is an impressive description of the girls, who are made to appear as they would have struck the approaching horseman, as an intrinsic part of the meadow amongst the birds and the animals, their tresses ‘flowing like grapes on a trellis’ (كعناقيد الدوالي), but the description again goes beyond the physical in stressing the impression they give of ‘coquetry and dalliance’ (ذات غنج ودلال). Similarly the brief description of Ibrīzah in poem 3 brings out the main features of her character as well as of her appearance: the opening word تزهو conveys the meaning of ‘haughtiness’ as well as of ‘blooming’, and the same duality is continued in the same line by comparing her with a Samhari lance. It is these non-physical attributes which add an extra element to the descriptions already provided in prose (a feature noted also in the descriptive quotations in other *siyar*).

Common to almost all descriptive quotations is their emblematic quality. This is demonstrated in the other two descriptions of scenery (poems 60 and 61)<sup>284</sup>, where the Narrator uses quotations to describe the lush pastures in which Daw’ and his men find themselves after days in the desert. The emblematic quality of the

<sup>282</sup> Munīr (1985) p.209

<sup>283</sup> Heinrichs (2007) p.362

<sup>284</sup> ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān* p.238

description is evident in the use of simile: the meadow is ‘as though it has been covered with a robe of green’ (كأنما نشرت عليه ملاء خضراء) and ‘water is like silver anklets around the trunks of trees’ (والماء في سوق الغصون خلاخل), and also in the attribution of non-physical features. These are implicit in the reference to the watcher in poem 60:

وترى بنفسك عزة في دوحه إذ فوق رأسك حيث يسري لواء  
 you will see yourself as glorious among the trees  
 since everywhere you go a banner floats above your head<sup>285</sup>

and to the flowers ‘like crowns’ (كالتيجان) in poem 61. The scene is emblematic of Ḍaw’s glory.

The quotations describing people share this emblematic quality. For example the Narrator’s description of a Muslim warrior (who turns out to be Ḍaw’) in poem 54 describes his long hair as ‘belonging to a young hero with a straight lance’ (على فئى) (معتقل صعدة)<sup>286</sup>.

## (2) gnomic

There are 11 quotations whose content can be described as gnomic. Eight of them occur in the set-piece performances by Nuzhat and Dhāt al-Dawāhī’s slave-girls, when they lecture the courts of Damascus and Baghdad respectively on princely qualities such as leadership, clemency and piety (poems 33, 34, 35, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52). The quotations are part of the performance designed to show off the erudition of the speakers and to impress Ḍaw’ al-Makān and ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān respectively. In the case of the slave-girls addressing ‘Umar, there is also ironic humour, obvious to the audience but not to ‘Umar, in the fact that the girls are acting a lie as they praise virtue: as in poem 49<sup>287</sup>, where the girl quotes Qays including: ‘each man is clothed by what he conceals in his heart’ (يرى النلس أضلالاً).

<sup>285</sup> trans. Lyons (2008), p.438

<sup>286</sup> ‘Umar al-Nu ‘mān p.234, trans. Lyons (2008) p.430

<sup>287</sup> ibid p.220

The other gnomic quotations fit naturally into their context, used by the speaker to add force to the point which he is making. Thus, in poem 66<sup>288</sup>, Dandan quotes a poet about the inevitability of fate to comfort Ḍaw' on Sharkān's death. In poem 153<sup>289</sup>, Kāna mā Kāna answers Quḍiya's warnings about the threat from Sāsān with a quotation about God's power to decide everything. And in poem 154<sup>290</sup>, Nuzhat uses a quotation to try to persuade Sāsān to relax his opposition to Kāna mā Kāna. All these quotations are both apposite and effective.

Interestingly, all of the gnomic quotations occur in the main tale of 'Umar al-Nu'mān and none of them is spoken by the Narrator. The latter point may indicate that the Narrator does not see it as part of his role to make moral comments on his material. Again this is a feature which is found in other *siyar*.

### (3) other

There are 12 other quotations whose role varies. Two are used, like the gnomic quotations considered above, to support the speaker's argument: in poems 58 and 59<sup>291</sup> Dandan quotes from two poets in support of war to help him persuade Sharkān and Ḍaw to take the fight to the Byzantines: 'my greatest pleasure is to kill my foe' (أطيب الطيبات قتل الأعادي). Three quotations are primarily ornamental. Following Ibrīzah asking Sharkān whether he knew any poetry about love, they swap quotations from Kuthaiyir about 'Azzah (poems 10 and 11)<sup>292</sup> and from Jamīl addressed to Buthaina (poem 12)<sup>293</sup>. They form an entertaining exchange and an excuse for some humour: first in Ibrīzah's mock-ingenuous comment: 'Azzah is said to have been extremely beautiful', and then in Sharkān's answer to Ibrīzah's question as to what Jamīl wanted from Buthaina when he replies: 'Lady, she wanted what you want with me and even that will not content you'.

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<sup>288</sup> ibid p.257

<sup>289</sup> ibid p.325

<sup>290</sup> ibid p.326

<sup>291</sup> ibid p.237

<sup>292</sup> ibid p.172

<sup>293</sup> ibid p.172

(b) Non-quotations(1) descriptive and gnomic

There are three descriptive pieces of verse, all spoken by Sharkān, two about Ibrīzah (poems 5 and 7)<sup>294</sup> and one describing the works of art in Ibrīzah's castle (poem 13)<sup>295</sup>. They all combine the specific and the emblematic: as, for example, in poem 7 where the description of Ibrīzah with ثقيلة الأرداف's (heavy buttocks) and ناعمة النهـد (tender breasts) is specific, but the conclusion of the poem is emblematic, where she is described كالقيل في حلي وفي عقد (like a king with powers to loose and bind).

Gnomic poems are confined to two pieces: Sharkān's line about Ibrīzah in poem 4<sup>296</sup>:

وإذا المـليـح أتى بذنب واحد      جاءت مهاسنه بألف شفيع  
When the lovely girl commits a single fault  
her beauty supplies a thousand intercessions,

and the stoker's reaction to being 'arrested' by the eunuch after Ḍaw' has disappeared on the way to Baghdad (poem 47<sup>297</sup>):

ذلك الذي خفت أن يكون      إنا إلى الله راجعون  
What I feared has come about  
to God do we return.

(2) dialogue and speech

Unlike the *siyar* previously examined, the *Tale of 'Umar al-Nu'mān* does not use verse as a primary vehicle for speech. This is reflected in the lack of dialogue in verse. There are only four instances where characters exchange verse: poems

<sup>294</sup> ibid pp.169 and 170

<sup>295</sup> ibid p.173

<sup>296</sup> ibid p.169

<sup>297</sup> ibid p.215

20/21<sup>298</sup> where Ibrīzah rejects Ghāḍbān's unwanted advances, poems 45/46<sup>299</sup> where Ḍaw' and Nuzhat are finally reunited, poems 156/157<sup>300</sup> where the youth and his sister express their respective confidence and fear before he goes out to defend her against Hammad and his band of Bedouin and poems 163/164<sup>301</sup> where the youth and Hammad speak after the former has emerged victorious. The latter two cases occur in what is called, in the index, '*Hammad's Tale*', which can perhaps be regarded as a separate addition to, rather than an essential part of, the main tale (a view supported by the formal differences noted in D above). Of the other two exchanges of verse, it is true to say that they both occur at key moments, where they serve to heighten the dramatic tension. In other words, their role is similar to that of verse in the *siyar* previously examined.

The scene where poems 20 and 21 occur is indeed very similar to the scene between al-Rabāb and Sallām in *Dhāt al-Himmah*. Like al-Rabāb, Ibrīzah is heavily pregnant and is fleeing from the tribe in the company of a slave who threatens to rape her. The poems also are very similar, although much shorter, to poems 5 and 6 in *Dhāt al-Himmah*<sup>302</sup>. For example, poem 20 is only 7 lines as compared with the 16 lines of poem 5 in *Dhāt al-Himmah*, but has two identical hemistiches (the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich line 2 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich line 7), three hemistiches where only one word is different (1<sup>st</sup> hemistich line 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich line 3 and 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich line 6) and two hemistiches where one half is identical (1<sup>st</sup> hemistich line 5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich line 6). The poems also share rhyme and metre.

It would seem logical to conclude that the shorter poem has been based on the longer one, and that the reciter has created a poem out of the fragments which he can remember plus a few extra lines to complete it. But the evidence of the poem may tell a different story, for the poet appears to be in full control of his material and to have constructed a carefully structured piece of verse. The opening أيا غضبان conveys Ibrīzah's anger as the verse is forced out of her by Ghāḍbān's advances. The impact of the following two verbs, دعني (leave me) and كفاني (I have had

<sup>298</sup> ibid pp.184-185

<sup>299</sup> ibid p.214

<sup>300</sup> ibid p.335

<sup>301</sup> ibid p.337

<sup>302</sup> *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* p.12

enough) is reinforced by the internal rhyme, which is repeated also in the end-word *زمني* (time) (incidentally, it is noteworthy that *Ghaḍbān*'s name makes a better fit with the rhyme than *Sallām*, the slave in *Dhāt al-Himmah*). The opening *أيًا* is also the first of six *ā* sounds in line 1, which are echoed by a further five such sounds in line 2. The 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich of line 2 parallels the structure and sounds of the first line, including the *قد* between the last two words. God is invoked in line 2 to condemn *Ghaḍbān*'s action, but line 3 starts with *وإني* to provide a statement of *Ibrīzah*'s own viewpoint. The evil of *Ghaḍbān*'s action is stressed by the positioning of *سوء* (evil) at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich, which is one of the only two occasions in the poem where a hemistich does not end with the poem's monorhyme. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich, the *دعني* of line 1 is repeated to stress *Ibrīzah*'s imploring him to stop. This request is reinforced by a threat in lines 4 and 5: if you do not stop, I will summon my tribesmen to my aid. In line 4, the repetition of *الفحشاء* (abomination) from line 2, and the use of words derived from *رعى* (to respect) twice in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich, stress two of the key themes of the poem. In the final two lines of the poem, anger gains the upper hand as *Ibrīzah* says that death would be preferable to being sullied by *Ghaḍbān*'s glances. In line 6, *فحاشا* echoes the use of *فحشاء* in lines 2 and 4 and the end-word *يراني* echoes the end-word *تراني* in line 3. The final line completes a ring structure by ending with a description of *Ghaḍbān*, whose name marked the beginning of the poem: *العبد من نسل الزواني* (the whoreson slave).

The poem has been carefully structured in a logical progression: the request to *Ghaḍbān* to desist in line 1 is followed by an invocation of God and a statement of *Ibrīzah*'s personal position in lines 2 and 3. These are followed by a threat of what will happen if *Ghaḍbān* does not desist, in lines 4 and 5, and a final burst of anger and repulsion in lines 6 and 7 (perhaps due to a realisation that the threat in lines 4 and 5 is an empty one, given the reality of *Ibrīzah*'s circumstances). The poem forms a coherent unit and makes its points concisely.

It is possible to make a case also for the coherence and qualities of poem 5 in *Dhāt al-Himmah*. However, the only additional point to be made in its extra nine lines concerns the importance and status of *al-Rabāb*, whose 'star has been higher than *Ursa Minor*', and it is arguable that the longer poem is merely a padded-out version

of the shorter one. This judgement is supported by repetitions which seem to serve no useful purpose, for example:

- the repetition of اليماني as the end-word in lines 3, 6 and 14; and
- the duplication of the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich of line 6 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich of line 14 with the sole difference being the use of a new word for ‘sword’: بالعضب has become بالسيوف .

A similar conclusion can be reached by comparing Ghaḍbān’s reply with that of Sallām to al-Rabāb (poem 6 in *Dhāt al-Himmah*). The former is only 4 lines long as against the latter’s 12 lines, but it is carefully structured. As well as matching Ibrīzah’s verse in rhyme and metre, Ghaḍbān’s response mirrors it in starting with an opening vocative and imperative: أإبريزة انكري (Ibrīzah think!), and Ibrīzah’s use of انقطعت is echoed by Ghaḍbān’s انقطع in line 2: he has already been cut in two, although not by a sword but by Ibrīzah’s harshness. The four forces to which Ghaḍbān’s will is subjected are highlighted by the opening words of each hemistich in lines 3 and 4: فقلبي - وجسمي - ولفظك - وفعلي (my heart - my body - your voice - my mind). In the final line, لو أجلبت (if you brought) echoes the أجلب in line 5 of the previous poem and the poem ends with the same word as Ibrīzah’s line 1: الزمان. The repetition again serves to unify the two pieces, as well as highlighting the different positions of Ibrīzah and Ghaḍbān: to her تازمان is ‘fate’, to whose cruel dictates she is subject, while to him it is merely ‘time’ in which to satisfy his lust.

When this poem is compared with Sallām’s answer to al-Rabāb in *Dhāt al-Himmah*, again it is striking how the latter is much more verbose and rambling, although only isolated words are shared by the two poems (عقل - جسمي - هواك).

Apart from these exchanges of verse, the main tale of ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān*’ contains 29 pieces of verse which are addressed to someone. In other words, they are used for specific communication rather than just expression of feeling, although the distinction is not always clear. These verse passages can be divided into three groups:

*fakhr*: 7 poems are expressions of *fakhr* before or after battle (poems

17, 53, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162)<sup>303</sup>. The last five all occur in the series of combats in Ḥammād's tale. The fact that there are only two such poems in the main body of the tale reflects the lack of combats, which is remarkable in a tale containing so many characteristics of a *sīrah*.

formal speeches: 3 poems fall into the category of formal speeches addressed to assembled crowds: Ḍaw's speech of encouragement to the Muslim troops on their way to Baghdad (poem 63)<sup>304</sup> and the funeral orations over Sharkān's grave by Ḍaw' and an old friend (poems 67 and 69)<sup>305</sup>.

other: the remaining 19 passages in this category consist of:

- 6 short pieces of verse exchanged between Kāna mā Kāna, his mother and Quḍiya, when Kāna mā Kāna and Quḍiya are falling in love (poems 137, 139, 140, 141, 149, 150)<sup>306</sup>;
- 3 poems in a letter from Nuzhat to her father (poems 30,31 and 32)<sup>307</sup>; and
- 10 isolated poems such as the dying words of the horse-thief (poem 148<sup>308</sup> - reminiscent of similar dying words by the horse-thieves in *Dhāt al-Himmah*), Kāna mā Kāna's mother's plea for help to Nuzhat (poem 132<sup>309</sup> - reminiscent of Ṣaḥṣāḥ's mother's plea to 'Ataf's wife in *Dhāt al-Himmah*) and Nuzhat's response to the merchant in the slave market when he asks her whether she has a brother (poem 28)<sup>310</sup>.

This last poem, although ostensibly in response to the merchant, is effectively a soliloquy on the agony of being apart from Ḍaw'. Its 7 lines are structured as a perfect ring. The central line 4 contains the kernel of

<sup>303</sup> 'Umar al-Nu'mān pp.175, 232 and 386

<sup>304</sup> ibid p.248

<sup>305</sup> ibid p.258

<sup>306</sup> ibid pp.312, 313 and 321

<sup>307</sup> ibid p.197

<sup>308</sup> ibid p.319

<sup>309</sup> ibid p.310

<sup>310</sup> ibid p.195

the poem: her wondering about her brother's whereabouts, while the first and last lines of the poem both focus on the subject of parting. Lines 3 and 4, either side of the central line, share the theme of tears, while lines 2 and 6 contrast her hope in line 2 that God is protecting Ḍaw' with her acknowledgement in line 6 that for her there is no protection against 'the coils of sleeplessness'. In type, form and quality, this poem belongs in the same category as the soliloquies by Ḍaw' and Nuzhat discussed below.

### (3) soliloquies

The large number of soliloquies is a distinctive feature of *'Umar al-Nu'mān* as compared with the *siyar* previously examined. There are 30 poems which fall into this category: that is, almost half of the non-quotations. Some occur when the speaker expresses his feelings at key moments: examples are Ḍaw's dying words (poem 131)<sup>311</sup>, but there are a number of soliloquies of a different type, where the connection with the action of the tale is less important than the mood and sentiments of the poetry. Such are the 10 poems recited by Ḍaw' and Nuzhat while they are parted (poems 23 to 27 and 37-41)<sup>312</sup>. As mentioned above, poem 28 belongs to the same group, although not strictly a soliloquy, and the poems share the same careful structuring and quality of that poem.

These are generic poems dealing with topics of life and death, love and parting. However, they do contain two specific references to the tale: in the play of words on نزهات الزمان (time's delights / Nuzhat al-Zamān) in poem 38 and its repetition together with ضوء المكان (light of the place / Ḍaw' al-Makān) in poem 40. The poems, even if generic in content, are closely linked to the action of the tale. Their role is to set a mood and to comment obliquely, rather than directly, on the characters and their actions. In doing this, they can be described as 'emblematic'.

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<sup>311</sup> ibid p.310

<sup>312</sup> ibid pp.190-193 and 209-212

The dominant subject of these poems is the agony of love and separation, which is a theme common to all three stories in *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*. This topic will be considered further in section (v) below.

(4) tools of the plot

Two poems are simply tools of the plot: they are poem 57<sup>313</sup>, where Dhāt al-Dawāhī is coaching her co-conspirators in how to lure Sharkān to a monastery by reciting the verses which they will claim to have heard an anchorite reciting there; and poem 62<sup>314</sup>, where Dhāt al-Dawāhī, disguised as the anchorite, recites religious mumbo-jumbo to Sharkān and Ḍaw’. It may be significant that these are the only two occasions on which Dhāt al-Dawāhī speaks in verse: it suggests that verse would be inappropriate for the expression of her true (evil) feelings.

(iii) *‘Azīz’s Tale*

[This tale is treated as beginning on p.267, as indicated by the sub-title in the text. Poems 70-82, which occur during the prelude to the start of *‘Azīz’s tale*, are treated as part of the *Tale of Tāj al-Mulūk and Princess Dunyā* which provides the ‘frame’ for *‘Azīz’s Tale*.]

(a) quotations

There are only 4 quotations in *‘Azīz’s Tale*. Three of them fall into the descriptive category: poem 94<sup>315</sup>, which ‘Azīz recites to ‘Azīzah to describe Daḥīlah’s daughter, and poems 95 and 105<sup>316</sup> which ‘Azīz uses to describe nights of love-making with Daḥīlah’s daughter and his subsequent bride. All are emblematic in nature. The description of the girl is similar to those in the main tale, describing not only

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<sup>313</sup> ibid p.237

<sup>314</sup> ibid p.239

<sup>315</sup> ibid p.277

<sup>316</sup> ibid pp.277 and 284

physical characteristics ('dressed in green' and 'hair unloosed') but also her character (she 'has burned lovers' hearts on coals of fire'). The descriptions of love-making are humorous: in poem 95 'Azīz describes the joys of sex when he 'joined the girl's earring to her anklet' (جمعت بين القرط والخلخال), and in poem 105 he describes the eagerness of his bride:

فأولجت فيها نصفه فتتهدت      فقلت: لما هذا؟ فقالت: على الباقي

I put it half in and she sighed.

'Why this sigh?' I asked, and she said: 'For the rest'.

These humorous quotations are out of character for 'Azīz, but would no doubt have been welcomed by the audience as light relief from the prevailing gloom.

The other quotation, poem 100<sup>317</sup>, is part of the exchange of messages between 'Azīzah and Daḥīlah's daughter, which form the cryptic heart of the plot (see (ii) below). It is the only message to be specified as being a quotation, but is no different in form or nature from the others, which will be considered below.

## (ii) Non-quotations

The verse passages in 'Azīz's tale are different from those in *'Umar al-Nu'mān* in a number of ways. There are no descriptive pieces and no exchanges of verse. Of the 20 non-quotations, one is a 'tool of the plot': that is the fake letter which the old woman asks 'Azīz to read out for her, as an excuse for tempting him into her house (poem 103)<sup>318</sup>. Of the other 19 passages, 12 fall into a group which is directly concerned with the action and plot of the tale and the other 7 are soliloquies which play a less direct role in the story. Looking at these groups in turn:

<sup>317</sup> ibid p.278

<sup>318</sup> ibid p.281

(1) plot:

12 verse passages form a series of messages between ‘Azīzah and Daḥīlah’s daughter, transmitted via the uncomprehending ‘Azīz. Five are written (poem 83)<sup>319</sup>, embroidered (poems 84, 85 and 106)<sup>320</sup> or carved on a tombstone (poem 102<sup>321</sup>, addressed by Daḥīlah’s daughter to the dead ‘Azīzah). The remainder are passed verbally. ‘Azīz’s role as a pawn, in the game being played for his body and soul between the two women, is reflected in the fact that he does not himself recite any verse until the final passage of the story (poem 107)<sup>322</sup> when he has finally been allowed to see the message left for him by ‘Azīzah and has begun to understand what he has lost.

These messages are very short: six are only 1 line and the longest is only 5 lines. They tend to be gnomic and, with regard to the tale, cryptic. Typical is the exchange between ‘Azīz (repeating the words provided by ‘Azīzah) and Daḥīlah’s daughter after their first night of love together (poems 97-99)<sup>323</sup>, which is reported to ‘Azīzah by ‘Azīz. His words:

ألا أيها العشاق بالله خبروا إذا اشتد عشق بالفتى كيف يصنع  
Lovers, by God, tell me  
when passion flares up in a man what is he to do?

are answered by Daḥīlah’s daughter with:

يداري هواه ثم يكتم سره ويصبر في كل الأمور وبخضع  
he must conceal his love and hide his secret  
showing patience and humility in all he does.

‘Azīzah’s reaction to ‘Azīz’s report is to recite:

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<sup>319</sup> ibid p.268

<sup>320</sup> ibid pp.268, 268 and 286

<sup>321</sup> ibid p.280

<sup>322</sup> ibid p.287

<sup>323</sup> ibid p.278

لقد حاول الصبر الجميل ولم يجد له غير قلب في الصبابة يجزع  
 He tried to show fair patience but could only find  
 a heart that love had filled with anguish.

The use of verse for these messages serves an obvious purpose in increasing their prominence and their role is indeed essential to the story. The verse dictates the course of the story, as events follow the successive verse messages. And the fact that it is ‘Azīzah, rather than ‘Azīz, who is conducting the other half of the dialogue with Daḥīlah’s daughter, indicates where the heart of the story lies: in the struggle between the two women. Jamel Eddine Bencheikh has analysed the story at length in *La volupté d’en mourir*, with special focus on the role of the poetry, and in considering the exchange of verse messages between the two women he concludes that: “*On peut dire que nous avons en réalité affaire à une correspondance qui constitue le roman*”.<sup>324</sup>

Although ‘Azīzah dies from grief and the efforts she has expended on her beloved ‘Azīz’s behalf, Daḥīlah’s daughter acknowledges ‘Azīzah’s victory in having saved ‘Azīz from destruction (that is, the destruction which she had planned for him) and she pays a striking tribute to ‘Azīzah in the words which she carves on her tomb (poem 102)<sup>325</sup>. The 5-line poem has a perfect ring structure: gardens are the theme of the first and last lines, lovers graves the theme of lines 2 and 4 and the central line 3 contains the main message to the departed ‘Azīzah:

فقلت: رعاك الله يا ميت الهوى وأسكنك الفردوس أعلى الشواهد  
 I said: God guard you, who died of love,  
 and may He house you in the topmost heights of Paradise.

It is significant that this is the last verse spoken by Daḥīlah’s daughter. With ‘Azīzah’s death, true love has finished and the need for poetry has ended with it. It

<sup>324</sup> Bencheikh (1991) p.

<sup>325</sup> ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān*, p.280

is equally significant that ‘Azīz’s only piece of verse occurs, as mentioned above, when he has understood true love for the first time.

(2) soliloquies

There are 7 poems spoken by ‘Azīzah on the occasions when ‘Azīz has returned from visiting Daḥīlah’s daughter, of which 5 are soliloquies (poems 87-89 and 92-93). Although heard by ‘Azīz when he returns to his cousin’s home, they are introduced by words describing ‘Azīzah alone weeping: *وتتشد* rather than the usual form of introduction, *انشدت*, which indicates that ‘Azīz found her speaking and that the words are not addressed directly to him. The other two poems are both spoken directly to ‘Azīz (poems 86 and 90). With the exception of poem 90, which is a brief exhortation to ‘Azīz to be patient, these poems are all similar in style and subject-matter. They are all on themes of love and the pain it brings (see the discussion of poem 86 in D (ii) above). They are all generic in nature, with no reference to the characters or events of the tale other than to ‘my cousin’ in poems 92 and 93. Indeed the wording in poem 87 is wholly wrong for the situation in the tale, since it is an expression of love by a man: ‘I cannot escape my hopeless love for her’ (*ما للهوى العذري عنها مصرف*). It is significant that poem 89 is almost identical (apart from losing line 6, and thereby losing its ring structure) to poem 28<sup>326</sup> in the main tale of ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān*, in which Nuzhat laments her separation from Ḍaw’ (see the discussion of the poem in F (ii) (b) above), for this group of poems is very similar in style and subject-matter to the love-poems recited by Ḍaw and Nuzhat when they are separated. The role of the poems is also similar, in colouring the mood and tone of the tale while commenting indirectly on the action. The fact that the similarity between the two sets of poems is emphasized, by the virtual duplication of one of them, suggests that the Narrator wants to highlight the connection and parallels between the two tales: ‘Azīzah’s selfless love for ‘Azīz is similar to Nuzhat’s and Ḍaw’s love for each other (and is fated to be similarly platonic and unconsummated). As in the earlier group of poems, the portrayal of love is emblematic.

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<sup>326</sup> *ibid* p.195

(iv) *The Tale of Tāj al-Mulūk and Princess Dunyā*(a) the prelude

Of the thirteen poems in the ‘prelude’ which precedes and provides the frame for ‘Azīz’s *Tale* (poems 70-82)<sup>327</sup>, seven are quotations. They are all descriptive of people and five of them follow each other in a chain of quotations used by the Narrator to describe the charms of the young Tāj al-Mulūk (poems 73-77)<sup>328</sup>. The variation and number of the quotations confirm the emblematic nature of the description and it seems safe to assume that they were used by the Narrator as a chance to show off his erudition, no doubt to a rising crescendo of audience appreciation.

Apart from the quotations and one poem where the Vizier indulges in exaggerated praise of King Zahr Shāh (poem 71)<sup>329</sup>, the rest of the poems are all outpourings by ‘Azīz on the subject of an absent beloved and his tortured heart (poems 78-82)<sup>330</sup>. Although overheard by Tāj al-Mulūk, they are, like ‘Azīzah’s poems in ‘Azīz’s *Tale*, effectively soliloquies. They contrast with ‘Azīz’s subsequent poetic silence until the final poem in ‘Azīz’s *Tale* (poem 107). This is explained by the fact that the poems are subsequent in time to those in ‘Azīz’s *Tale* and so are the result of his transformation. He can speak now of his love, even if he can no longer consummate it. Like ‘Azīzah’s group of poems in ‘Azīz’s *Tale*, this group of poems sets a mood without having any specific connection with the facts of the tale: for example, poem 82 is clearly speaking of a male beloved: ‘how often did he plead with me’ (كم تشفع بي).

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<sup>327</sup> ibid pp.260-266

<sup>328</sup> ibid pp.263-264

<sup>329</sup> ibid p.271

<sup>330</sup> ibid pp.265-266

(b) the main body of the tale

Of the 23 pieces of verse in the main body of the tale, 3 are quotations. They are all descriptive and emblematic: in poem 110<sup>331</sup>, the Narrator describes the fine appearance in the baths of Tāj al-Mulūk and ‘Azīz, who then respond, in poems 113 and 114<sup>332</sup>, to the Market Superintendent’s request for examples of poetry about baths. The latter two quotations are deliberately humorous, poking fun at the Superintendent and his sexual tastes with mock-solemn antitheses on the theme of heaven and hell and a description of ‘a paradise most of whose contents are suns and moons’ (جنة وأكثر ما فيها شمس وأقمار). The antithesis is maintained in the two pieces of verse spoken on the same theme by the Superintendent (poems 115 and 116)<sup>333</sup>, which are also humorous in effect, as are his first two pieces of verse when he reacts to the sight of Tāj al-Mulūk and ‘Azīz’s buttocks in poem 111<sup>334</sup>: ‘it is not surprising that weight causes him to sway’ (لا غرو في كونه يرتج من ثقل) and his overblown greeting to them in poem 112<sup>335</sup>. Poetry has been used in all these cases to enforce the Superintendent’s role as a figure of fun and indeed the humour which is at the heart of the tale (all the more effective for following on the misery of ‘Azīz’s Tale).

Humour is equally to be found in the four poems spoken by ‘Azīz and the Vizier, when they are requested by Tāj al-Mulūk to recite something to cheer him up. Their response is four passages of unrelieved gloom (poems 125-128)<sup>336</sup>, whose tone is set by ‘Azīz in the first line of poem 125:

جميع ما قالت الغشاق من كمد      حويته مفردا حتى وهي جلدي  
all the grief of which lovers talk  
is mine alone exhausting endurance.

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<sup>331</sup> ibid p.292

<sup>332</sup> ibid pp.292-293

<sup>333</sup> ibid p.293

<sup>334</sup> ibid p.292

<sup>335</sup> ibid p.292

<sup>336</sup> ibid p.300

The first two poems in the main body of the tale (poems 108 and 109)<sup>337</sup> are short laments by Tāj al-Mulūk on the subject of love and parting. They are generic, with no specific reference to the tale, but they serve to bolster the presentation of Tāj al-Mulūk as someone who has fallen hopelessly in love with the unseen Duniyā, thereby providing the basis for the story which follows. The story is neatly bracketed between these two poems and the two which conclude it (poems 129 and 130)<sup>338</sup> in which ‘Azīz’s mother laments his presumed death. Again the poems are generic expressions of grief, but they set the mood to enhance the happy ending when ‘Azīz reappears.

The remaining 8 poems (poems 117-124)<sup>339</sup> form an exchange of messages between Tāj al-Mulūk and Duniyā, as he pleads his case and she angrily rejects him, until he is reduced to asking ‘Azīz to draft his final effort. All the poems are written rather than spoken, since it is essential to the story that the two ‘lovers’ do not meet until the very end of their unusual courtship. The poems form the core of the tale and are exceptional, in *The Tale of ‘Umar al-Nu ‘mān* as a whole, in being both an extended (albeit written) dialogue and in being specific rather than generic in content. For example, Duniyā’s threat to have Tāj crucified, at the end of poem 119<sup>340</sup>, is picked up in the first line of Tāj’s reply (poem 120):

أمست تهددني بالقتل واحربي      والقتل لي راحة والموت مقدور  
 she threatened me with death alas for me  
 but this would bring me rest death is decreed for all.

The twist in the story, which confirms the humour at the heart of it, lies in the fact that all the poetic outpourings are of no relevance or effect once Duniyā actually catches sight of Tāj al-Mulūk. One glance at his beauty accomplishes what no amount of words had done. The Narrator has been poking fun at his own recitation.

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<sup>337</sup> ibid pp.289-290

<sup>338</sup> ibid p.306

<sup>339</sup> ibid pp.295-298

<sup>340</sup> ibid p.296

## (v) Love poetry

The theme which is present in almost all of the verse in *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* is that of ‘love’. As well as being the main theme in the majority of verse passages, it dominates each of the three stories and provides a link between them. Its role is particularly striking and significant in the three dialogues which lie at the heart of each of the tales:

the main tale: the dialogue between Daw’ and Nuzhat in poems 22-46 (although these poems may not form a ‘dialogue’ in the normal sense, since many of the poems are presented as soliloquies, they are clearly directed at each other);

‘Azīz’s Tale: the exchange between ‘Azīzah and Bint Daḥlāh (via ‘Azīz) in poems 83-102, which must include the poems recited by ‘Azīzah on ‘Azīz’s return from his trysts with Bint Daḥlāh and which end with the words carved by Bint Daḥlāh on ‘Azīzah’s tombstone; and

Tāj al-Mulūk and Princess Dunya: the exchange of messages between Tāj and Dunya in poems 117-124.

Common to the presentation of love in each of these dialogues are the themes and tone of the *nasīb* section of the pre-Islamic *qasīdah*: ‘the sad and emotional themes of the abandoned encampment and of the parting of lovers’.<sup>341</sup> In his detailed study of Arabic love poetry in the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods<sup>342</sup>, Thomas Bauer has shown how these themes were developed in poems where love had become the single or main theme: a love often associated with sorrow and suffering. The relevance of his analysis to the poetry in *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* can be shown by examining one typical example: poem 26<sup>343</sup> (which was analysed in C above), where

<sup>341</sup> Stetkevych (1993) p.19

<sup>342</sup> Bauer (1998)

<sup>343</sup> *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* p.191, Lyons (2008) p.355

Nuzhat soliloquizes as she leaves Daw' on his sick-bed in Jerusalem in order to earn the money which she needs to nourish him.

Bauer lists three main themes or motivations for what he calls the lover's lament (*Klage*):

- force of emotion (*Ergriffensein*), which may lead not to happiness but to passion, illness, madness or death;
- separation and parting; and
- interference by jealous or critical third parties (*Störer*).<sup>344</sup>

All these themes are present in poem 26: passion, sickness and parting are highlighted in the first two lines:

جن الظلام وهاج الوجد بالسقم والشوق حرك ما عندي من الألم  
ولوعة البين في الأحشاء قد سكنت والوجد صيرني في حالة العدم

The night is dark passion has stirred up sickness  
while longing has aroused the pains I feel  
the pangs of parting settled in my heart  
and thanks to passion nothing of me is left,

and the theme of blame is introduced in line 6: يا من يلوم على ما حل بي.. (you who blame me...).

Bauer also lists eight 'symptoms' of a lamenting lover<sup>345</sup>, of which no less than six are present in this short, 8-line poem:

- *sorrow, longing, pain*: in lines 1, 3, 5 and 6;
- *weeping*: in line 3;
- *illness, madness, death*: in lines 1 and 4;
- *fire, burning, thirst*: in lines 3 and 5;
- *sleeplessness*: in line 8; and
- *concern about beloved's reaction*: in line 8.

<sup>344</sup> Bauer (1998) pp.344-361

<sup>345</sup> ibid pp.361-385

Finally, Bauer lists the ways in which the lover's love is portrayed (*Erklärung*)<sup>346</sup>, of which 7 (out of 11) are present in poem 26:

- *revealed by tears*: in line 3;
- *moved by longing*: in lines 1 and 3;
- *(unreasonable) passion*: in lines 1, 2 and 7;
- *inevitability (lover cannot abandon his love)*: in line 7;
- *sincerity (proved by suffering)*: in line 6;
- *constancy*: in line 7; and
- *pleading*: in line 8.

Poem 26 is one of many such examples in the 3 tales. As a whole the poetry reflects the themes of the classical *nasīb*, where love is always linked with separation, but they reflect the way those themes changed in the Ummayyad period and later. As well as becoming acceptable as the sole theme for poetry, love is portrayed in a different way. Bauer defines three of the main changes as being:

- love is more than a passing pleasure;
- love is present, 'now', and not always in the past; and
- love is personal, so that the 'beloved' can be given a real name.<sup>347</sup>

The verse in each of the tales fits this mould, but there are nonetheless interesting and significant differences in the portrayal of love between the tales. The most obvious difference is between the two 'framed' tales of 'Azīz and Tāj al-Mulūk. In 'Azīz's Tale, the love of 'Azīzah for 'Azīz falls clearly into the category of 'Udhri' love, whose poetry has been described by Andras Hamori as 'the poetry of faithful, chaste and debilitating passion for unattainable objects'.<sup>348</sup> It portrays a love which remains constant despite the impossibility of union and which may lead to illness and death. It is a view of love found also in the mystical poetry of Sufism, where '...death is more beautiful than the pain of being separated'<sup>349</sup> and in which the

<sup>346</sup> ibid pp.387-425

<sup>347</sup> ibid pp.42-43

<sup>348</sup> Hamori (1990) p.205

<sup>349</sup> quoted by Annemarie Schimmel (Schimmel (1982) p.24) from Ghazzali, *Iḥyā' IV* p.298

absorption of a lover in another person may lead to extinction. ‘Azīzah’s final lines of verse addressed to ‘Azīz, in poem 101<sup>350</sup> start with the words: *سمعنا أطعنا ثم متنا* (I have heard obeyed and now I die), and the central line of poem 102, carved on ‘Azīzah’s tombstone, provides a fitting epitaph:

فقلت: رعاك الله يا ميت الهوى وأسكنك الفردوس أعلى الشواهدق  
 I said God guard you who died of love  
 and may He house you in the topmost heights of paradise.<sup>351</sup>

This depiction of unattainable, mystical passion is radically different from the portrayal of love in the *Tale of Tāj al-Mulūk and Princess Dunya*. As noted in (4) above, there is humour at the heart of the tale and a happy ending at its conclusion. In contrast to the ‘*Udhri*’ tone of ‘*Azīz’s tale*, it can be categorised as *Hijāzī* (also called by Bauer: *realistisch*<sup>352</sup>), whose characteristics, as described by Hamori, include ‘..a light-hearted atmosphere of easy adventures...lovers’ quarrels and secret messages’<sup>353</sup>. Many of the verse passages are seemingly perfect examples of ‘*Udhri*’ poetry, such as the lines in poem 120 from Tāj to Dunya:

أمست تهددني بالقتل واحربي والقتل لي راحة والموت مقدور  
 والموت أغني لصب أن تطول به حياته وهو ممنوع ومقهور  
 she threatened me with death alas for me  
 but this would bring me rest death is decreed for all  
 and it is easier for a lover than long life  
 when he is kept from his beloved and oppressed.<sup>354</sup>

But when the verse is put into the context of a story where the lover wins his beloved through a mixture of bribery and trickery, and finally thanks only to his physical beauty, it is possible to see the verse as containing elements of parody. At least it provides an effective contrast to the mood of the tale which it frames.

<sup>350</sup> ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān* p.278

<sup>351</sup> *ibid* p.280

<sup>352</sup> Bauer (1998) p.47

<sup>353</sup> Hamori (1990) p.204

<sup>354</sup> ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān* p.296, Lyons (2008) p.538

In the main tale of *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*, the poetry in the dialogue between Nuzhat and Daw’ is clearly *‘Udhrī* in tone and all the poems focus on the themes identified in poem 26 above. This is true also of the other dialogues of love-poetry in the tale: notably the verse exchanged between Sharkān and ‘Abrīzah, in poems 3 to 18, and between Kāna mā Kāna and Quḍiyah towards the end of the tale. The former starts like a presentation of al-Jāhiz’s *Singing-girls*<sup>355</sup>, when ‘Abrīzah enters with a retinue of slave-girls singing and dancing, as described by the Narrator’s quotation in poem 2<sup>356</sup>: ‘the meadow gleams with beautiful white girls.....all fascinating virgins flirtatious coquettes’, but the tone of the verse in this section remains *‘Udhrī* and it includes quotations from Kuthayyir about ‘Azzah (poems 10 and 11)<sup>357</sup> and from Jamīl about Buthaynah (poem 12)<sup>358</sup>.

Despite the persistently *‘Udhrī* tone of the poetry in *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*, it is part of an overall presentation of love which is far from monotone. The exchanges between Sharkān and ‘Abrīzah are followed first by ‘Umar’s rape of ‘Abrīzah, and then by Ghaḍbān’s attempted rape of the pregnant ‘Abrīzah and the exchange between them in poems 20 and 21<sup>359</sup>. And the exchange between Nuzhat and Daw’ has to be seen against the background of Nuzhat’s incestuous (albeit innocent) union with Sharkān.

Apart from the overall tone of the poetry in *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*, there is one feature common to almost every love poem. That is the mention of tears and, in many cases (including all the poems in *‘Azīz’s Tale*), the fact that tears precede and follow the speaking of the verse. A typical example is poem 87<sup>360</sup>, recited by ‘Azīzah when ‘Azīz returns from his first assignation with Bint Dalīlah. ‘Azīz finds ‘Azīzah with tears pouring down her cheeks (تسكب العبرات); in the poem she refers to herself shedding ‘tears of blood’ (ولقد بكيت دماً); and afterwards she wipes the tears off her cheeks (مسحت بكمها). The significance of tears to the consideration of poetry’s role in the *sīrah* will be discussed further in G below.

<sup>355</sup> *The Epistle on Singing-girls of Jāhiz*, ed. and trans. A.F.L.Beaston, Aris & Phillips, 1980

<sup>356</sup> *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* p.166

<sup>357</sup> *ibid* p.172

<sup>358</sup> *ibid* p.172

<sup>359</sup> *ibid* pp.184-185

<sup>360</sup> *ibid* p.270

## G. Conclusion

In certain respects the role of poetry may appear to be less prominent in the *Tale of 'Umar al-Nu'mān* than in the *siyar* examined previously. It does not play a major role in the plot, as was the case in *'Antarah*; there is no specific praise of poetry and poets, such as in *Dhāt al-Himmah*; and poetry does not provide the main vehicle for characters' speech, as was the case in *Zīr Sālim*. The role of poetry in *'Umar al-Nu'mān* is nonetheless central to all three parts of the *sīrah*, as well as providing a link between them.

This fact has become increasingly apparent in examining the poetry's content and role in F above, particularly in the context of the love poetry which forms the bulk of the poetry. The centrality of love in the narratives is very obvious in the case of *'Azīz's tale* and *Tāj al-Mulūk*. It may be less obvious, but is nonetheless also the case in the main tale of *'Umar al-Nu'mān*, as demonstrated by Wen-chin Ouyang's analysis of the *sīrah* in her essay on *The Epical Turn of Romance: love in the narrative of 'Umar al-Nu'mān*, where she shows how 'Shahrazad's loyalty and endurance (staying power) and, I would add, legitimacy..are translated into love in the stories of 'Umar al-Nu'mān, Tāj al-Mulūk and 'Azīz and 'Azīzah'<sup>361</sup>. Not only is the verse the prime vehicle for expressing the characters' emotions, particularly love, which are at the heart of the stories, but it adds a rich layer of intertextual reference through its use of the themes of classical love poetry which would have been familiar to its audience. These themes serve to unite the three tales, while also highlighting the contrasts between them.

It has been argued that poetry is not essential to the tales in the *1001 Nights*. André Miquel, for instance, has argued that there is generally 'un lien très lâche' between poems and their narrative context<sup>362</sup>. This view is based on his study of *Ajīb and Gharīb*, where he distinguishes between the elements 'essential' to the

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<sup>361</sup> Ouyang (2003) pp.501-502

<sup>362</sup> Miquel (1977) p.323

narrative and those which are ‘redundant’. He concludes that poetry falls into the latter category, observing that: ‘La poésie reste dans le conte, mais le conte, à la limite, lui est indifférent.’<sup>363</sup> Similarly Wolfhart Heinrichs, in his study of *prosimetrum* in classical Arabic literature, states in relation to *1001 Nights* that ‘E. Littman is right when he argues that the poetry may be suppressed without harm to the narrative’<sup>364</sup>. Heinrichs is one of the rare scholars who have tried to define the nature of poetry in the *Nights*. In his *Observations on the function of poetry in the Nights*, he quotes from his study of *prosimetrum* where he defined the functions of poetry within a narrative as being no more than three: *shāhid* (poetry as authority for a prose account), *‘aqd wa ḥall* (equivalence of prose and poetry) and *tamaththul* (quoting a poetic parallel). He concludes that ‘the poetry of the *Arabian Nights* belongs in the third category’.<sup>365</sup> He quotes also from Jamel Eddine Bencheikh’s study of *‘Azīz’s Tale*, where Bencheikh discusses how prose and poetry combine in the narrative tasks: ‘Si le conte narre une passion, le poème le représente’.<sup>366</sup> Heinrichs interprets Bencheikh’s comment as being similar to his own description of the Narrator’s quotations as ‘illustrations’, but this may be understating Bencheikh’s view of poetry’s role. It is significant that Bencheikh also insists on the ‘lien organique entre prose et poésie dans l’organisation du récit’ and it may be that he is using the word ‘représente’ in the sense of ‘stand for’, rather than simply ‘depict’, so that poetry’s role is considerably more than just ‘illustration’. It has a role and life of its own. This would be consistent with the central role of poetry in the tales, not only as the core of the narrative but also as the key means of expressing emotion as in the love poetry, of expressing beauty (in descriptive passages such as poem 13<sup>367</sup>), wisdom (in gnomic passages such as poem 25<sup>368</sup>) and music (for example poem 8 sung by a slave-girl<sup>369</sup>).

It would also be consistent with the role of poetry as what Heidegger has called ‘the house of Being’. Poetry is concerned with being and identity. Thus, in *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*, the poems are expressions of the characters’ identities and existences.

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<sup>363</sup> *ibid* p.324

<sup>364</sup> Heinrichs (1997) p.271

<sup>365</sup> Heinrichs (2007) p.358

<sup>366</sup> Bencheikh (1991) p.270

<sup>367</sup> *‘Umar al-Nu‘mān* p.173

<sup>368</sup> *ibid* p.191

<sup>369</sup> *ibid* p.171

‘Azīzah, for example, is defined by her poetry and it is through her poetry that she lives. Her poetry can be described as exemplifying what Heidegger called ‘the founding of being in the word’<sup>370</sup>. Poetry’s role as an expression of identity and existence is illustrated by the episode where Nuzhat and Daw’ are finally reunited when she realises his identity after listening to his laments on their journey to Baghdad (culminating in poem 45<sup>371</sup>).

This episode also demonstrates the power of poetry to achieve results. This is demonstrated in ‘*Azīz’s Tale*, where poetry results in the death of ‘Azīzah. The fact that poetry’s role in *Taj al-Mulūk* is less effective (Tāj’s poems do not influence Dunya, who is only overcome eventually by the sight of his beauty) can be seen as being consistent with the humorous and parodic elements which distinguish it from the other two tales.

Finally, the importance and role of the poetry are also revealed by the way in which tears are a recurrent feature of almost every scene in which poetry occurs. In his comparative study of poems by Virgil, al-Buḥturī and Wilfred Owen, Stefan Sperl has pointed out the presence and significance of tears in each of the poems: Aeneas’s *lacrimae rerum* before the temple of Juno in Carthage, al-Buḥturī’s tears before the ruins of Ctesiphon and the tears of the enemy soldier who is Owen’s partner in *Strange Meeting*. He concludes that ‘tears are clearly a metaphor for poetry’<sup>372</sup>. Tears in Arabic poetry are also regarded as a source of renewal and relief, and hence of life, like rain: Bauer quotes the example of Abu Tammām describing his cheeks as the ‘earth’ on which his tears fall like rain<sup>373</sup>. Thus the omnipresent tears in ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān* confirm the role of poetry as a source of life as well as an expression of emotion.

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<sup>370</sup> Heidegger (2000) p.59

<sup>371</sup> ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān* p.214

<sup>372</sup> Sperl (2006) p.373

<sup>373</sup> Bauer (1998) p.368

## Chapter 7

*Sīrat al-Malik Sayf ibn Dhī al-Yazan*

## A. Introduction

In his ‘*Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*’, Edward Lane makes only a passing reference to *Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*, but he succeeds in highlighting its singularity among the *siyar* when he describes it as ‘a work abounding with tales of wonder’.<sup>374</sup> The *sīrah* includes an exceptional level of the fantastic, the magical and the supernatural, but much of its content is otherwise similar in type to the other *siyar* and, like them, its characters and events have some slight basis in historical fact. Its form also is similar to the other *siyar* in being composed in a mixture of prose and verse. The verse is less frequent than in many of the other *siyar*, but nonetheless plays a major role: the *sīrah* contains 2,923 lines of verse, amounting to approximately 7.7 % of the whole work. It will be seen that this role is in some respects significantly different from that of the verse in the *siyar* previously examined. A notable difference is the number of longer poems, whose role tends to be narrative and prophetic. The role of these poems is closely linked to the basic themes of the *sīrah*, which have been described by Helen Blatherwick as ‘the foundation of Egypt and the Islamisation of the earthly and supernatural spheres...’.<sup>375</sup>

Three scholarly works have been devoted exclusively to *Sīrat Sayf*: Lena Jayyusi’s ‘translation & narration’ of the *sīrah* in English<sup>376</sup>, Khutrī ‘Urābī’s *البنية الأسطورية في سيرة سيف ابن ذي يزن*<sup>377</sup> and Helen Blatherwick’s *Prophets, gods and kings: Islamic, Egyptian and Persian cultural strands in Sīrat Saif ibn Dhī Yazan*.<sup>378</sup> In Lena Jayyusi’s work, poetry only receives a passing mention, in Harry Norris’s introduction, where he refers to the existence of ‘strategically spaced poems’ but declares the prose to be ‘paramount’.<sup>379</sup> ‘Urābī, on the other hand, devotes a section of twelve pages to the poetry entitled ‘The poetry and its role in the *sīrah*’.<sup>380</sup> As the title of his book suggests, ‘Urābī’s focus is on the folkloric and mythological elements of the work and his discussion of the poetry, which draws heavily on

<sup>374</sup> Lane (1896) p.421

<sup>375</sup> Blatherwick (2002) p.3

<sup>376</sup> Jayyusi (1996)

<sup>377</sup> ‘Urābī (1996)

<sup>378</sup> Blatherwick (2002)

<sup>379</sup> Jayyusi (1996) p.xiv

<sup>380</sup> ‘Urābī (1996) pp.161-172

studies of early Arabic story-telling,<sup>381</sup> is designed to support his view that the poetry's primary function is to add an impression of reality to the mythological and fantastic elements of the work. His views on poetry's role will be considered in section E below. Helen Blatherwick's thesis is concerned with intertextuality in the *sīrah* and does not comment specifically on the poetry.

The scope of Arab scholarship on the *sīrah* has been thoroughly reviewed in Zuzana Gazakova's *Remarks on Arab Scholarship in the Arabic popular sīra and the Sīrat Sayf Ibn Dhī Yazan*<sup>382</sup>. As well as commenting on 'Urābī's treatment of the poetry, Gazakova refers to the opinion of Ilfah 'Umar al-Adlabi<sup>383</sup> that 'the poetry inserted in the prose does not have any particular value and function apart from prolongation of the narration'.

NB: All references to the text of *Sīrat Sayf Ibn Dhī Yazan* are to the edition published in 2 volumes by Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah in Beirut in 1985 (each containing two of the four volumes of the original printed edition, which will be referred to as 'books').

Poems are numbered as shown in Appendix 13.

## B. Section chosen for analysis

### (i) Volume and distribution of verse

*Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan* consists of 1,270 printed pages and contains 265 pieces of verse, ranging in length from 1 to 213 lines and amounting to a total of 2,923 lines. The distribution of the poetry between the four books of the *sīrah* is as follows:

<sup>381</sup> These include: Ahmed Ibrahim al-Hawārī, *Naqd al-Riwāyah fī 'l-Adab al-'Arabī al-Hadīth fī Miṣr*, Dar al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, 1983, and Farūq Khūrshīd, *Fī 'l-Riwāyah al-'Arabiyah, 'Aṣr al-Tajmī'*, Dār al-Shurūq, Cairo, 1975

<sup>382</sup> Gazakova (2005)

<sup>383</sup> Adlabi (1974)

<u>book</u>	<u>no. of pages</u>	<u>no. of poems</u>	<u>lines of verse</u>	<u>verse as % of whole</u>
1	351	90	985	9.0%
2	339	74	752	7.4%
3	284	46	434	5.1%
4	294	55	742	8.2%
Total	1,268	265	2,923	7.5%

The following table shows the breakdown of the lengths of all the poems:

<u>number of lines</u>	<u>number of poems</u>	<u>% of total</u>
1 - 2	29	11%
3 - 5	34	13%
6 - 10	117	44%
11 - 20	71	27%
20 +	14	5%

The average length of the poems is 11.0 lines and the verse is approximately 7.5% of the *sīrah* (measured in lines). This suggests that *Sīrat Sayf* belongs to the same category as *Dhāt al-Himmah* and ‘*Antarah*, where the use of verse is more selective than in *Zīr Sālim* and *Banī Hilāl*.

The section chosen for detailed examination is pages 3 to 146, which contain the first 2 of the *sīrah*’s 20 parts. The chosen section contains 43 pieces of verse, amounting to 585 lines. The proportion of the verse to the total text (measured by lines) in this section is significantly higher, at 13.5%, than the average for the whole work noted above at 7.5%. This is largely explained by the presence of three long poems, of 66, 86 and 151 lines respectively, which amount to more than half of the section’s total. The only other poem of comparable length in the *sīrah* is the very last poem of all, which is the longest at 213 lines (and will be discussed in F below). The chosen section of *Sīrat Sayf* differs from those of the *siyar* previously examined by including a number of poems of exceptional length; the longest poem in *Sīrat ‘Antarah* was 36 lines, in ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān* 13 lines, in *Dhāt al-Himmah* 26

lines and in *Banī Hilāl* 36 lines. The only poem comparable to the ones in *Sīrat Sayf* was الملحمة الكبرى (the great prophecy) of 75 lines in *Zīr Sālim*.

## (ii) Synopsis of section's plot

A detailed outline of the plot is to be found in Appendix 13: 'Placement of poems in *Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan* (parts 1 and 2)'. The section is concerned with the birth and early exploits of the hero. The following is a very brief summary of the plot, which abounds in action and characters.

The story starts with the Tubba'ī king of Yemen, Dhū Yazan, being converted to Islam by his wise minister, Yathrib, while he is on an expedition to invade the land of King Ba'albak. When he follows this by setting off to conquer Ethiopia and Abyssinia, his advance is delayed first by his building the new city of al-Ḥamrā' as his capital and then by Yathrib 'casting the sands' and determining that it is not Dhū Yazan himself who is destined to fulfil Noah's curse (that the black children of Hām will be subjugated to the children of Sām), but his unborn son. Meanwhile the king of Ethiopia and Abyssinia, Sayf Ar'ad, plots to kill Dhū Yazan by sending him a gift of a slave-girl, Qamriyah, who has been ordered to kill him with a hidden phial of poison. Instead, the girl marries Dhū Yazan and gives birth to a son after Dhū Yazan has died (cause unknown). Afraid for her own status as Queen, Qamriyah exposes the boy to die in the desert, but he is rescued and raised as a son by King Afrāḥ with the name of Waḥsh al-Falā. The boy is stolen for 3 years by a queen of the Jinn and raised with her daughter, 'Āqīṣah, before being returned to Afrāḥ. He grows up to be a mighty warrior.

Waḥsh rescues Afrāḥ's daughter, Shāmah, from being abducted by an evil Jinn, they fall in love with each other and he seeks her hand from Afrāḥ. However 'Afrāḥ is persuaded by one of Sayf Ar'ad's wizards, Saqardyūn (who is afraid that Waḥsh may be the man destined to fulfil Noah's curse), to set Waḥsh an impossibly difficult task as a dowry: to bring the head of Sa'dūn, a renowned brigand. He achieves this (although he brings Sa'dūn alive, having spared his life and made him

a friend), but is then told that he must also bring the Book of the Nile (whose possessor will have dominion over Ethiopia and Abyssinia). On his way to carry out this mission, he meets a hermit, Sheikh Jayyād, who converts him to Islam, reveals the secret of his identity and tells him how to proceed with his quest. Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan (as he is now known to be) acquires the book from King Qamrūn with the help of one of the latter's sorceresses, 'Āqilah, who wants him to marry her daughter Ṭāmāh.

After an interlude when 'Āqīṣah takes Sayf to visit two of the 'seven realms', Sayf returns to Afrāḥ with the Book of the Nile, but this is promptly stolen by Saqardyūn and sent to Sayf Ar'ad. Sayf is sent to punish Qamrīyah for not paying tribute, but she recognizes him (from the necklace which she had put round his neck when abandoning him), tells him the truth about his birth and pretends to regret her past actions.

Besides its narration of the events summarized above, the importance of the section lies in the way it establishes the main themes of the *sīrah* as a whole: the ascendancy of Islam, the progress of Noah's curse and the hero's mission to found Egypt.

### C. Example: poem 6<sup>384</sup>

#### (i) Introduction

This poem is spoken by the minister, Yathrib, to King Dhū Yazan. Following his victory over Ba'albak, the king's determination to proceed with the conquest of Ethiopia was delayed by the decision to build a city, al Hamrā', to be a new capital for his kingdom. Having completed the building successfully, he told Yathrib that he intended to continue his mission of conquest, but Yathrib asked him to wait until he had 'cast the sands' to see what the future might hold. Yathrib encouraged the king by suggesting that he may be the man who is destined to fulfil Noah's

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<sup>384</sup> *ibid* p.15

curse. This poem is Yathrib's way of informing the king of the results of his geomancy; the audience has already been told that the king is not the one chosen to fulfil Noah's curse, but that news has not yet been broken to Dhū Yazan himself.

This poem has been chosen as the text for analysis because both its form and its content make it a good example of the type of poems which play an important role in the *sīrah* and which are quite different from the majority of poems found in the other *siyar*. Particular features are its above-average length and its blend of narrative and prophecy. It will be seen that it shares these features with other key poems in the *sīrah*. The poem is also chosen because of its central importance as the first major statement of the themes at the heart of the *sīrah*.

(ii) The text

أيا ملكا في هذه الأرض قد نما	ملوك الورى أرض وأنت لهم سما	1
وأنت كما البدر المنير الذي علا	عليهم وقد صاروا زمانك أنجما	2
ملكك جميع الأرض شرقا ومغرباً	وربك قد أعطاك ملكاً معظما	3
علوت على أعلى الثريا بهمة	تعيد جلاميد الصخور إلى الحما	4
حميت من الأعداء أرضك كلها	وفي الجود كالبحر المحيط إذا ظما	5
وجللت بيت الله خزا مزركشا	يحير عين الناظرين مرقما	6
وساعدتني حتى بنيت مدينتي	يهاجر فيها سيد الأرض والسما	7
ويظهر دين الحق شرقا ومغربا	فيا فوز ذاك العصر من كان مسلما	8
نبي كريم سيد الرسل كلهم	به الأنبياء رب البرية ختما	9

- 10 على دينه من مات يحظى بجنة  
يخلد فيها دائما متنعما
- 11 على ملة الإسلام ربي توفي  
على دين طه الهاشمي مكرما
- 12 وإني قد أصبحت لا شك مسلما  
فيا ربنا اغفر لي الذي قد تقدمنا
- 13 ومن يثرب سرنا إلى بعلبك ذي ال  
جيوش فقتلنا وقد ضربنا مهازما
- 14 وجئنا مع الجيش العظيم بسرعة  
نزلنا إلى روض وقد حزننا مغنما
- 15 غرسنا بها الأشجار طابت ثمارها  
وصار لنا ظل ظليل مخيما
- 16 بنينا بها حمر الجيوش مدينة  
وصار لنا دار ومأوى ومعلما
- 17 أراد ملك العصر ذو يزن بأن  
يدوس جيوشا للجيوش ويهجمنا
- 18 فقلت له صبيرا قليلا ولا تخف  
عدوا ولا زلت على الناس قادما
- 19 لكي أنني أضرب لك الرمل عاجلا  
وأكشف من كتب الملاحم ملحما
- 20 فإن مليكا يملك الأرض كلها  
يكن حمريا تبعياً ومسلما
- 21 بدعوة نوح داعيا كل أسرة  
لأولاد سام تابعين وخداما
- 22 يقاتل أبطال الجيوش بعزمه  
وينقذهم من ظلمة الكفر والعمى
- 23 فقابلت بتخت الرمل بعد ملاحم  
فلم أره هذا المليك المعظما
- 24 ولكنه من نسله يأتي عاجلا  
ومن اسمه يشتق إسم له سما
- 25 فبالله لا تبغ ولاتك تعندي  
وقابل بمن يأتيك خصما مخصما
- 26 وإن كنت تبغي الشر فاتركه وانتح  
صوابا فإني أصح لك معلما



you have ruled the whole world from east to west  
and your Lord has indeed given you a vast kingdom

you have risen to the highest Pleiades with such endeavour  
that it restored the heaviest boulders to the tribal enclosure

5           you have protected all your lands against the enemy  
and when they are thirsty (you are) in generosity like the ocean

you have draped the Lord's house with embroidered  
and brocaded silk which confounds the beholder's eye

you have helped me to build my city  
there come to it lords of the earth and sky

and the true religion appears in east and west  
O victory of that age (for) those who are Muslim

a noble prophet chief of all the messengers  
with him the Lord of the earth sealed (the line of) prophets

10           whoever dies in his faith is safe in paradise  
he lives there forever in ease and comfort

into the faith of Islam my Lord accept me  
honoured in the faith of Ṭaha the Hāshimī

I have indeed become a Muslim without doubt  
O Lord forgive me for what has gone before

from Yathrib we travelled to well-fortified Ba'albak  
and we killed and fought overwhelmingly

we came with a mighty army speedily  
 we camped in the meadows and won spoils

15 we planted trees there whose fruits flourished  
 and a shady grove well-sheltered became ours

in it we built the Ḥamra of the Hosts as a city  
 which became for us home and refuge and abode

the King of the age Dhū Yazan wanted to  
 trample armies with armies and to attack

so I said to him be patient for a while and do not fear  
 an enemy for you are still the leader of the people

so that I may cast the sands for you without delay  
 and reveal to you a prophecy from the books of divination

20 for a king will rule over all the earth  
 he will be Himyarī Tubbaʿī and a Muslim

according to Noah's curse he will call on all tribes  
 to serve and follow the children of Sām

and will fight the champions of the armies in his might  
 and rescue them from the gloom of disbelief and blindness

I faced the sands' board after (consulting) the (book of) divination  
 and I have not seen him (as) this mighty king

but he will come from his stock soon  
 and from his name his exalted name will be derived

- 25                   so by God do not be unjust or excessive  
                      (but) meet those who oppose you with opposition
- if you desire evil abandon it and turn away  
                      to act rightly for I counsel you correctly
- for you are respected amongst all their kings  
                      and they offer you bounty and wealth
- so live secure in ease and comfort  
                      and until a time when life ends reap happiness
- a son will come to you and will rule over their lands  
                      and will remain a ruler over all the earth
- 30                   by his hand assuredly will be accomplished the curse  
                      of Noah God's Prophet as a judgement which he ordered
- in his generation this city of yours will be devastated  
                      all its walls cast down and destroyed
- and all of Egypt will be built in his time  
                      and the blessed Nile will flow in it as a servant
- its regions will stay forever prosperous  
                      and it will be inhabited by Arabs together with non-Arabs
- and afterwards all creation will be put to the test  
                      and God's judgement will rule over all mankind
- 35                   death cannot be avoided and resurrection and judgement day  
                      the gardens of paradise and the fires of hell

this is what was clarified in travel and books  
so we recited it as poetry like a string of pearls

O Lord of ours pardon your servant Yathrib  
I bear witness O God that I have become a Muslim

and bless all the Prophets  
and their seal Taha the mighty Intercessor.

[ for ease of consultation, the Arabic text of  
the poem is shown also in Appendix 14 ]

### (iii) Analysis

The poem can be split into six sections according to its themes:

- (i) introductory praise of King Dhū Yazan – lines 1-7;
- (ii) the coming of Islam – lines 8-12;
- (iii) recent events in the *sīrah* – lines 13-18;
- (iv) prophecy of future for Dhū Yazan – lines 19-28;
- (v) prophecy of future for Dhū Yazan's son – lines 29-34; and
- (vi) conclusion – lines 35-38.

Taking these in turn:

- (i) lines 1-7: These lines are addressed to King Dhū Yazan in praise of his qualities and achievements. The poem opens with the vocative 'O King', and each of lines 2 to 7 opens with a verb or pronoun in the vocative case. Each line enumerates the king's key qualities (for example, he is 'like a radiant moon' in line 2) or achievements (for example, 'you have protected your land against the enemy' in line 5).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich of line 1 echoes the opening hemistich in repeating **ملك** and **أرض**: this stress on the earthly power of kings adds weight to the end of the line, where Dhū Yazan is likened to the sky by comparison to the earth-bound qualities of other kings.

The contrast between earth and sky provides a unifying theme throughout this section. In line 2, the king is likened to a ‘radiant moon’ rising above other kings, while they are merely stars. In line 4, his importance has eclipsed the Pleiades, and in line 7 the city he has built attracts ‘lords of the earth and sky’. The final word of line 7, **سما**, repeats the final word of line 1, thus neatly rounding off the section.

This is a clue to the fact that these lines form a ‘ring structure’, based on the pairing and contrast of earth (**أرض**) and heaven (**سما**). This is particularly clear in the opening and closing lines, 1 and 7, which are linked by both words occurring in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich of each line. Line 2 and 6 contrast the king’s earthly dominance in line 2, like the moon rising above his age, with the Lord’s house in line 6, representing heavenly qualities, which the king can only decorate (the contrast is heightened by the use of the heavenly moon to symbolise the king’s earthly power and of the earth-bound ‘Lord’s house’ to symbolise God’s heavenly power). Lines 3 and 5 are linked by the reference to ‘all the earth’ in each line (**جميع الأرض** in line 3 and **أرضك كلها** in line 4), reinforced by identical final consonants of ‘z - m’ (**معضما** and **ظما**). The central line 4 contains the theme of ‘high/low’, or ‘heaven/earth’, which encapsulates the whole section. The first three words of the line stress the concept of height: **علوت على أعلى**, while placing the king higher than the Pleiades (**الثريا**, whose root **ث - ر - ي** also connotes mankind as a whole). This is contrasted with the ‘boulders of stone’ in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich.

The ring structure can be shown in the following diagram:

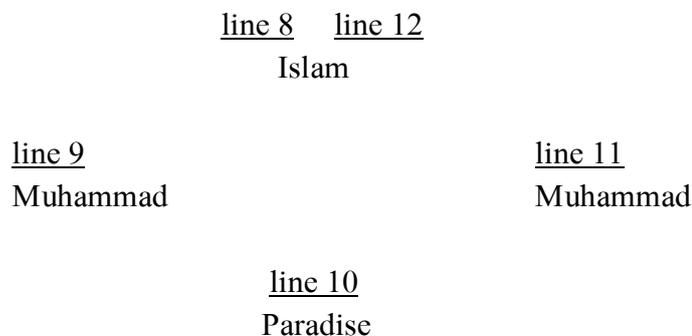
<u>line 1</u> Earth and Heaven	<u>line 7</u> 
<u>line 2</u> king's power (the moon on high)	<u>line 6</u> God's power (the <i>Ka'bah</i> on earth)
<u>line 3</u> all the earth	<u>line 5</u> all the earth
<u>line 4</u> heaven    earth high      low	

- (ii) lines 8-12: Following the combination and contrast of heaven and earth in the first section of the poem, the next two sections focus respectively on things spiritual and things worldly. Lines 8-12 describe the coming of Islam and Yathrib's acceptance of it, while lines 13-18 describe recent events in the world.

The theme of lines 8-12 is summarised in the opening words of line 8: 'there appears the true religion' (ويظهر دين الحق), the change of subject from the first section being marked by the grammatical change from the succession of opening vocative verbs in lines 3-7 to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person case of يظهر. The theme is stressed also by the final word of the line: مسلما. The section moves from the general to the specific: the coming of Islam in line 8 is followed by the role of the Prophet in line 9, before turning to the effect of Islam on mankind in line 10 and on Yathrib in particular, in lines 11-12.

Like the first section, these lines are structured as a ‘ring’. Lines 8 and 12 are linked by reference to Islam: the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich of line 8 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich of line 12 both end with *مسلمًا*, although the reference has changed from the Muslims as a whole conquering the world to the specific example of Yathrib embracing the faith. Lines 9 and 11 are linked by references to Muhammad: in line 9 to ‘a noble Prophet chief of all the Messengers’ and in line 11 to ‘Taha the Hāshimī’. The lines are also linked by the use of *رب البرية* in line 9 and *ربي* in line 11, as well as by the description of the Prophet as *كريم* in line 9 and as *مكرم* in line 11. The central line 10 describes the eternal paradise awaiting those who embrace the true faith, reflected in the antithesis of death in the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich and life in the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The importance of the message in this central line lies in the theme running through the whole of the section: that is Yathrib’s allegiance to Islam and his aspiration to a place in Paradise after his death.

The ring structure of these lines can be shown in the following diagram:



- (iii) lines 13-18: These lines switch attention back to things worldly by providing a brief account of recent events in the *sīrah*. Their role is to explain and lead in to the main section and purpose of the poem, which is Yathrib’s prediction of the future. The section divides into three stages. Lines 15 and 16 describe the *status quo*, where Dhū Yazan and his army have established their camp and built a new city. These lines are sandwiched between lines looking forwards and backwards respectively. Lines 13 and 14 describe the past: that is, the victorious

campaign against Ba'albak, while lines 17-19 are concerned with the future: Dhū Yazan's wish to proceed at once with the conquest of Ethiopia and Abyssinia. Yathrib's advice to be patient (صيرا), in line 18, is contrasted with the progress and action of lines 13-16 where the narrative is driven along by a succession of verbs of action in the past tense: سرنا - قتلنا - ضربنا - جننا - نزلنا - حزنا. The importance of the prophecy, to which these lines are leading up, is stressed by the final repeated words of line 19: الملاحم ملحما (prophecies from the books of divination)<sup>385</sup>. The repetition echoes those in the previous lines: ظل ظليل in line 15 and جيوشا للجوش in line 17.

- (iv) lines 19-28: It is significant that lines 19 and 20 form the central lines of the poem. Just as line 19 has stressed the importance of the prophecy, so line 20 contains the news of a world-conquering leader to come, whose attributes are summarised in three adjectives which end the line: حميريا تبعا ومسلما (Himyarī Tubba'ī and Muslim). Line 20 encapsulates the twin themes of earthly and spiritual power which run through the whole poem: the 1st hemistich stresses earthly power by repeating the root 'م - ل - ك', in مليكا يملك, and the reference to 'the whole earth' (الأرض كلها), which echoes the words used in line 5 to describe Dhū Yazan's power (أرضك كلها), while the 2nd hemistich leads up to the climactic final مسلما.

These twin themes are maintained in the next two lines, 21 and 22, where the achievements of the coming champion are described: he will not only conquer the armies of the children of Sām, fulfilling Noah's curse, but he will also rescue them from pagan unbelief. The twin aims are summarised in the parallel hemistiches of line 22, both starting with 3rd person imperfect verbs: يقاتل and ينفذ (he fights...he rescues).

The mention of Noah's curse highlights its role as one of the major

<sup>385</sup> Toufic Fahd describes ملاحم as being originally a term for prophecies of the coming of the Mahdī, which was then extended in meaning when 'la divination astrologique et météorologique envahit la malhamah et la destinée des peuples, des dynasties, des religions et des individus fut lue dans le firmament'. (Fahd (1966) p.225)

motivators of the *sīrah*; it is emphasized by the *tajnīs* between *تبعيا* (Tubba‘ī), in line 20, and *تابعين* (following), which refers to the future servitude of the race of Hām, in line 21.

Having given the good news in these lines, in lines 23 and 24 Yathrib has to break the bad news that the champion is not Dhū Yazan himself. He does so with gentle diplomacy. He conveys the information obliquely in line 23: ‘I have consulted the sands ..... and I have not seen him as this mighty king’, and he follows this blow with the reassurance in line 24 that the champion will be from his stock and will bear his name. The final word of the line, *سما* (to rise high), strikes a spiritual note through its *tajnīs* with the *سما* (heaven) of lines 1 and 7.

Subject and mood change in the next four lines, 25-28, where Yathrib counsels Dhū Yazan on how to behave in this situation. Here he is playing the role of trusted minister rather than skilled geomancer, anxious to dissuade his master from the violent urge for conquest which led him to suggest casting the sands. Again Yathrib demonstrates diplomatic skill. He starts the advice in line 25 by invoking God and then providing a perfect summary of how a king should behave: ‘be just and reasonable but meet opposition firmly’. In line 26 he adds a moral dimension to the advice (‘avoid evil’), in line 27 he reminds Dhū Yazan in flattering terms of his reputation and wealth and finally in line 28 he recommends him to enjoy them for as long as he lives.

- (v) lines 29-34: This intimation of mortality leads naturally into the prophecy, in lines 29-34, of what Dhū Yazan’s son will achieve after him. The combination of earthly and heavenly interests is continued in lines 29 and 30: in line 29, the son will be ‘ruler over all the earth’ (the words *يملك أرضهم* echoing the words applied to Dhū Yazan in line 3: *ملكك جميع الأرض*), and in line 30 he will accomplish the curse of ‘God’s prophet’ Noah. Similarly, lines 31-34 begin by recounting Sayf’s worldly achievements (connoted by the reference to *الدهر* in

line 33) before proceeding to the final prophecy that ‘God’s judgement will rule over (حاكم) all mankind’. This reference to God’s judgement as حاكم contrasts with the previous use of the word to describe Dhū Yazan’s son’s rule over the earth in line 29; the importance of the word is stressed by its position as rhyme-word in both lines. This repetition also points to the fact that there are elements of a ring-structure in these six lines: while lines 29 and 34 refer to earthly and heavenly rule, lines 30 and 33 both refer to the mixture of races within Islam - the accomplishment of Noah’s curse in line 30 and the cohabitation of Arabs and non-Arabs in line 33. Finally the central lines, 31 and 32, contrast the devastation of Yemen in line 31 with the prosperity of Egypt in line 32. The ring structure also falls into two halves: the earthly focus and problems of lines 29 to 31 is followed by the success and heavenly focus of lines 32 to 34.

- (vi) lines 35-38: The final four lines of the poem provide a rich mixture of gnomic *hikma*, *fakhr* and religious invocation. Following the reference, in line 34, to God’s judgement, line 35 reminds the audience of what that entails: certain death to be followed by either heaven or hell. The point is stressed by antithesis in each hemistich of the line: of death and resurrection in the first hemistich and of paradise and hell in the second. This gnomic line is followed in line 36 by a reminder both of the power of learning, through the reference to ‘travel and books’ (the traditional training of a scholar) in the first hemistich, and of the power of poetry, through the reference to ‘poetry like a string of pearls’ in the second. This line is designed as *fakhr* by Yathrib, as both sage and poet, to reinforce his influence over Dhū Yazan. It is equivalent to a classical Arab poet’s self-praise in the final section of a traditional *qaṣīdah*, before he seeks recompense for a piece of *madīh*.

The final two lines of the poem, 37 and 38, are addressed to God, reminding him of the speaker’s devotion to Islam in line 37 and concluding with a pious invocation in line 38. They confirm the

overriding importance of Islam as a theme in this poem, as in the *sīrah* as a whole. The contrast between earthly power and God's supreme role, which has been noted throughout the poem, is maintained here through the contrast between the first line of the poem, addressed to the earthly king, and the final lines addressed to God.

#### D. Form and structure of the poetry

##### (i) Form and structure of poem 6

Poem 6 is in conventional form, using 2-hemistich lines with monorhyme and a classical metre (*tawīl*). There is very little imagery, but the poem makes effective use of parallelism (notably in the ring structures identified above) and occasionally of *tajnīs* (as in line 21). The language is simple, but its use is often far from simple.

The poem differs from most poems found in the *siyar* by being classifiable as a *qaṣīdah* rather than a *qīt'ah* due to its length and structure. If the poem's structure is compared to that of a conventional classical Arabic *qaṣīdah*, whether pre-Islamic or Abbasid, it is possible to identify certain themes which they share: for example, the *madīh* of the ruler, the poet's *fakhr* and the existence of a *rihlah* (the journey from Yathrib to Ba'albak in line 13 and following). It is, however, hard to find any equivalent to a *nasīb*.

Perhaps the most striking similarity to a classical *qaṣīdah* lies in the existence of a clear theme uniting the different elements of the poem and in the division of the poem into two contrasting halves, equivalent to the strophe and anti-strophe identified by Stefan Sperl as a feature of the Abbasid panegyric *qaṣīdah*.<sup>386</sup> The first half, or strophe, looks to the past and mainly to things earthly, while the second half, or anti-strophe, looks to the future and mainly to things heavenly.

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<sup>386</sup> Sperl (1989) pp.25-27

## (ii) Formal characteristics of poetry as a whole

There are only two poems in the section which do not conform to the conventions of classical Arabic poetry in consisting of lines of 2 equal hemistiches and in having a consistent end-rhyme or monorhyme. They are:

poem 31:<sup>387</sup> although printed as six 2-hemistich lines (in a *rajaz* metre), the fact that each hemistich shares the monorhyme of ‘*āb*’ suggests that the poem may better be considered as consisting of twelve single-hemistich lines. This phenomenon is met in other poems in the *sīrah*: in part 3 on pages 37, 39 and 181, and in part 4 on pages 138 and 246.

poem 39:<sup>388</sup> this 4-line poem has the following rhyme pattern:

a	-	a
a	-	a
b	-	b
b	-	c

Both ‘a’ and ‘b’ share the same *rawī*: *dāl*, but in the ‘b’ rhymes it is preceded by a *ridf* - as in ‘*ādī* and *fu’ādī*. The concluding word of the poem is completely different, the final hemistich being:

على عاصي الهوى الله أكبر

The effect of this change is to place extra emphasis on the poem’s concluding invocation of God.

In this section, as well as in later sections of the *sīrah*, there are a number of instances where verse has been printed in strophic form but is found, on examination, to consist of conventional 2-hemistich lines with monorhyme (an example is poem 33). There is, however, one genuine example of a *musammaṭ*<sup>389</sup>.

<sup>387</sup> *Sīrat Sayf* p.95

<sup>388</sup> *ibid* p.128

<sup>389</sup> *ibid*, vol.2, book 2, p.149

All the poems use one of the canonical classical metres (although there are frequent examples of lines where the scansion depends on omitting one or more of the diacritics).

### (iii) Structure, style and imagery of the poems as a whole

*Sīrat Sayf* shares certain features with the other *siyar*. It uses a middle-Arabic language, mixing the classical and the colloquial, and the use of imagery is both rare and conventional. However, the use of language is often far from simple, as found in poem 6 above. The use of rhetorical devices is also far from basic: an example is poem 30<sup>390</sup>, where effects are achieved through internal rhyme and alliteration, as shown in the first 3 lines where lines 1 and 2 are dominated by repetitions of the letter *jīm*, and line 3 contains three forms of the root ع - و - د (عودت - أعد - عادائك). And there is extensive use of parallelism and ring-structures, also as seen in poem 6.

## E, Introductory formulas

### (i) Quotations

The quotations cited by the Narrator are introduced with wording very similar to that found in the other *siyar*: formulas such as كما قال فيه الشاعر, followed usually by القائل. The only case where the source of the quotation is actually named is poem 15<sup>391</sup>, where the author is identified as Jamīl. The only case where approbatory language is added is poem 11<sup>392</sup>, which is presented as a quotation from poetry composed specifically in homage to Sayf's beauty and is introduced by the words: 'a piece of poetry did him justice saying...'

<sup>390</sup> ibid p.88

<sup>391</sup> ibid p.43

<sup>392</sup> ibid p.37

Two quotations are spoken by characters. In poem 27 'Āqīṣah quotes a proverb to Sayf and introduces it with the words: 'the proverb was indeed true about you when it said...' (ألا يصح فيك المثل حيث قيل... ). And in poem 38<sup>393</sup>, Bahr Qafqān warns Sayf Ar'ad against Sayf by quoting a saying of 'those who came before us' (المتقدمون عنا).

## (ii) Non-quotations

There are no introductory formulas within the texts of the poems, such as the statements of identity found in *Zīr Sālīm* and *Banī Hilāl*. Equally the prose leading up to the poems is generally brief and simple, although it does usually indicate the reason or emotion giving rise to the verse. A typical example is poem 10<sup>394</sup>, where Qamrīyah is rejoicing after abandoning her son in the desert. The words leading up to the poem are: 'sorrow left her heart and life became serene and pleasant to her from the abundance acquired of joy and contentment and she sang saying...'. These words describe very clearly the emotions motivating Qamrīyah, without mentioning any physical symptoms. In other cases, tears may be mentioned: an example is poem 21<sup>395</sup>, where Sayf is facing death having been thrown into a pit full of daggers in Sa'dūn's castle. The words leading up to the poems are: 'he wept and lamented and complained and began to pray for help with these verses singing and saying..'. These words not only describe Sayf's physical condition: weeping and moaning, and his mood: complaining, but they also indicate the purpose of his poem: to beg God for help (يستغيث). It will be seen, in considering the content and role of the poems in F below, that Sayf's reaction to distress or danger is not to give way to his feelings but to control them and to seek the courage to cope with them. Indeed poetry is itself one of the sources of help in such crises, as indicated in the words leading up to poem 26<sup>396</sup>: 'he began to seek solace ( يتسلى ) through reciting poetry'.

The expression of emotion in the introductory passages generally falls well short of what is found in some of the other *siyar*, where poems may be described as forced

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<sup>393</sup> ibid p.125

<sup>394</sup> ibid p.28

<sup>395</sup> ibid p.54

<sup>396</sup> ibid p.65

out of people by the strength of their feelings. In *Sīrat ‘Antarah*, for example, a common formula is: جاش الشعر في خاطره (poetry boiled in his head). A rare exception in *Sayf* is poem 17<sup>397</sup>, where Sayf is overcome by the sight of Shāmah in her bridal clothes and his verse is introduced by the words: ‘his reason left him and his longing and his sorrow welled up so that he sang to her saying..’. The lack of such emotional formulas reflects the fact that poems in *Sīrat Sayf* tend to be more concerned with cerebral considerations of faith and fate than with passion. This fact will be examined further in F below.

The words leading up to poem 29<sup>398</sup> are particularly noteworthy: ‘tears flowing down his cheeks he turned to the custom of the arabs (و عاد إلى طبع العرب) and recited saying...’. Although the phrase عاد على طبع العرب occurs only this one time in the chosen section, there are five other poems in the *sīrah* which are preceded by identical or similar words<sup>399</sup>. These poems have other features in common: all are spoken by Sayf and all are either addressed directly to God or contain a reference in the opening hemistich to الدهر or الأيام and are concerned with the vicissitudes of fate. An example is the poem in book 2<sup>400</sup> which is introduced by the words: ‘so he declaimed and sang and behaved like an Arab reciting and saying...’ ( فأعرب وأطرب ) (وتطبع بطبائع العرب وأنشد يقول يحاربني دهري بأسهم كبده), and whose opening hemistich is: (my fate assaults me with its gravest affliction). The use of this phrase emphasizes the importance of poetry to the Arabs as well as the importance and solemnity of the particular occasion which calls for poetry.

Most but not all of the poems in *Sīrat Sayf* include words of religious devotion immediately before the start of the poem, which is consistent with the strongly Islamic tone of the *sīrah*.

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<sup>397</sup> ibid p.44

<sup>398</sup> ibid p.87

<sup>399</sup> *Sīrat Sayf*, vol 1, book 2, pp.60, 65, 126 and 196; vol 2, book 1, p.158

<sup>400</sup> ibid, vol 1,book 2, p.65

## F. Content and role of the poetry

### (i) Content and role of poem 6

If the content and role of poem 6, as examined above, are considered in the context of the narrative surrounding it, the following features can be seen:

- it is addressed by one major character, Yathrib, to another major character, Dhū Yazan;
- it occurs at an important point in the plot and addresses two very important issues which have just been brought to the audience's attention: Dhū Yazan's momentous decision whether to go ahead with an invasion of Ethiopia, and the significance of Noah's curse;
- the key message about Noah's curse, namely that it is not Dhū Yazan himself who will carry it out, has already been mentioned by the Narrator, but the poem adds enormously to the very bare message conveyed in prose;
- the poem contains no expression of emotion and reveals nothing of Yathrib's character apart from his wisdom and diplomatic skills;
- the poem is partly narrative, but its main aim is to comment on the intellectual motifs which drive the action of the *sīrah*, such as the guiding role of Islam, the fulfilment of Noah's curse and the building of a new nation; and
- the poem is perfectly suited to its role in the action, being utterly convincing as the speech of a wise and trusted adviser to his king, leavening his advice with both praise and reminders of mortality.

This poem cannot be described as typical of all the poems in this section of the *sīrah*, because there are only two other poems of this length, or longer, and the

element of prophecy is only found in two other poems (poems 8 and 43).<sup>401</sup>

However it will be seen that most of the poems share certain features with it, including the focus on moral principles and the role of faith, which are key *motifs* throughout the *sīrah*.

The reception of the poem by Dhū Yazan is also highly significant: ‘when the king heard these words from the minister he was seized with emotion and passion for the astonishing *qaṣīdah* and ordered that the remarkable things it contained should be inscribed in gold’. The preservation of the poem in this way stresses its central importance to the *sīrah* and to its account of the foundation of Egypt. It shares this honour with other poems in the category of ‘longer narrative/prophetic’ poems, which are examined in (ii) (f) below.

## (ii) Content and role of the poems as a whole

### (a) introduction

The content and role of the poems have to be considered in their narrative context. This is shown in Appendix 13: ‘Placement of poems in *Sīrat Sayf* (parts 1 and 2)’. The 43 poems in the section include 14 quotations, which will be examined as a separate group. The other 29 poems are centred almost completely on Sayf himself: of the 31 poems which occur after Sayf’s birth, and excluding quotations, only one poem is not spoken by, to or about Sayf. This is partly due to the action of the *sīrah*, from which Sayf is seldom absent.

It was noted above that the formulas leading up to the poems are generally sober and unemotional and that this reflects the nature of the poetry. By comparison with the *siyar* previously examined, there is little dialogue but a preponderance of soliloquies, which tend to focus on issues of fate or faith rather than on personal emotions, in addition to a few longer poems of narrative and prophecy. The poems will be considered in their different categories.

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<sup>401</sup> *Sīrat Sayf* pp.20 and 137

(b) quotations

The section contains 14 quotations. They are all attributed to anonymous poets, apart from poem 15<sup>402</sup> which is attributed to Jamīl. They are all spoken by the Narrator, apart from poem 27<sup>403</sup>, spoken by ‘Āqilah, and poem 38<sup>404</sup>, spoken by Bahr Qafqān. Both these quotations are gnomic proverbs, while the Narrator’s quotations are all descriptive: of scenery (poems 1, 3, 5, 32 and 33)<sup>405</sup>; of people (poems 7, 11, 12, 15, 39 and 40)<sup>406</sup>; and of a lion (poem 4)<sup>407</sup>. A similar dichotomy has been noted in the *siyar* previously examined, although it has seldom been so complete. It highlights two characteristics of narration in the *siyar*: the Narrator avoids saying anything judgemental about the characters or events of the *sīrah* in his quotations, just as the characters hardly ever indulge in physical description except of their beloved. The Narrator’s neutrality adds to the drama of the *sīrah* by leaving people and events to speak for themselves as the action unfolds. Physical description, however, particularly of scenery and objects, is part of the scene-setting and is therefore naturally part of the Narrator’s responsibility.

The use of quotation serves to elevate the scenes to *loci amoeni* and the descriptions tend to be exaggerated and emblematic. This can be seen very clearly in the first three descriptive quotations, where the Narrator is describing the three scenes which figure in the early action of the *sīrah*: the site of Yathrib, Ba‘labak’s palace and the site of al-Ḥamrā’. Yathrib is like Paradise (poem 1)<sup>408</sup>, Ba‘labak’s palace is higher than the clouds (poem 3)<sup>409</sup> and the flowers at al-Ḥamrā’ are as if they had been stolen from Paradise (poem 5)<sup>410</sup>.

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<sup>402</sup> ibid p.43

<sup>403</sup> ibid p.84

<sup>404</sup> ibid p.125

<sup>405</sup> ibid pp.9, 12, 14, 97 and 98

<sup>406</sup> ibid pp.19, 37, 37, 43, 128 and 131

<sup>407</sup> ibid p.14

<sup>408</sup> ibid p.9

<sup>409</sup> ibid p.12

<sup>410</sup> ibid p.14

Khutrī ‘Urābī argues that one of the purposes of poetry in *Sīrat Sayf* is to add an allusion of reality to the events in the *sīrah* which he describes as أسطوري (using the word in a wide sense to include all non-realistic and non-historical elements, such as the fantastic and the folkloric), and he gives the descriptive quotations in poems 32 and 33 as cases where poetry is used for this purpose following passages which have been أسطوري.<sup>411</sup> If this point is valid, it is surprising that there are not more of such poems to match the extent of the magical and supernatural elements in the *sīrah*. Also it does not explain the number of descriptive quotations at the very start of the *sīrah*, which occur before any supernatural elements have intruded.

The quotations used by the Narrator to describe people, or in one case a lion, are similarly emblematic and hyperbolic. The young Qamrīyah ‘is perfection and the sun her servant’ (تمت ملاحظتها والشمس تخدمها) (poem 7)<sup>412</sup>, while the sight of the mature Qamrīyah, stripped for fighting, ‘would cause an old man limping on his stick...(to) become a hunter of lions’ (ولو واصلت شيخاً يدب على العصا لأصبح هذا الشيخ مقتنص الأسد) (poem 40)<sup>413</sup>.

There are two gnomic quotations. In poem 27<sup>414</sup>, ‘Aqilah tries to warn Sayf against entering the dome by quoting what is described as a proverb (مثل); and in poem 38<sup>415</sup>, Bahr Qafqān, in warning King Sayf ‘Arad about Noah’s curse, quotes a saying of the ancients (المتقدمون).

(c) dialogue

There is only one brief exchange of verse between two characters in this section: that is in poem 24<sup>416</sup>, where Shāmah says farewell to Sayf before he sets off to seek the Book of the Nile, and poem 25<sup>417</sup>, in which Sayf replies using the same metre (*rajaz*) and *rawī* (*mīm*).

<sup>411</sup> ‘Urābī (1996) p.163

<sup>412</sup> *Sīrat Sayf* p.19

<sup>413</sup> *ibid* p.131

<sup>414</sup> *ibid* p.84

<sup>415</sup> *ibid* p.125

<sup>416</sup> *ibid* p.64

<sup>417</sup> *ibid* p.64

Although only 3 lines, poem 24 is an eloquent expression of Shāmah's love. It is tightly constructed: five of the six hemistiches end with the pronominal suffix *كم*, the key words are repeated throughout ( *هوى* in each line and *فؤاد* in lines 1 and 3) and a succession of long *ā* sounds provide echoing internal rhymes. Despite its brevity, the poem is a thoughtful appeal to Sayf: line 1 talks of love as both feeling and idea, present 'in my heart and mind' ( *فؤادي وقلبي* ), while line 2 brings in a more carnal love with its instruction 'take my body' ( *خذوا معكم جسمي* ). Finally line 3 reminds Sayf of what he may lose: 'weep on my grave if I die' ( *نادوا على قبوري إذا مت* ).

Sayf's reaction to this poem is described as emotional: 'his love and desire increased and he was overcome by emotion and passion'. His reply in poem 25, however, is controlled rather than passionate. The poem is again short, at only 4 lines, but carefully structured. The tone is set in line 1, where love is likened to 'something you were keeping hidden' ( *مثل الذي كنت أكنتم* ). The idea is carried on in the following 3 lines, where first tears (in line 2) and then glances and fingers (in line 3) are made love's spokesmen, before being concluded in the final hemistich of line 4: 'for we are silent and love speaks' ( *فنهن سكوت والهوى تتكلم* ). It will be seen that this poem is typical of Sayf's other poems in the way its emotions are controlled, as if poetry itself is being used as a means of exercising such control.

Apart from this brief exchange, there is only one other poem which can be described as part of an inter-personal dialogue. That is poem 42<sup>418</sup>, where Qamrīyah bids for Sayf's affection and forgiveness by presenting herself in pitiful terms as being full of remorse and love for Sayf. The fact that her emotions here are totally false tends to support the view that poetry in *Sīrat Sayf*, unlike the other *siyar*, is not used as a prime means of expressing emotion.

Given the rarity of verse dialogue in *Sīrat Sayf*, it is surprising that Khutrī 'Urābī describes one of poetry's main roles in the *sīrah* as being to provide a 'means of dialogue' between characters. He sees this also as a way of adding realism to the presentation of characters, whose traits are <sup>419</sup>أسطوري (folkloric). It is of a piece

<sup>418</sup> *ibid* p.135

<sup>419</sup> 'Urābī (1996) p.163

with his assertion that a feature of poetry in the *sīrah* is the way in which it crosses national and social boundaries and is placed in the mouths of all sorts of people: high/low, Arab/non-Arab.<sup>420</sup> This is hard to justify on the basis of the section under review, where most of the poetry is spoken by Sayf and none at all by any of the lowly characters.

(d) soliloquies

There are eleven pieces of verse which can be classified as soliloquies, of which seven are spoken by Sayf. They tend to be very short and only four of them are of more than 5 lines.

Eight of these pieces are on topics related to faith and fate. It is significant that the first poem of the *sīrah* which is not a quotation is Dhū Yazan's expression of his new faith in poem 2<sup>421</sup>, as he leads his troops towards Ba'albak. It has been noted, in examining other *siyar*, that the first poem is often used to set the tone for the story to follow and poem 2 is filling that role here. The 5 lines of the poem form a ring around the central statement in line 3, which is given extra force through its antithesis: '...I turned to Islam in despite of disbelief'. The pairs of lines before and after the central line describe Dhū Yazan's actions before and after his conversion to Islam. Lines 2 and 4 contrast his trying to destroy the *Ka'bah* in line 2 with his clothing it in fine silk in line 4. Lines 1 and 5 contrast the same destructive urge in line 1 with his acknowledgement in line 5 that 'there is no God but Allah'. Lines 1 and 5 are also linked by the references to God in each line: to الجبار in line 1 and to Allah in line 5.

The six other poems spoken by Sayf, which are reflections on faith and/or fate (poems 13, 21, 26, 29, 30 and 34), are all reactions to moments of stress or disaster, such as Sayf's being expelled by 'Aṭamṭam (poem 13<sup>422</sup>) and his being thrown into a pit full of daggers (poem 21<sup>423</sup>). They tend to combine acceptance of the workings

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<sup>420</sup> *ibid* p.162

<sup>421</sup> *Sīrat Sayf* p.10

<sup>422</sup> *ibid* p.41

<sup>423</sup> *ibid* p.54

of fate with prayers for help to God and they display a wish to come to terms with his predicament and to exercise moral will-power to move forward. Although these passages appear at first sight to be similar and repetitive, a closer examination shows that they reflect a clear development in Sayf's spiritual education and attitudes. His first piece of verse (poem 13) is concerned with the injustice of fate and the need to accept it:

مشيناها خطا كتبت علينا      ومن كتبت عليه خطا مشاها  
 we have gone down a line as ordained for us  
 to whom a line has been ordained he will go down it.

There is no mention of any God here, but this is changed in poem 21 where fear can be overcome by having confidence in 'him who stretched out the earth' (تأذي مد) (الثرى). Equally, in poem 26<sup>424</sup>, as Sayf sets off on his quest for the Book of the Nile, he accepts the hardships of life:

فأولى به أن يطعم التبن كالعير      ومن قال إن الدهر فيه حلاوة  
 who said that life contains sweetness  
 I charge him to eat chaff like a wild ass,

while referring also to "the Merciful One" (الرحمن) and extolling the remedy of patience, repeating the word صبر four times in the poem's 5 lines. It is after this that Sayf meets Sheikh Jayyād and, when asked whom he worships, replies: 'Sir.....according to my understanding, the one to be worshipped is God. And yet I have, up to now, found no divinity I can acknowledge. I have seen the Sudanese worship Saturn.'<sup>425</sup> Thereupon Jayyād instructs him in Islam and Sayf declares his faith. All his subsequent soliloquies, poems 29, 30 and 34, contain direct prayers to God for help. In poem 29<sup>426</sup>, after Sayf has been thrown into a pit by Qamrūn, fate is accused in the first half of the poem, where each of the first six lines contains a reference to الأيام or الدهر, and Sayf describes his plight as he is loaded with chains, but the poem ends with a confident appeal for help to 'God on high who knows

<sup>424</sup> ibid p.65

<sup>425</sup> ibid p.66 (as translated in Jayyusi (1996) p.34)

<sup>426</sup> ibid p.87

what is hidden' (إله تعالى عالم بالسريرة). The following poem 30<sup>427</sup> contains another appeal to God, but there are interesting differences from the previous poems. There is no reference to fate and the peril faced by Sayf is presented primarily as a spiritual danger, rather than the physical distress of previous laments: 'my soul is in a perilous state....who is there (to save) me and my troubled soul (والأنفس أمست في ) حرج.....من لي ولقلبي المنزعج). Finally, in poem 34<sup>428</sup> Sayf acknowledges his own weakness in not being able to bear adversity, and again makes no mention of fate, but appeals confidently to God 'for the ocean of Your bounty satiates all who approach' (فبحر جودك يروي كل من يرد).

In this succession of soliloquies, it can be seen that poetry has been used to chart and highlight Sayf's spiritual development: from complaint at misfortune to acceptance of it, coupled with complete faith in God. There are a calmness and a moral strength expressed in these soliloquies, which often belie the emotion or distress to which Sayf is subject. Leading up to poems 13, 21 and 29, for example, he is weeping at the extent of his misfortune; in poem 26, he feels himself to be 'alone and single' (فريدا وحيدا) and in poem 30 he is 'in the greatest possible agony' (في أشد ما يكون من التنكيل). The poems are not only a means of displaying Sayf's moral resilience, but can also be seen to be a means of achieving it. This is particularly clear, as has been noted above, in the words leading up to poem 26: 'he began to seek solace through reciting poetry'. Poetry provides comfort and a means of controlling (as well as expressing) emotion.

As noted in C (i) (a) above, the importance of Sayf's using verse to express his prayer, in poem 29, is reinforced by the introductory phrase وعاد إلى طبع العرب وأنشد يقول. The poem contains both the elements common to the other poems introduced by this phrase: there is both a reference to fate in the opening hemistich (الأيام) and a direct prayer to God in the final two lines.

The one soliloquy on a similar theme, which is not spoken by Sayf, is poem 16: Shāmah's lament as she waits to be taken off to be an unwilling bride to 'Abd

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<sup>427</sup> ibid p.88

<sup>428</sup> ibid p.101

Nār.<sup>429</sup> It contains no reference to God, which is consistent with Shāmah's upbringing as the daughter of 'Afraḥ, who is described as a worshipper of Saturn.<sup>430</sup>

The three remaining soliloquies comprise two short pieces of verse, poems 19 and 20 (each of 2 lines only), on the subject of love, spoken by Sayf and Shāmah respectively, and Qamrīyah's expression of joy after abandoning Sayf as a baby in poem 10.

(e) pre- and post-fight

There are only three poems which fall into the category of pre-fight *fakhr*, which is common in the other *siyar* but rare in *Sīrat Sayf*. They are poems 22 and 28<sup>431</sup> spoken by Sayf and poem 36<sup>432</sup> spoken by Sa'dūn. And there are no examples in *Sīrat Sayf* of the poetic jousting found in the other *siyar*, where, before combat, opponents exchange verse using identical rhymes and metres in a deliberate prefiguring of the exchange of blows to come. The poems in *Sīrat Sayf* are also different from those in the other *siyar* in form and content. Both of Sayf's poems adopt a similar structure: the first half fills in the background to the occasion for the fight, the central line or lines carry the main message and the second half contains *fakhr* which ends in Sayf introducing himself to his opponent(s). This differs from what has been found in the other *siyar*, where the normal pattern is for a pre-fight poem to start with the introduction, before proceeding to *fakhr* and threats of the annihilation which the opponent is about to suffer, and where background information on the reason for the combat is notably lacking.

Thus, in poem 22, where Sayf is preparing to fight Sa'dūn, he starts in lines 1-4 by explaining how he rescued Shāmah and sought her hand in marriage. In the central lines 5 and 6, he sums it all up:

وقال إذا ما رمت ياذا فتانتنا بهامة سعدون اعت ياذا بسرعة

<sup>429</sup> ibid p.44

<sup>430</sup> ibid p.29

<sup>431</sup> ibid pp.56 and 85

<sup>432</sup> ibid p.116

فقلت له كل الذي تطلبونه سأحضره في الحال من غير مهلة  
 he said if you want this girl of ours  
 bring Sa'dūn's head with all speed  
 so I said to him everyone whom you seek  
 I will bring to you without delay.

In lines 7-10 he warns Sa'dūn of his prowess: ‘..nothing will prevent me from achieving my aim’, and in the last line he introduces himself as ‘..Waḥsh al-Falā..brother of al-Falā ...’

Poem 28, where Sayf is yelling defiance at Qamrūn's men, adopts a similar structure, although with less narrative content. In lines 1-5, Sayf describes his current predicament: ‘alone encompassed around with my enemies’. In the central lines 6-9, he expresses his defiance, including the central line:

أنا سيف بن ذي يزن عروس الحرب اشبعكم قتالا  
 I am Sayf bin Dhī Yazan  
 the bridegroom of war I shall let you have your fill of the fray.<sup>433</sup>

Lines 10-13 contain *fakhr*, where Sayf warns his opponents that he will make their flesh ‘a banquet for wild beasts’, and in the final line he introduces himself again: ‘I am Sayf bin Dhī Yazan the Yemeni’.

These two poems also reflect Sayf's spiritual development, as noted in his soliloquies in (d) above. In poem 22 he asks ‘my God’ (إلهي) to strike Saqardyūn with disaster, but in poem 28, which occurs after his conversion to Islam by Sheikh Jayyād, he starts his central message in line 6 with the words: ‘I alone with God's help...’ (بعون الله وحدي).

Sa'dūn's pre-fight verse, in poem 36, where he is leading his men against ‘Afrāḥ's army, adopts a structure similar to Sayf's. Lines 1-4 describe the current situation, where ‘spears are raised and the earth is made to tremble’; the central lines 5 and 6

<sup>433</sup> translation: Jayyusi (1996) p.56

contain a message of defiance, warning his opponents to ‘fear death from the sword of Sa‘dūn’; and lines 7-10 contain *fakhr*, where Sa‘dūn invites his foes to ‘come to me and taste my sword’. However, the poem does not end with a formula of introduction and it contains no reference to ‘a god’ or to ‘God’; these differences may reflect the fact that, unlike Sayf, Sa‘dūn is not the main hero of the *sīrah*.

(f) longer narrative/prophetic poems

In addition to poem 6, examined in D above, there are four other poems which are of exceptional length and which all, like poem 6, are narrative or prophetic in content: poems 8, 37, 41 and 43. They merit individual examination:

poem 8:<sup>434</sup> this poem, which is 26 lines long and in a *mutaqārib* metre, is included with Bahr Qafqān’s letter to Dhū Yazan warning him of Sayf Ar‘ad’s plot to send a slave-girl to seduce and then poison him. The text of the letter has not been quoted but it has been summarised, including the fact that Bahr Qafqān has introduced himself as a Believer like Dhū Yazan. The poem is presented as if it was itself the letter, beginning with a greeting to Dhū Yazan: ‘greetings to the Himyarī King’.

The key message of the letter and poem must be the warning, but this is delayed until near the end of the poem, in lines 19-22. The core of the poem is the prophecy of Muhammad’s coming to Medīnah: ‘a prophet who will emigrate from Mecca’ (نبي يهاجر من مكة) and Bahr Qafqān’s expression of his own faith: ‘I acknowledge the oneness of my Lord’ (أقر (بتوحيد ربي), which fill lines 11-15 at the centre of the poem. The bulk of the poem consists of *madīh* of Dhū Yazan:

ملك مطيع لقوله الأله      وما هو في الحكم بالمفتري  
a king who obeys God’s word  
and does not rule with lies.

<sup>434</sup> *Sīrat Sayf* p.20

The poem contains one significant gnomic comment, highlighted by its position in line 24, sandwiched between the warning of Sayf Ar‘ad’s plot and the concluding invocation of God in lines 25-26: ‘the wiles of women are of irresistible force ( فكيد النساء قاهر لا ينبري ). This poem is only the third poem in the *sīrah*, other than the Narrator’s descriptive quotations, and this gnomic warning confirms that it is playing the same role as poems 2 and 6 in laying the groundwork for the themes which will run through the story to come.

The fact that the poem is written suggests that it may belong to the same category as poem 6, which, as noted above, was ordered to be preserved inscribed in gold. The poem’s being in writing is due to the requirements of the plot, in that Bahr Qafqān is sending a secret warning to Dhū Yazan and has to do so via a messenger. It is arguable, however, that the fact of its being in writing may have made it suitable for the inclusion of the prophetic element in the poem, which goes far beyond the basic essentials of the warning. On the other hand, there is no suggestion that the poem is going to be preserved like poem 6. Indeed, although the text does not specifically cover the point, it appears likely that the letter was never seen by its intended recipient, Dhū Yazan. It is received and read by his minister, Yathrib, but when he goes to warn his master he finds that he has already fallen hopelessly in love with Qamrīyah, who had arrived at Hamra’ before the letter. Yathrib warns the king appropriately, if too late, but there is no mention of the letter being read by Dhū Yazan.

There is one notable feature of the poem’s style: that is the frequency with which statements are expressed in the negative rather than the positive and placed in a stressed position at the end of lines, as in لم يكفر in line 4, لم ينكر in line 9, لم ينكر again in line 13, لم أخبر in line 14, لم أكفر in line 15 and لا ينبري in line 24. This may be part of the Narrator’s depiction of Yathrib’s character as an elderly cautious adviser.

poem 37<sup>435</sup>: in this poem, which is 86 lines long and in a *tawīl* metre, Sayf recounts his adventures to Sa‘dūn and his companions after returning with the Book of the Nile in time to save Sa‘dūn from defeat by ‘Afrāh and Munāṭih. In the first line Sayf calls the poem *qaṣīdatī*, and the poem’s length would justify this title, but the structure bears no relation to that of a classical qaṣidah other than its beginning with a request to his friends to listen to his story, which evokes the opening of Umru ‘l-Qays’s *mu‘allaqah*, and the fact that journeys form a major part of the story which follows.

The subject of the poem is stated in the first line: his quest for his wife’s dowry, and it includes events already known to his listeners. He relates the events chronologically from his initial quest for Sa‘dūn’s head to his obtaining the Book of the Nile and the death of Sheikh Jayyād, although there are passages which it is hard to fit into their context and may have been misplaced in the manuscript (for example, lines 19-22). The narrative is driven along by the verbs beginning most hemistiches, often accompanied by the particles *قد* or *لقد* or by the conjunction *لما*. That is the pattern, for example, in 33 of the first 40 hemistiches.

The poem does not include any prophetic passages, such as were found in poem 6, but the theme of religion is repeated at intervals throughout the poem, as in the central line 44:

فناديت ربي خالق الأرض والسما      لتعجيل إنقاذي وتفريج كربتي  
I called to my Lord the creator of earth and heaven  
to rescue me speedily and relieve my distress.

The poem ends with an invocation of God, in lines 83-86, coupled with a reference to Noah’s curse, which is one of the elements binding the action of the *sīrah*.

<sup>435</sup> *ibid* p.119

The importance of the poem, and of the central themes, is indicated by the words preceding and following it. When Sayf prepares to answer Afrāḥ's request to tell the story of his adventures, he says: 'I will tell you what happened to me in verse and poetry'. He means: only poetry is worthy of the task. And when he has finished his recital, the audience insists on his repeating the whole poem again 'for we must make this story a model for us'. As was the case with poem 6 (and will be noted below with reference to poem 43), the importance of the poem is marked by the need to preserve it (in oral memory if not in writing).

The poem is interesting as an example of pure narrative or 'epic' poetry, which is a rare genre in classical Arabic poetry<sup>436</sup>. This aspect will be considered further below.

poem 41<sup>437</sup>: in this poem, which is 66 lines long and in a *tawīl* metre, Sayf recounts the story of his life to his newly-found mother, Qamrīyah. It is similar to poem 37 in being purely narrative in nature. It follows a conversation where Sayf has asked his mother how she could have abandoned him as a baby and she has blamed 'madness'.<sup>438</sup> The poem tells the story chronologically, but with more detail about his upbringing than about his subsequent adventures. This is consistent with the drama of the meeting between mother and son, where there is uncertainty about how Sayf is going to react to Qamrīyah's overture. Things look bad for her when, in the first half of the poem, he stresses the difference between her abandonment of him and the help he received from 'Afrāḥ through the intervention of the Merciful One, and the tension is maintained until the last 3 lines of the poem. But in the end, perhaps surprisingly in the context of the poem, he tells his mother:

فطبيبي وقرى وافرحي يا أميمتي      سأحمي حماك بالرماح الكواعب

<sup>436</sup> Nicholson (1930) p.325

<sup>437</sup> *Sīrat Sayf* p.133

<sup>438</sup> *ibid* p.133

be glad, relax and be happy O my mother  
I will protect your sanctuary with well-formed spears.

It is noteworthy that there is no mention of this poem being repeated or preserved, despite its similarity in content to poem 37. It is possible that this similarity makes such treatment unnecessary. A more likely reason is that its audience is Qamrīyah, whose actions and deceitfulness make her unable, and unworthy, to understand the poem's importance. This is demonstrated by her reaction to it, in poem 42, where she utters false protests about her regrets for the past and her love for Sayf.

poem 43<sup>439</sup>: at 151 lines, this is by far the longest poem in the section and the second longest in the whole *sīrah*. Spoken by Yathrib, and in a *tawīl* metre, it occurs as part of a flash-back, following Qamrīyah's reconciliation with Sayf, in which the Narrator explains how Yathrib left Qamrīyah in disgust at her treatment of the baby Sayf and returned to live in the city of Yathrib. On arriving there, he cast the sands and saw the baby's glorious future. This poem is his reaction to that vision (which has been briefly summarised in prose).

It is narrative poetry of the grandest kind, which places the events of the *sīrah* in the context of mankind's history since the creation of the world and adds passages of prophecy and expressions of faith. The poem falls into five main sections (the dividing lines being approximate):

- (i) lines 1-18: the story of Adam and Eve;
- (ii) lines 19-91: the story of the Prophets, including extended accounts of Noah (lines 56-61) and of Abraham (lines 65-84), including his marriages to Sarah and to Hājar and his building of the *Ka'bah*, it also includes a look into the future and the coming of Muhammad (line 21) and a statement of Yathrib's own belief (lines 44-51);

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<sup>439</sup> *ibid* p.137

- (iii) lines 92-135: the events of the *sīrah* are retold, including a prophecy of how Muhammad will come to the city of Yathrib (Medinah) and read the letter which Yathrib has left for him (lines 99-101) and an account of Qamriyah's misdeeds (lines 125-135);
- (iv) lines 136-142: a prophecy of what Sayf will achieve, including his making the Nile flow and building Egypt (line 140); and
- (v) lines 143-151: praise of God and the role of his Prophet.

The poem's coherence is assured by the flow of the chronological narrative as well as by the continual theme of religious faith. It is also reinforced by the repetition of certain end rhyme-words throughout the poem: for example, ضرر (harm, loss) occurs ten times and بشر (man, mankind) eight times. The repetition may be due primarily to the difficulty of finding sufficient different rhyme-words for a poem of this length, but the repetition is none the less effective.

Just as the importance of poem 6 was stressed by the decision to preserve it in gold script, so the importance of poem 43 and its themes is highlighted by an order to preserve it (and in an even more special way), as recounted by the Narrator: 'then the minister wrote that qaṣīdah on a piece of skin and placed it in a stone box and laid it on the gate of the city and on a marble slab above the box he wrote "this box contains the history of the building of the city, without falsehood, and God's curse on anyone who opens it except the one who bears the sign and the mark on the Day of Judgement"',<sup>440</sup>. This statement makes the connection between history and preservation very clear - the poem records facts of great importance to the Arab nation and that is why it needs to be preserved - as well as why poetry has been used to record the facts.

The fact of preservation also points to the link between the prophetic

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<sup>440</sup> *ibid* p.142

poems and the *sīrah*'s embodiment of the 'foundation myth' of the founding of Egypt. There are clear parallels between the preservation of poem 43, for example, and the way in which the Book of the Nile, which is at the heart of the 'foundation myth' is preserved: 'this book was placed in a box of black ebony covered with layers of red gold and the box was placed in a chest of teak covered with layers of silver'.<sup>441</sup>

The combination of poetry and prophecy in Yathrib's long poems, 6 and 43, resonates interestingly with the traditional Islamic view of poets and prophets and their incompatibility. In his study of the Qur'ānic view of poetry and prophecy<sup>442</sup>, Michael Zwettler has pointed to the pre-Islamic Arabs' awareness of '...a class of individuals who would at times be subject to the influence of some supernatural or paranormal entity ..[and who]...would receive through the agency of that entity communications and perceptions inaccessible to ordinary folk and would relay these communications and perceptions to others in a verbal form that differed markedly from conventional everyday speech.' He describes the most prominent representatives of that class as being '...the shamanistic soothsayers or seers, known as *kuhhān*...and the poets, whose very name in Arabic - *shu'arā*...- seems to have signified those adept at a special mode of knowing, endowed with a special kind of knowledge'. The source of this knowledge was believed to be jinn or *shayātīn*.<sup>443</sup> This explains the importance of Muhammad's distancing his own, and other Prophets', knowledge and communications from those of both soothsayers and poets.

It is significant that Yathrib, despite his use of geomancy, is never described as a *kāhin*: the Narrator's description of Yathrib's abilities, when he first introduces him, stresses the extent of his reading, notably 'the old books and the mighty prophecies...the Torah and the Gospel..<sup>444</sup>. On the other hand, in line 108 of poem 43 he describes Sayf

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<sup>441</sup> ibid p.80

<sup>442</sup> Zwettler (1990)

<sup>443</sup> ibid p.76

Ar‘ad’s advisers (who devised the plot to kill Dhū Yazan) as *kuhhān*. The presentation of Yathrib as a prophet (with a small case ‘p’) is clearly designed to add weight to the themes which he sets out in his poems and which, as noted above, underlie the whole *sīrah*. It is also underlining the importance of poetry as the chosen means of expression.

A survey of the longer poems would not be complete without a look at the poem of 213 lines which comes at the very end of the *sīrah* (the poem is effectively the conclusion of the *sīrah*, since it is followed only by ten lines recording Miṣr’s accession to power and Sayf’s eventual death and burial). It is spoken by Sayf after he has handed power over to his son, Miṣr, and has announced his intention to retire to the mountain to devote the rest of his life to the worship of God. He thinks back over his life ‘from the moment when his mother abandoned him until now’ and puts his thoughts into what is described as a ‘*qaṣīdah*’. The bulk of the poem consists of a rather jumbled and confusing, and occasionally incomprehensible, account of selected events in his life as told in the *sīrah*. It lacks a prophetic element and it is probably mainly of this poem that Rudi Paret was thinking, when he wrote of *Sīrat Sayf*: ‘Ferner finden wir in Gedichten in teilweise recht langatmiger Weise Selbsterlebtes besungen’<sup>445</sup> (also we find in the poems praise, sometimes rather longwinded, of the poet’s own achievements). It does, however, provide a fitting end to the *sīrah* in its final lines, where he dedicates his poem, and by inference his life, to all those who have helped him and, finally, to God.

The existence of extended narrative poems in *Sīrat Sayf* is an interesting feature, since narrative poetry is generally regarded as lacking from classical Arabic poetry. One reason advanced for this is the lack of objectivity in classical poetry, where everything is seen only from the poet’s subjective viewpoint.<sup>446</sup> It is tempting to see this poetry in the *sīrah* as filling a gap, and perhaps laying the groundwork for modern pioneers of narrative poetry such as Khafīl Muṭrān. However the narrative poetry of the *sīrah* is very different from Muṭrān’s use of fictional narrative and it remains essentially subjective. In discussing Muṭrān’s poetry, M.M.Badawi

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<sup>444</sup> *Sīrat Sayf* p.4

<sup>445</sup> Paret (1924) p.2

<sup>446</sup> Saade (1985) p.34

differentiates it from the narrative elements in classical Arabic poetry: ‘..the narrative element in traditional Arabic poetry, in which poets described fighting episodes and heroic deeds, was in fact only a part of the traditional lyrical form. It remained subjective or related to the poet’s self, since the poet’s design behind the narrative was either to illustrate his own achievements or the achievements of his tribe or of his patron.’ The same criticism may be levelled at the narrative poems in the *sīrah*, with the difference that the design behind the narrative is primarily to glorify the God of Islam. It is the poems which combine narrative and prophecy (such as poems 6, 8 and 43), which add a special element to the *sīrah*. This element may fairly be called ‘epic’, for the poetry places the events and characters in a context which embraces the whole of history and mankind. They share this quality with ‘the great epic’ ( الملحمة الكبرى ) in *Zīr Sālim*.

## G. Conclusion

The poetry in *Sīrat Sayf* is similar in form to poetry found in the other *siyar*. It also shares some common elements in its role and content: it is not used as a medium for information which is not available in prose, but it is carrying out a different function from the prose. However, the nature of that function in *Sīrat Sayf* is significantly different from the other *siyar*.

The difference from *Zīr Sālim* and *Banī Hilāl* is very obvious, since poetry in *Sīrat Sayf* is not used as a primary medium for dialogue. But the role of the poetry also differs greatly from that found in *Dhāt al-Himmah*, ‘*Antarah* and ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān*. In particular, it is only very rarely used for the expression of strong emotion. Rather, poetry is used as a means of controlling emotion and stress and of finding the courage to confront the blows of fate. This often involves an appeal to God; a focus on spiritual matters of faith and fate is a common element in most of the poems.

This focus is consistent with the major themes of the *sīrah*: the foundation of Egypt and the rule of Islam. These themes find their main expression in the long

narrative and prophetic poems which are such a special feature of *Sīrat Sayf* and whose sweep and ambition match the grandeur of the themes. In these poems, poetry is given its traditional role in Arabic life of recording the key events. The importance of the role is shown by the physical preservation of the main poems as well as by the importance of their themes.

## Chapter 8

### *Qiṣṣat Firūz Shāh*

## A. Introduction

*Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* is an Arabic version of the *sīrah* whose Persian equivalent is known as the *Fīrūz Shāhnāmāh* of Bīghamī<sup>447</sup>. The *sīrah* is believed to be Persian in origin<sup>448</sup>, although there is some doubt as to which of the available printed editions of the Arabic and Persian texts is based on an older manuscript<sup>449</sup>. There are enormous differences between the versions, both in the events described and in the cast of characters, but they share certain features, which include the following:

- the hero is Persian and the *sīrah* recounts victorious Persian campaigns against Yemen, Egypt and other Arab countries;
- the underlying plot running through the whole *sīrah* is the love affair between Fīrūz Shāh, son of the king of Persia, and ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt, daughter of the King of Yemen; and
- a substantial amount of verse is interspersed amongst the prose.

They share also a lack of scholarly attention.<sup>450</sup> The only work devoted to the Persian version is William Hanaway’s *Love and War, Adventures from the Fīrūz Shāh Nāma of Sheikh Bīghamī*, a partial translation and introduction.<sup>451</sup> The work is also summarized and discussed in William Hanaway’s PhD dissertation: *Persian Popular Romances before the Safavid Period*.<sup>452</sup> The Arabic version is included in Malcolm Lyons’ work on *The Arabian Epic*<sup>453</sup>, and receives passing mention in works such as Peter Heath’s *The Thirsty Sword*<sup>454</sup>, but the only works wholly devoted to it are two articles by Muhammad Rajab Najjār and Kenneth Grant respectively. Najjār’s essay is primarily concerned with its relationship to

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<sup>447</sup> Sheikh Bīghamī is the putative 15<sup>th</sup> century narrator or story-teller associated with the *sīrah* (see Hanaway (1974) p.20).

<sup>448</sup> Heath (1996) p.xvi

<sup>449</sup> Grant (2003) p.524

<sup>450</sup> as evidenced by the small bibliographies in the entries in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* and the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*

<sup>451</sup> Hanaway (1974)

<sup>452</sup> Hanaway (1970)

<sup>453</sup> Lyons (1995)

<sup>454</sup> Heath (1996)

Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmah*<sup>455</sup>, and Grant's with the differences between the Arabic and Persian versions of the *sīrah*.<sup>456</sup> It is noteworthy that *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* is the only work listed under 'sira literature' in the Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature<sup>457</sup> which does not have its own separate entry in the Encyclopaedia.

It will be seen that the role and nature of the poetry in *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* are significantly different from those of the poetry found in the *siyar* previously examined.

NB: All references to the text of *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* are to the edition published in two volumes by al-Maktabah al-Thaqāfiyah lil-Nashr wa-'l-Tibā'ah in Beirut in 2005 (each containing two of the four volumes of the original printed edition, which will be referred to as 'books').

Poems are numbered as shown in Appendix 15.

## B. Section chosen for analysis

### (i) Volume and distribution of verse

*Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* consists of 1,642 printed pages and contains 171 pieces of verse.

The distribution of the verse between the four books of *Fīrūz Shāh* is as follows:

<i>book</i>	<i>no. of pages</i>	<i>no. of poems</i>	<i>lines of verse</i>	<i>verse as % of whole</i>
1	399	57	394	3.9%
2	394	44	389	3.9%
3	408	44	595	5.8%
4	441	26	251	2.3%
Total	1,642	171	1,629	4.0%

<sup>455</sup> Najjār (1985)

<sup>456</sup> Grant (2003)

<sup>457</sup> Meisami and Starkey (1998)

The poems range in length from 1 to 37 lines, with an average length of 9.5 lines.

The following table shows the breakdown of the lengths of all the lines:

<u>number of lines</u>	<u>number of poems</u>	<u>% of total</u>
1 - 2	18	10%
3 - 5	31	18%
6 - 10	54	32%
11 - 20	49	29%
20+	19	11%

The average length of the poems is 9.5 lines and the verse is approximately 4.0% of the *sīrah* (measured in lines).

The verse in *Fīrūz Shāh* is very unevenly distributed throughout the *sīrah*. Verse passages tend to occur in groups, which may be separated by long passages containing no verse at all. There are, for example, several instances where 5 pages will contain as many pieces of verse (e.g. vol 1: pp.25-27, 31-35; vol.2: 55-58, 307-311) but there are also passages of 50 or more pages totally devoid of poetry (e.g. vol 3: pp.24-74, 185-240). This reflects the concentration of the verse on the theme of 'love', rather than war, which runs through the whole of the *sīrah* (which will be discussed in section D below).

The section chosen for detailed examination is pages 5-408, which is the whole of the first of the *sīrah*'s 4 books. It contains 57 pieces of verse, amounting to 394 lines. The proportion of verse to the total text is 3.9%, which is similar to the *sīrah*'s overall proportion of 4.0%. Half of the poems are of 5 lines or less and the longest poems are two of 20 lines each (poems 53 and 56)<sup>458</sup>.

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<sup>458</sup> *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh*, pp.392 and 395

(ii) **Synopsis of section's plot**

The plot, which is full of incident and characters, is outlined in detail in Appendix 15: 'Placement of Poems in *Qissat Fīrūz Shāh* (book 1)'. The following is a very brief summary.

Fīrūz Shāh is born to the monotheist King of Persia, Dārāb, on the same day as Farkhūzād, the son of the King's champion, Fīlzūr, who becomes his constant companion and helper. He grows up to be a paragon of strength and chivalry and falls in love with a girl whom he sees in a dream. She is 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt, the daughter of Surūr, King of Yemen (a fire-worshipper), and she in turn falls in love with Fīrūz Shāh's portrait.

Fīrūz travels to Yemen, meets 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt and makes love to her. After winning Surūr's favour (although he is unaware of Fīrūz's identity or intentions), through his prowess in fighting Yemen's enemies, he is accused of killing Surūr's guards (actually killed by 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt to protect her reputation) and is sentenced to die. Surūr spares his life after being told of his true identity, since he is worried about possible Persian reprisals, but hands him over to Hūrank, the king of a black nation, whose son had been killed by Fīrūz in battle. Fīrūz is released by a gaoler, whom he converts to monotheism, and kills Hūrank but is captured by an evil sorceress, Ṣafrā, who paralyses him. He is finally rescued by Bīhrūz, one of his Persian companions, and joins up with the Persian army, which Dārāb has sent to find him and to help him against the Yemenis. A series of single combats and battles takes place between the Persian and Yemeni armies, including Fīrūz's victory against the Yemeni champion, Ṭūmār, before Surūr pretends to agree a truce. Under this, Fīrūz and 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt will marry after a short delay, but meanwhile Surūr treacherously sends for help to Egypt.

C. Example: poem 53<sup>459</sup>

(i) Introduction

Poem 53 is a soliloquy spoken by Fīrūz Shāh. He has just concluded a truce with King Surūr, after leading the Persian army in a successful campaign against the Yemenis, but his thoughts are entirely focused on his absent beloved, ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt (Surūr’s daughter). The Narrator has commented that the only comforts Fīrūz can find against the agonies of his separation are hunting and poetry<sup>460</sup>. He is alone when he recites this poem about love and the agony it can cause.

It is open to question whether the poem is being presented as Fīrūz’s own creation or as a quotation, since the words leading up to the poem are unclear: ‘verse came to his mind and he recited...’. However, it is clear that the verse springs from the force of his emotion and his wish to remember his beloved: ‘he was assailed by the pangs of love and moved by feelings of passion and convulsed by longing so he sat to remember (يتذكر) his beloved...’. It will be seen that, in these respects, the poem is similar to many other poems in the *sīrah*.

The poem has been chosen as a text for analysis because, as a soliloquy on the subject of love, it is typical of the poetry in the *sīrah*. It is also typical in the richness of its love imagery and its rhetorical embellishments, and especially in its extensive use of Ṣūfī themes and imagery. The reference to *dhikr*, noted above in the introduction to the poem, is an important pointer to the existence of these Ṣūfī elements.

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<sup>459</sup> ibid p.392

<sup>460</sup> ibid p.391

## (ii) Text

1	جلا وجهها الديجور لما تجلت	لتهدي نفوس في الهوى قد أضلت
2	لوحت وقد أرخت ذوائب شعرها	فخلت شعاع الشمس تحت الدجنة
3	وسلت جفونا كالسيوف ولم أر	لعمري جفونا كالقواضب سلت
4	مهاة تثنت اذ تفرد حسنها	أثنت عليها الورق لما تثنت
5	تبدت وقد هز الشباب قوامها	ألم تر ان الشمس بالغصن حلت
6	وماست بعطفي بانه قد علاما	هلال جبين لاح في ليل طرة
7	ايا سامح الله العيون وان تكن	احدت ظبي تلك اللحاظ لقتلي
8	ولا واخذ الاصداع فيما تحملت	عقاربها بالفتك من لسع مهجتي
9	خليلي هل عاينتما او سمعتما	محبا براه الشوق قبل المحبة
10	مليكة حسن لذ في شرعة الهوى	خضوعي لديها وانكساري وذلتي
11	وسقمي وتسهيدي وشوقي وأدمعي	ووجدي وتعذيبي ونوحي وانتي
12	ولم يستطع قلبي امتناعا عن الهوى	ولم تستطع روحي سبيلا لسلوتي
13	سأصبر حتى تنقضي مدة الجفا	وما الصبر الا من حلاي وحليتي
14	فما كل من نادى أجيب نداءه	ولا كل من نودي اجاب بسرعه
15	أيا راكبا تطوي عزائمه الفلا	بنجب اشتياق لم تقدر بأدمة
16	رويدا بطرف ناظر كل مهجة	ورفقا بقلب قابل كل صورة

فطورا أرى في كل مسرح ومربع	وطورا أرى في كل دوح وروضة	17
وطورا أرى في كل درس ومعبد	وطورا أرى في كل دير وبيعة	18
أدين بدين الحب في كل موضع	وأصبو لذات الحسن في كل جهة	19
وألثم ما بين اللثام وثغرها	وتم كؤس راحها فيه راحتي	20

This can be translated as:

Her face lit up the darkness when it appeared  
so that souls before misguided are now guided in love

she beckoned and loosened the locks of her hair  
and I imagined the rays of the sun shone out of the gloom

she drew eye-lids like swords and I have never seen  
by my life eye-lids drawn like sabres

(she is) a gazelle who walks with a swinging gait  
so the turtle-doves praised her when she walked

5 she appeared and her figure excited the youths  
did you not see that the sun has alighted upon a branch

she moved with the swaying [hips] of a willow-tree and above them  
was a crescent-shaped forehead which shone in the night of a forelock

O may God be kind to the eyes even though she  
sharpened the blades of those glances to kill me

may he not (desert) the stinging forelocks with that which  
its scorpions hold of death in order to kill my innermost soul

my two friends have you seen or heard  
of a lover who was worn out by longing before love

10 (she is) a possessor of beauty pleasurable is to her in the law of love  
my submission to her my brokenness and my lowliness

my illness my sleeplessness my longing and my tears  
my passion my torment my lamentation and my groans

my heart has never been able to desist from love  
and my spirit has never been able to find a means of solace

I will be patient until the period of separation has ended  
and patience is but my finery and my adornment

Not everyone who calls out has his call responded to  
and not everyone who is called responds quickly

15 O rider whose resolutions are consumed by the desert  
on a noble (steed) of longing which is not led by reins

be gentle to the gaze of one who looks at every soul  
be kind to a heart that adopts every shape

sometimes I am seen in every pasture and encampment  
and sometimes I am seen in every tree and garden

sometimes I am seen in every school and temple  
and sometimes I am seen in every convent and church

I follow the religion of love in every locality  
and I long for the holder of beauty in every direction

20 and I kiss what is between the veil and her mouth  
in the perfection of the cups of her wine is my respite.

[ for ease of consultation, the Arabic  
text is shown also in Appendix 16 ]

### (iii) Analysis

The poem falls into two equal sections, lines 1-9 and 12-20, divided by two central lines, 10-11, which form a self-contained pair. The first section is focused on the beloved, describing her beauty and its effect, while the second section focuses on the poet and on the agonies and ecstasies of his love. The first section also falls into two parts: lines 1-6 describe the beloved's ('Ayn al-Ḥayāt's) beauty through a series of images, while lines 7-9 describe its effect on the observer/poet.

The 1st hemistich sets the model for what follows with its image of the beloved's face lighting up the darkness. The opening *جلا* (lit up) is echoed by *تجلت* (appeared) at the end of the hemistich, in a rhetorical flourish which combines elements of both *tajnīs* and *radd al-'ajz 'alā'l-ṣadr*. The antithesis of light and darkness in the 1st hemistich is matched by that of *لتهدي* (to guide) and *اضلت* (was misguided) which begin and end the 2nd hemistich. This hemistich is the first of many pointers to the religious and Sufi themes of the poem, particularly in the use of the verbs *هدى* and *أضل* which are used frequently in the Qur'ān to mean to guide (someone) on to, or away from, the right path.

It is also the first of several clear echoes of, or drawings from, the poetry of Ibn al-Fāriḍ. The line recalls Ibn al-Fāriḍ's line:

وإن ضللت بليل من ذوائبه أهدى لعيني الهدى صبح من البلج<sup>461</sup>

and if I wandered astray in the black night of his tresses

yet would the dawn shining in his brows bestow guidance upon my sight.<sup>462</sup>

Line 2 continues the image of light and darkness: when the beloved lets loose her locks, her face becomes the sun shining in the darkness of her hair - the closing word *الدجنة* (darkness) being in antithesis to the line's opening *ولاحت* (shone).

The image changes in line 3, where her eyelids are compared to swords. The line is typical of the poem in its rhetorical embellishment: 'she drew eyelids like swords' ( *سلت جفونا كالسيوف* ), at the start of the 1st hemistich, is matched by 'eyelids like drawn sabres' ( *جفونا كالتواضب سلت* ) at the end of the 2nd, thus providing an especially complex combination of *radd al-'ajz 'alā 'l-ṣadr* and *tajnīs* (between the two meanings of *jufūn*: 'eyelids' and 'scabbards'). The two parallel phrases are neatly divided by the words forming the *enjambement* between the two hemistiches, where the poet fits himself into the image: 'I have never seen by my life.....' ( *ولم ار لعمرى* ).

This line echoes another line by Ibn al-Fāriḍ:

سيفا تسل على الفؤاد جفونه وأرى الفتور له بها شحاذا<sup>463</sup>

a sword his eyelids draw against my heart

and I see the very languor thereof doth whet its blade.<sup>464</sup>

After the physical description of the first three lines, line 4 sums up the beloved's exceptional beauty: 'her beauty is unparalleled' ( *تفرد حسنها* ) and 'turtle-doves praised her when she walked' ( *أثنت عليها الورق لكا تثنت* ). The switch from the physical description of the first three lines is marked by the grammatical change from starting each line with a verb, as in lines 1-3, to starting line 4 with a noun, *مهاة* (a gazelle), which thus receives added emphasis. Again the line's Sufi associations are

<sup>461</sup> Ibn al-Fāriḍ (2001) p.252

<sup>462</sup> trans. Arberry (1956) p.28

<sup>463</sup> Ibn al-Fāriḍ (2001) p.78

<sup>464</sup> trans. Arberry (1956) p.46

clear: both beauty and the gazelle are identified with God. As Arberry commented: 'The gazelle, favourite simile of the early Arab poets for the slender, shy young beloved, with the Ṣūfīs becomes a symbol of the elusive Beauty of God...'.<sup>465</sup>

Line 4 is again rich in rhetorical embellishment through the triple *tajnīs* of تثنت (walked with a swinging gait ...praised....walked), occurring as the second word of the 1st hemistich and as the first and last words of the 2nd hemistich.

Lines 5 and 6 return to physical description, both opening with verbs تبدت...وماست (she appeared....she moved), and both including images of light and darkness: in line 5 the sun alights on a branch at the sight of her, and in line 6 her forehead is shining in the night of a forelock. The ألم تر (did you not see), at the start of the 2nd hemistich of line 5, echoes the ولم ار (I have not seen) at the end of the 1st hemistich of line 3.

The lines of physical description have all followed an identical pattern: an opening verb (جلا...لوحث...وسلت...تبدت...وماست) has introduced a physical description (her face, her hair, her eye-lids, her beauty, her figure, her movement), which is then followed by a complementary image in the 2nd hemistich (showing the way to lost souls, the rays of the sun, eyelids like drawn sabres, turtle-doves praising her, the sun alighting on a branch, the moon shining). The pattern changes in lines 7-9, where the focus switches from her beauty to its effect on the beholder. The switch is marked by a grammatical change: lines 7 and 8 open with exclamations (ايا سامح الله) and (ولا) and line 9 with a vocative interrogative (...خليلي هل عابنتما...). These changes also reflect the difference between line 7-8 and 9: lines 7 and 8 describe the effect of the beloved's beauty, through the images of 'killing glances' and 'scorpions' stings' ('scorpions' being used as metonymy for her hair), while line 9 sums up the poet's position as 'a lover worn out by longing before love' (محباً يراه الشوق قبل المحبة).

The emaciated lover is a common figure also in Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetry<sup>466</sup> (as in all Ṣūfī poetry), and this line recalls, or borrows, a phrase from one of his lines:

<sup>465</sup> Arberry (1956) p.32

467 قل تركت الصب فيكم شديها ما له مما براه الشوق في

say, 'I left him that is ardent for you a wraith:

no shadow remaineth to him, so yearning hath chiselled him.<sup>468</sup>

Lines 10 and 11 are the central lines of the poem. They form a link between the two main sections and they contain a summary of the poem's main theme. The 1st hemistich of line 10 encapsulates the first section in its reference to the 'possessor of beauty' who enjoys his abasement, with the opening noun *مليكة* (possessor) receiving emphasis in the same way as the opening *مهارة* in line 3, while in the following three hemistiches the poet lists the consequences of love in a rising crescendo starting with 'my submission to her' (*خضوعي لديها*) and ending with 'my passion my torment my lamentation and my groans' (*وجدي وتعذيبي ونوحى وانتي*).

Lines 12-14 form a semantic unit as the poet describes his predicament and how he will respond to it: in line 12 he admits that he cannot resist love, but in line 13 he is determined to bear separation with patience and in line 14 he confirms his readiness to respond to the beloved's call. These lines are also similar in form, with the opening words of each 1st hemistich being echoed in the opening of the 2nd: *ولم يستطع قلبي... ولم تستطع روجي* (my heart has never been able to...my spirit has never been able to) in line 12; *ساو صير... ما الصبر الا* (I will be patient....patience is only..) in line 13; and *فما كل من نادى اجيب... ولا من كل نودي اجاب* (not everyone who calls out has his call answered....not everyone who is called responds...) in line 14. The affirmation of the virtue of patience in line 13 again strikes a Sufi note, reflecting what Martin Lings has described as the Sufi's perpetual 'state of spiritual expectancy, poised between longing and patience'.<sup>469</sup>

It can be seen that the structure of the second section of the poem is similar, although reversed, to that of the first section. As the first section was seen to fall into two parts: six lines describing the beloved's beauty followed by three lines

<sup>466</sup> Ibn al-Fārīd (2001) p.208, footnote 58

<sup>467</sup> *ibid* p.30

<sup>468</sup> trans. Arberry (1956) p.98

<sup>469</sup> Lings (1990) p.235

describing its effect, so the second section divides into three lines describing the poet's predicament (lines 12-14) followed by six lines giving the response to it (lines 15-20). The change of topic in line 15 is marked by the opening vocative *يا راكبا* (O rider), which plays the same role as the vocative seen to mark a change of theme in line 7 above.

In lines 15-16, the poet is comparing the position of a lover, obsessed with his love, to that of a rider who is wrapped round by the desert and riding a horse of longing which he cannot control for it 'is not led by reins'. It is not clear whether he is addressing himself as *يا راكبا*. That would be consistent with his change to the first person in line 17, but seems to be at conflict with his plea in line 16 to 'be gentle to the gaze of one who...' where the gazer is surely himself. The concluding *كل صورة* (every shape) in line 16 leads in to the next two lines where each hemistich starts with the words *وطورى ارى في كل ...* (sometimes I am seen in every ...) followed by a list of places where the lover/poet exists: a list which moves from the everyday 'every pasture and encampment' (*كل مسرح ومربع*) in line 17 to the more serious 'every convent and church' (*كل دير وبيعة*) which ends line 18.

These lines carry clear echoes of two celebrated poems by Ibn Al-'Arabī and Ibn al-Fārīd respectively. In the former's poem, the words 'my heart has become capable of every form' (*لقد صار قلبي قابلا كل صورة*)<sup>470</sup> lead to a succession of places in whose form the heart may be found: lines which Reynold Nicholson described as expressing 'the Sufi doctrine that all ways lead to the One God'.<sup>471</sup> In Ibn al-Fārīd's poem, the phrase *في كل عضو* (in my every limb) is followed by a succession of phrases with *في كل* followed by parts of the body, ending with the words: *كل قلب فيه* (*كل غرام*) (every heart inhabited by every human love), described by Stefan Sperl as '...a magnificent climax as the poet's condition becomes one of universal empathy with every human heart that ever loved'.<sup>472</sup>

Just as *كل صورة* at the end of line 16 triggered the list of shapes in the following two lines, so *كل دير وبيعة* (every monastery and church) at the end of line 18 leads in to

<sup>470</sup> Ibn al-'Arabī (1911) pp.19 and 67

<sup>471</sup> *ibid* p.vii

<sup>472</sup> Sperl (1996) p.73

the last two lines of the poem, where the theme of religion joins that of love, as expressed in the opening of line 19: 'I follow the religion of love' ( ادين بدين الحب ). This is a clear borrowing from Ibn al-‘Arabī’s poem, where the lines mentioned above are followed by the same words: ...أدين بدين الحب...<sup>473</sup> The line’s two hemistiches are perfectly parallel in structure: 1<sup>st</sup> person present tense followed by two nouns in an *idāfah* structure followed by a phrase consisting of *في كل* plus two nouns. The effect is to stress the contrast between the ادين بدين الحب of the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich and the اصبو لذات الحسن (I seek the delights of beauty) which starts the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich: the contrast between ideal and physical love. The thought is continued into line 20, where he describes his kiss as being ‘between the veil and her lips’ ( بين اللثام وثغرها ), using the *tajnīs* between الثم (I kiss) and اللثام (the veil) to add stress to the contrast.

The final hemistich is marked by a syntactical change from the first person verbs of the previous lines to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the opening وتم (and perfection). Like the poem, the cup of wine (كؤس راحها) is perfected, as is the comfort which it represented for him (فيه راحتي), the link being stressed by the *tajnīs* between راح (wine) and راحة (comfort). The reference to wine echoes the many occasions on which ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt has sought comfort in wine while expressing her love for the absent Fīrūz, although here the wine is used purely symbolically, as a symbol for love. There are also spiritual connotations in the reference to wine, through its use as a symbol in Ṣūfī poetry<sup>474</sup>, which links with the reference to the ‘religion of love’ in line 19. So the symbol of wine combines again the elements of physical and spiritual love.

The final line is linked to the opening line through the contrast between the trouble evoked by اضلت (gone astray), as the last word in line 1, and the reassurance of راحتي (my comfort) as the last word in line 20.

<sup>473</sup> Ibn al-‘Arabī (1911) p.19

<sup>474</sup> Harb (1990) pp.232-234

## D. Form and structure of the poetry

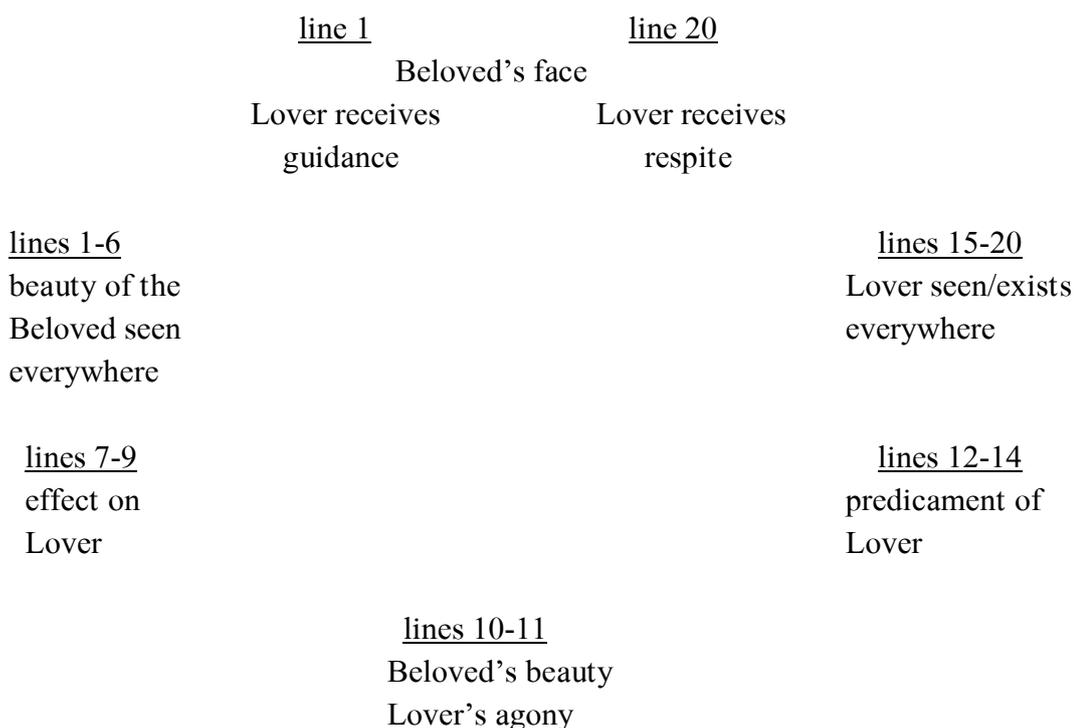
### (i) Form and structure of poem 53

The poem complies with classical conventions in consisting of 2-hemistich lines, using a monorhyme and a *tawīl* metre. The poem is rich in rhetorical embellishment and imagery. There is constant use of parallelism, syntactic and semantic, to reinforce the meaning of the lines and this is supplemented by frequent use of devices such as internal rhyming, antithesis, *tajnīs* and *radd al-‘ajz ‘alā ‘l-ṣadr*. In all these respects, the poem is typical of the bulk of the poetry in the *sīrah*.

The care, with which the poem has been structured, is shown by the features noted above:

- the division into two equal sections, each divided again into sections of 3 and 6 lines, the order being reversed in the second section;
- the existence of a central pair of lines which link the sections as well as summarising the poem's main themes; and
- the way in which the opening and closing lines are linked.

All these features point to a ring structure, which is shown graphically as follows:



It is noteworthy that the poem should boast such an effective structure, despite the fact that it includes so many echoes, or perhaps borrowings, from the poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Ibn al-‘Arabī. It serves to confirm the authorship of an individual poet of great ability. It has, however, not been possible to identify the poem as the work of any known poet (unlike two of the poems discussed in D (ii) (f) below).

(ii) **Formal characteristics of the poetry as a whole**

(a) line structure, rhyme and metre

Like poem 53, all the poems comply with classical convention in consisting of lines of two equal hemistiches and having a monorhyme. There are no examples of strophic forms. Similarly all the poems use one of the canonical classical metres.

(b) structure and style

There are two common features of the verse which are strikingly different from the *siyar* previously examined: the extensive use of imagery and of rhetorical devices.

The poetry abounds in imagery, which is generally used to describe either the pain or pleasure of love or the beloved. The opening lines of poem 17<sup>475</sup> are typical:

هيفاء كالغصن الرتيب اذا انثنت      تختال في ثوبي حيا ودلال  
تسبي القلوب بأسرها فجميعهم      في اسرها لكن بقيد جمال  
يا وجهها الحاوي لبهجة روضة      انواره انت العزيز الغالي  
اذ فيك كل عجيبة ما بين تفا      ح وورد يانع ولآلي

slender as a tender branch when it bends

she swaggers in the two garments of bashfulness and flirtatiousness

she takes all hearts prisoners and all of them

are her captives but in chains of beauty

<sup>475</sup> *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* p.68

O face whose blossoms comprise the splendor of a garden  
 you are the dearest and most cherished  
 in you is every marvel of apples  
 ripening flowers and pearls.

The use of rhetorical devices, especially *tajnīs*, *radd al-‘ajz ‘alā ‘l-ṣadr*, internal rhyming, antithesis and parallelism, is amply illustrated in poem 53 above.

In the extensive use of such imagery and rhetorical devices, the poetry is far closer to the classical poetry of the Abbasid period, and especially to Ṣūfī love poetry, than it is to the poetry found in the other *siyar*. This point will be discussed further in F below.

#### E.      **Introductory Formulas**

The way poems are introduced in the text is often different from what is found in the *siyar* previously examined. Poetry is sometimes recited without any explanation or introduction at all and, where there are words of explanation or introduction, they are often unclear as to whether or not the poem is presented as a quotation. One effect of this is to diminish the role of the Narrator, whose interventions are less clearly marked than in other *siyar*.

It may serve also to stress the paramount importance of the emotions being expressed, whatever their source. It is the strength of emotion which is usually stressed in the passages leading up to the poems, as seen in poem 53 above. Also frequently stressed is the fact that the speaker is thinking of, or remembering, the beloved, so that the poem becomes an act of remembrance. It is the word *dhikr*, or one of its derivatives, which recurs on these occasions (again, as in poem 53) and points to the Ṣūfī element of the poetry (to be discussed further in F below).

## F. Content and role of the poetry

### (i) Content and role of poem 53

There are a number of features of poem 53 which are typical of the content and role of the verse in *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* as a whole. They include the following:

- it is spoken by the *sīrah*'s hero, Fīrūz Shāh;
- as noted above, it is unclear whether it is being presented as a quotation or as an original creation by the speaker;
- it is a soliloquy;
- its subject-matter is love and its pain;
- its sentiments on love are entirely appropriate to the speaker and his situation, but they contain no express reference to any character or event in the plot; and
- the depiction of love and beauty is entirely consistent with a Ṣūfī view of life.

The poem was forced out of Fīrūz by the strength of his feelings and poetry can be seen as the essential way of expressing love. The power and effectiveness of poetry is also demonstrated by the fact that, after the poem, Khwājā al-Yān arrives with a message from 'Ayn al-Hayāt as though conjured up by Fīrūz's verse.

### (ii) Content and role of the poetry as a whole

#### (a) introduction

The narrative context of the poems is shown in Appendix 15: 'Placement of poems in *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* (book 1)'. Their content and role are significantly different from those of the other *siyar* in a number of respects, such as:

- the lack of difference between quotations and non-quotations; and
- their almost total concentration on the theme of love.

(b) quotations

There are 11 pieces of verse which are expressly stated to be quotations, of which 6 are spoken by the Narrator and 5 by different characters. Love, or the beloved, is the theme of every quotation and there is very little difference between the content and role of the quotations and those of the other poems. This is consistent with the fact that it is often difficult to tell whether a particular piece of verse is, or is not, being presented as a quotation.

The Narrator's interventions are all describing feelings or states of mind of the characters, arising from situations which have occurred in the narrative. For example, poem 1<sup>476</sup> describes the agony of Fīrūz's troubled, sleepless night after he has seen 'Ayn al-Hayāt for the first time in a dream:

وليل كأن الله قال له استطل فطال الى ان مد للحشر باعه  
 the night is as if God had told it to prolong itself  
 so that it stretched out to the Day of Resurrection.

In other cases, the Narrator uses quotations to describe Fīrūz's love for 'Ayn al-Hayāt (poems 22 and 32<sup>477</sup>), 'Ayn's and Fīrūz's pleasure and pain after their night of lovemaking and subsequent separation (poems 26 and 27<sup>478</sup>) and Sulūk's happiness on his wedding-night (poem 33<sup>479</sup>). What is remarkable is that, unlike what was found in the other *siyar*, none of the quotations in *Fīrūz Shāh* contains physical descriptions of places or people.

(c) fakhr poems

There are no poems equivalent to the exchanges of pre-fight *fakhr* found in other *siyar*, but there are four poems spoken by Fīrūz before, or in the middle of, battle:

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<sup>476</sup> ibid p.25

<sup>477</sup> ibid pp.88 and 163

<sup>478</sup> ibid pp.98 and 100

<sup>479</sup> ibid p.167

poems 18, 41, 47 and 48. They are different from almost all the other poems in the *sīrah*, in that each of them contains specific references to events or characters of the *sīrah*. All are addressed to the absent ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt, referring to her by name, and also contain other specific references.

Poem 48<sup>480</sup> can be considered as a typical example of the four poems, in containing specific references and in combining *fakhr* with thoughts of ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt. Fīrūz recites the poem as he joins in the battle between the Persians and the Yemeni following his victory over Ṭūmār in single combat. The poem is addressed to ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt, through an initial use of *tajnīs*: يا عين لا تنكري بعدي عن اليمن (O eye/’Ayn don’t be unaware of my distance from the Yemen), and mentions specific events and people, as in: أرديت طومار مقتولا (I have felled Ṭūmār dead).

The poem adopts a ring structure based round the four central lines. The reference in line 1 to Fīrūz’s ‘return’ (from captivity) is balanced by his statement in line 14 that ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt’s face shone gloriously to him ‘in good times and bad’. Lines 2 and 13 both refer to Fīrūz’s sword: فيسيفي and حسامي. Lines 3 and 12 both refer to the black warriors he has defeated: جيش ابيك (your father’s army) and الزنوج (the Abyssinians). Lines 4 and 11 both refer to the enemy being stampeded: وتتفر القوم and وقت الجموع. In lines 5 and 10, the enemy abandoning their country (وقد تخلت عن (الايوان) is contrasted with Fīrūz advancing to the attack (...لما قدمت). The central message of the poem is contained in the central four lines, 6-9, which relate Fīrūz’s key boast: ‘I have destroyed Ṭūmār ( أرديت طومار ), and ascribe his inspiration to the thought of ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt: ‘but for your brilliance...(ولا انكاؤك). The central message thus combines both the main elements of the poem: the *fakhr* and ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt, as reflected in the first and last lines of the poem.

These poems are distinguishable from almost all the other poems through their specific references to people and events (in this respect, as in their being poems of *fakhr*, they are closer to the poetry seen in *Zīr Sālīm* and *Banī Hilāl*). They can be distinguished formally also, since they are almost bare of imagery or rhetorical devices. There is, however, one feature of the *fakhr* poems which is common to all

<sup>480</sup> ibid p.348

the poetry in *Fīrūz Shāh*. That is the theme of love, which is present in all of the *fakhr* poems despite the dominance of martial elements.

(d) love poetry

All the rest of the poetry in *Fīrūz Shāh* can be included in this category. Even the descriptive poems are of people *qua* ‘lover’ or ‘beloved’: poems 6 and 7<sup>481</sup>, spoken by Shayāghūs to Fīrūz, are describing ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt in her garden in Sanā’, and in poem 50<sup>482</sup> Sharīfah entertains ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt, while she is drinking wine and thinking of Fīrūz, by describing ‘a handsome man drunk from the nectar of the lips’ (خوطله من رحيق الثغر اسكار).

It is a curious feature of the poetry, that only one poem is actually recited in the presence of its intended audience; that is poem 23<sup>483</sup>, which is recited by Fīrūz to ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt during their first meeting and after they have declared their love for each other. Otherwise they are all included in written messages (poems 8, 10, 12, 37 and 38)<sup>484</sup>, transmitted via third parties (poems 29, 54, 55, 56, 57)<sup>485</sup> or recited as soliloquies in the absence of the beloved. The latter are by far the largest category of poems: out of the 57 poems in the section, 27 fall into this category, and almost all are spoken by Fīrūz or ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt (12 and 13 poems respectively). Like poem 53 above, they are spoken by characters who are on their own and their purpose is the expression of feeling rather than communication. However, as was the case in poem 53, there is no doubt that these poems are addressed to the absent beloved. They are almost similar in theme and context to poem 53: they arise out of Fīrūz’s or ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt’s thoughts turning to the absent beloved, but they speak of love generally and the beloved is unnamed.

Typical is poem 14<sup>486</sup>, which Fīrūz recites when he is alone at night in the desert, on his way to Yemen: ‘he thought of ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt and his passion was stirred up and

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<sup>481</sup> *ibid* p.31

<sup>482</sup> *ibid* p.350

<sup>483</sup> *ibid* p.89

<sup>484</sup> *ibid* pp.34, 34, 36, 191 and 191

<sup>485</sup> *ibid* pp.133, 394, 394, 395 and 396

<sup>486</sup> *ibid* p.45

he was shaken by his longing, so that he wished he was a bird to fly to her. He began to assess the extent of his love and to think of what would happen when he reached her and how he would manage to achieve his aim. Then he was overcome by his feelings and recited saying....'. The 8 lines of verse which follow are an elegant argument in favour of love and against those who belittle it. The cynics are dismissed splendidly in line 3:

إذا أنت لم تعشق ولم تدر ما الهوى      فكن حجرا من يابس الصخر جلما  
 if you have never loved and don't know what love is  
 then be a stone of dry compacted rock.

As is typical with the poems in the *sīrah*, form reinforces content: the force of this line is emphasized by the repeated لم phrases in the 1st hemistich and the imperative starting the 2nd hemistich, as well as by the repetitions of love (تعشق and هوى) and of stone (صخر and حجر) in the respective hemistiches. After three lines of conceits around the subject of the lover's body (whose thinness does not give rise to wrinkling), the poem ends in line 8 with a more personal statement of the poet's love:

واني لاهواها واهوى لقاءها      كما يشتهي الصادي الشراب المبردا  
 I love her and I love meeting her  
 as the thirsty man delights in a cold drink.

There is one theme found in a number of soliloquies in addition to that of love: that is wine and the pleasure it brings. This is partly a result of the fact that 'Ayn al-Ḥayat's soliloquies often occur when she is drinking wine and gazing at Fīrūz's picture: for example, poems 24, 43, 44, 45, 46 and 49 (in addition to poems 25, 26 and 50 which are presented as quotations). The wine poems do not contain any physical description of wine, such as might be expected in the *khamriyyāt* of the Umayyad or Abbasid periods.<sup>487</sup> The focus is rather on the effect of wine. In poem

<sup>487</sup> Harb (1990) pp.224-234

24<sup>488</sup>, for example, ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt talks of the combined pleasure of wine and love after returning from her first meeting with Fīrūz:

ان طيب المدام بين الندامي      وسرور النديم فيمن احبا

wine is good among friends

and the pleasure of the boon-companion is in the one she loves.

In his study of the *khamriyyāt*, Harb describes the ‘effects of wine’ as a ‘frequent motif’ of pre-Islamic poetry, but he adds that ‘they are usually depicted purely in physical terms<sup>489</sup>, which is not the case with the *sīrah*’s wine poems. However, the use and presentation of wine in the *sīrah*’s poetry is consistent with its Ṣūfī character, as will be discussed further in (f) below.

(f) Ṣūfī elements

A number of Ṣūfī elements, and echoes of Ṣūfī poems, have been identified in the examination of poem 53 above and are present also in most of the *sīrah*’s poems. Perhaps the clearest and most prominent Ṣūfī features are the combination of wine and love, which provide the context for many of the poems, and the act of *dhikr* which provides their motivation. A typical recurring scene is one where ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt recites poetry, or asks Sharīfah to recite, while she drinks wine and gazes at Fīrūz’s portrait. An example is poem 44<sup>490</sup>, where the words leading up to the poem are: ‘she drank a little wine and kept embracing the pictures, kissing them, rubbing them with her face and clutching them to her bosom. It was a moment of pleasure for her in which she felt happy and was able to think of her beloved (وسهل لديها تذكر (حبيبها) and poems overflowed from the many which came back to her, among them.....’. It recalls the opening of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *khamrīyah*: شربنا على ذكر الحبيب : 491 (we drank to the memory of the beloved a wine), where the wine is

<sup>488</sup> *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* p.90

<sup>489</sup> Harb (1990) p.221

<sup>490</sup> *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* p.312

<sup>491</sup> Ibn al-Fāriḍ (2001) p.218

interpreted by Arberry to be ‘the source of holy rapture, the Love of God manifested in His creation, and indwelling in the human soul’.<sup>492</sup>

Another poem which contains very clear Ṣūfī imagery, as well as echoes of other Ṣūfī poems, is poem 34<sup>493</sup>, spoken by Fīrūz when he is away on a mission (the text of the poem is shown in Appendix 17). Worrying about ‘Ayn al-Hayāt, he can only find solace in reciting poetry. The lover is depicted, in typical Ṣūfī terms, as sleepless and emaciated by the force of his longing for intimacy and union with the beloved. The mystical aspect of the poem is clear in its central lines:

انا المحب الذي اهل الهوى نقلوا      عني فاعطيتهم بالعشق تقليدي  
من اين للعشق مثلي في تشرعه      ومن يشيد دين الحب تشييدي  
لله ليلة انس قلت اذ ذكرت      يا ليلة الوصل من ذات اللمى عودي

I am the lover of whom the people of love reported  
and with love I gave them my [faith]  
where is there anyone (who is) like me in the way of love  
and who erects the religion of love as high as I do  
how wonderful is a night of spiritual joy I said when it was recalled  
O night of union with the possessor of beautiful lips return!

It is further stressed in the final hemistich of the poem: وهل سمعتم بشرك بعد توحيدى (have you heard of polytheism after monotheism).

The above lines, like the whole of the poem, are full of the vocabulary which is found in Ṣūfī poetry. In the third line (line 7 of the poem), for example:

- انس : explained by Arberry as the technical term for the spirit’s joy in the familiar experience of God’;<sup>494</sup>
- ذكرت : a reference to the Ṣūfī ritual of *dhikr*, as discussed in the context of poem 53 above;
- الوصل : the lover’s longing for union with the beloved represents the Ṣūfī’s ultimate aim of union with God.<sup>495</sup>

<sup>492</sup> Arberry (1956) p.85

<sup>493</sup> *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* p.170

<sup>494</sup> Arberry (1956) p.44

There are also echoes of poems by leading Ṣūfī poets, including the reference to *دين الحب* (the religion of love) which recalls Ibn al-‘Arabī’s use of the phrase as identified in the examination of poem 53 above. It is therefore interesting that the whole poem is borrowed from the *ḏīwān* of Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī<sup>496</sup>, who is not primarily celebrated as a mystical poet but rather as an innovator in the use of dialect and strophic forms, who is described by Salma Khadra Jayyusi as someone ‘who can at least claim to have embraced most trends and poetic genres of his time’.<sup>497</sup> The *sīrah*’s version has omitted 7 of its 19 lines and this cannot reasonably be regarded as due to the narrator’s faulty memory, since the poem is otherwise reproduced with total accuracy (bar one or two obvious writing or printing errors). The *sīrah* has retained the same lines as Ḥillī’s poem for the important centre of the poem, as discussed above, and the structure of the shortened poem is admirably coherent:

- lines 1-2: focus on lover/poet’s predicament, where obstacles are preventing him from reaching his beloved;
- lines 3-4: describe the force of the beloved’s charms (like ‘the fire of the trench’ - a reference to the Qu’rān, S 84.5);
- lines 5-8: a profession of faith and affirmation of the poet’s love for God/the beloved, with remembrance of Union and a hope to achieve it again;
- lines 9-10: focus on lover’s efforts and inadequacy; and
- lines 11-12: a generalised conclusion and affirmation of monotheism.

The poem has moved from the particular to the general and from despair to affirmation, while containing a powerful expression of Ṣūfī faith in its central core.

It is interesting to note that at least one other poem is identifiable as being from al-Ḥillī’s *ḏīwān*. That is poem 40<sup>498</sup>, which is half the length of its original<sup>499</sup> but, like

<sup>495</sup> *ibid* p.6

<sup>496</sup> al-Ḥillī (1956), p.[ ]. The authorship was identified through the *Adab* website.

<sup>497</sup> Jayyusi (2006) pp.51-52.

<sup>498</sup> *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* p.272

poem 34, retains an effective structure including an important statement in its central pair of lines. Again like 34, the central lines contain the poem's one direct reference to God:

الله ايامنا والدار دانية والشمل مجتمع والجمع مشتمل

how wonderful were our days when the abode was near  
the group was gathered and the gathering grouped.

This supports the view that the narrator(s)/author(s) of the *sīrah* were not merely borrowing material but were treating it in a skilled and creative way to achieve their artistic aims.

## G. Conclusion

It is clear that the poetry in *Fīrūz Shāh* is like the poetry in almost all the other *siyar* in being *sui generis*. It is different formally in the extent of its use of imagery and rhetorical device; where they are used very occasionally in the poetry in the other *siyar*; they are frequent and normal in *Fīrūz Shāh*. It is different also in content and role: through its lack of dialogue and its concentration on soliloquy and through its almost total focus on the theme of love. This focus is maintained throughout the four books of the work. In the final book, the roles of the 'lovers' pass to the next generation, including Fīrūz's son Bahman and his beloved Hudūb, but the type and proportion of the love poetry remains the same. In the whole of *Fīrūz Shāh*, the theme of love and the beloved is the subject for 150 of the 177 pieces of verse (i.e.87%of them). It is therefore the only theme of the poetry apart from a few isolated pieces of description or *fakhr*, a string of 6 pieces where Ṭīṭlūs is describing the beauties of Damascus to Ḍārāb and a string of 10 pieces of *madīḥ* at the wedding feast of Fīrūz and 'Ayn al-Hayāt in volume 3. Also throughout the work the love poetry maintains the mystical Ṣūfī overtones which have been highlighted in the examination of the first volume.

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The centrality of the love-theme in *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* is recognized by Saʿīd Yaqtīn in his analysis of what he calls the وظائف مركزية (central tasks) of each *sīrah*, where, for *Fīrūz Shāh*, he selects Ṭīṭlūs's conversation with Dārāb at the birth of Fīrūz:

وكان طيطلوس الحكيم قد أوصى الملك أن يحافظ على تربية ولده لأنه سيكون له حديث يذكر جيلا بعد جيل....إنما يخاف عليه من شيء واحد. قال الملك: وما هو؟ قال: إنه يغرم بحب فتاة فيلاقي لأجلها صعوبات كثيرة. (the wise Ṭīṭlūs advised the king to take care with his son's upbringing, because his deeds would be remembered for generation after generation....indeed he was only afraid of one thing on his behalf. The King said: "What is that?" He said: "He will fall in love with a girl and through her he will encounter many problems.")<sup>500</sup> The *sīrah* is an account of those problems. The role of the poetry is to give expression to that love and to stress its importance to the audience.

In his study of the *sīrah*, on the other hand, Muhammad Rajab Najjār examines the role of the 'love stories' in *Fīrūz Shāh* and considers them to be primarily an artistic device for the story-teller: to provide a linkage for the action, to fill in the gaps between the wars and to heighten the audience's emotional response to the protagonists' adventures. He states: ومن هنا حرص القاص الشعبي أن تواكب كل حرب من حروب السيرة جميعا قصة من قصص الحب العذري تتدخل في نسيجها وتمتزج بها وتشكل جزءا من نسقها أو معمارها وتشير في الوقت نفسه إلى ما تتطوي عليه من رموز قومية أو دينية (so the popular story-teller was determined to accompany each of the *sīrah*'s wars with a story of 'udhrī' love, which is inserted into its fabric, blends with it and forms part of its structure, while at the same time indicating what it contains of national or religious symbolism).<sup>501</sup> It would, however, be possible to stand this view on its head and to argue that it is the love theme which is at the heart of the *sīrah*. This view is supported by the seminal importance of Fīrūz's dream of 'Ayn al-Hayāt at the start of the *sīrah*, which sets the whole plot in motion.

The Ṣūfī nature of the love is also an essential part of this opening episode: apparent both in the ideal, unreal nature of the lovers meeting in a dream and in the role of the portraits. The portraits, like the poetry of the *sīrah*, are expressions of the Ṣūfī aim to celebrate the Beloved's beauty. As W.C. Chittick states, in

<sup>500</sup> Yaqtīn (1997) p.48

<sup>501</sup> Najjār (1985) p.193

discussing Ṣūfism: ‘Poetry’s evocation of beauty is evocation of God. Reminding people of beauty stirs up love in their hearts, and all love redounds on God’. He goes on to state: ‘The single most important feature of Sufi poetry is its beauty, a beauty that entrances and intoxicates.’<sup>502</sup> There is no reason to consider the *sīrah* as a Ṣūfī text in the sense of a text whose primary intention is the promotion of Ṣūfī ideals, but it is the Ṣūfī nature of the poetry which gives *Fīrūz Shāh* its special character. Entrancement and intoxication form a good description of the nature and the role of the *sīrah*’s poetry.

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<sup>502</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition*, Brill, Leiden, 2000, vol X, p.320

## Chapter 9

*Sīrat al-Amīr Ḥamzah al-Baḥlawān*

## A. Introduction

The story of Ḥamzah al-Bahlawān exists in three versions: Persian, Urdu and Arabic. Like *Fīrūz Shāh*, the Arabic *sīrah* of *al-Amīr Ḥamzah al-Baḥlawān* is probably based on a Persian original<sup>503</sup>, but Hamid Dabashi may be right when, in his introduction to the English translation of the Urdu version, he describes the origins of the romance as being ‘lost in time immemorial’ and refers to ‘its Arabic, Persian, Urdu and ultimately worldly disposition’.<sup>504</sup> The hero of each version is very loosely based on the paternal uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, but otherwise there are big differences between the versions, both in the events described and in the cast of characters.

The *sīrah* consists of a cyclical succession of military expeditions conducted by the Arab hero, Ḥamzah, firstly against the opponents of Persia and its ruler, Kusrā (who have put the Arabs under their rule), and then against the Persians and other infidels. Ḥamzah’s initial motivation is provided primarily by his love for Kusrā’s daughter, Mihrdukār, although this does not prevent him from succumbing to other women’s charms when the occasion offers. His enduring motivation is provided by his Arab nationalism and resentment of the Persians and, above all, by his strong belief in one God (the God of Abraham and of Islam) and by his urge to proselytize.

A substantial amount of poetry is interspersed amongst the prose. It is similar to the poetry in *Fīrūz Shāh* in being almost wholly love poetry, but it will be seen that there are significant differences in the nature of the poetry.

NB: All references to the text of *Sīrat Ḥamzah* are to the edition published in 2 volumes by Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, in Beirut, in 1985 (each containing two of the four volumes of the original printed edition, which will be referred to as ‘books’).

Poems are numbered as shown in Appendix 18.

<sup>503</sup> Marzolf, U. entry in *Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature*, eds. Meisami and Starkey, Routledge, 1998 p.270

<sup>504</sup> Lakhnavi & Bilgrami (2007) pp.xi-xiv

## B. Section chosen for analysis

### (i) Volume and distribution of verse

*Sīrat Ḥamzah* consists of 1,071 pages and contains 119 pieces of verse, amounting to a total of 1,460 lines. Its distribution between the four books is as follows:

	<u>total lines of verse</u>	<u>proportion of text</u>
book 1:	434	5.6%
book 2:	319	3.8%
book 3:	503	6.5%
book 4:	204	2.4%.

The verse is approximately 4.5% of the total text (measured in lines). The reduced amounts found in volumes 2 and 4 are due to long passages in each volume containing no verse at all: pp.197 - 258 in volume 2 and pp.1-56 in volume 4. As was found to be the case in *Fīrūz Shāh*, this reflects the concentration of the verse on the theme of 'love', which results in its absence from passages which are devoted solely to war.

The poems range in length from 2 to 39 lines, with an average length of 12.3 lines. The breakdown of the lengths of all the lines is as follows:

<u>number of lines</u>	<u>number of poems</u>
1 - 2	17
3 - 5	16
6 - 10	38
11 - 20	41
20+	17

The section chosen for detailed examination is pages 3 - 260, which is the whole of the first of the *sīrah*'s four books. It contains 41 pieces of verse, amounting to 434

lines. Their average length is 10.5 lines, but there are three poems of over 20 lines (the longest being poem 27<sup>505</sup> at 35 lines).

**(ii) Synopsis of section's plot**

At the start of the story, Persia under Kusrā Anūshīrwān, who is a fire-worshipper, has conquered all the Arab lands. Ḥamzah is the son of the Arab Governor of Mecca and is identified at birth by Bujurjmīhr, Kusrā's wise old minister, as being the man who will help Kusrā overthrow his enemies (but he hides the fact that Ḥamzah will also finally overthrow Kusrā's empire, end Persian dominion over the Arabs and destroy their fire-temples).

The first volume describes Ḥamzah's growing up and early adventures, with his life-long companion 'Umar, until he is enlisted to lead an Arab army to rescue Persia from invasion by Khartīn of Ḥiṣn Khaibar. When Ḥamzah, after defeating Khartīn, goes in triumph to Kusrā's court (which has been evacuated to Tehran), he and Kusrā's daughter, Mihrdukār, fall in love at first sight. Kusrā agrees to the marriage reluctantly and delays it by sending Ḥamzah on a series of missions, which are intended to result in his death. Sent to subdue a rebellious prince, Ma'qil, Ḥamzah defeats him, converts him to monotheism and makes him a friend. A second expedition, against Andahūq, ends in exactly the same way. When he is finally sent to collect taxes from different kingdoms, in order to pay for his own wedding, he makes allies as he goes (as well as marrying the daughters who fall instantly in love with him), until he is tricked into imprisonment in Egypt. After being rescued by 'Umar, and aware of Kusrā's hostile intentions towards him, he finally returns to Aleppo to lead an Arab army against the Persians.

Continuing themes throughout are the love between Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār, which occupies the thoughts of each of them (apart from Ḥamzah's brief interludes with his other wives) and Ḥamzah's belief in the One God and his wish to convert all unbelievers.

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<sup>505</sup> *Sīrat Ḥamzah*, p.143

C. Example: poem 6 <sup>506</sup>

(i) Introduction

Poem 6 is a soliloquy by Ḥamzah, which he recites on returning to his tent after catching sight of Mihrdukār for the first time (he had previously received a letter from her expressing her love for him after watching him arrive at her father's - Kusrā's - court). It is stated that Ḥamzah had hurried back to his tent 'so that he should not waste time or lose the image of his beloved from his mind, and he was alone because a true lover enjoys solitude for the same reason, namely to be able to give more attention to the one he loves, to focus on the beloved's beauty with his eyes and to express it in his thoughts'. The words leading immediately up to the poem are: 'Prince Ḥamzah saw that love calls for this sort of reflection and for the delights of fancy and imagination and finally for the reciting of poetry, so he recited saying...'

These words provide a good introduction to what is to come in the poem. It is a poem expressing the speaker's first impression of his beloved as well as his first reactions to the thunderbolt of love which has struck him. It has been picked for analysis because it is a typical example of the poetry in the *sīrah*, both in form and content (as will be explored further in F below). It will be seen that there are both similarities to the poetry found in *Fīrūz Shāh* and significant differences.

(ii) Text

الفاتكات سوالفا و عيوننا	بأبي الطباء الفاترات جفونا	1
المسيلات من الشعور دجونا	المطلعات من الثغور كواكبا	2
المرسلات إلى القلوب متونا	الراشقات من اللواظ أسهما	3
أرأيت ورداً خالط النسرينا	سفروا وقد صبغ الحياء خدودهم	4
وسفرن أقماراً وملن غصونا	ونفرن غزلانا وتهن غوانيا	5

<sup>506</sup> ibid p.79

غيدا إذا هزوا المعاطف لا ترى	6
إلا صريعاً بينهن طعينا	
سود النواظر ما كحلن بأتمد	7
والحسن حقا يغلب التحسينا	
يالائما قد جار في تعنيفه	8
هلا رحمت متيما مفتونا	
فأنا الذي اتخذ المحبة والهوى	9
شرفا لأرباب الغرام ودينا	
ومريضة الأجان ساجر لحظها	10
ينبيك عما في الفؤاد كمينا	
في طرفها السفاح أصبح خدها	11
الهادي ترى نعمانه مأمونا	
معشوقة الحركات حرك قدها	12
قلبا إليها كان قبل سكونا	
وإذا انتنت قلت الرماح معاطفا	13
وإذا رنت قلت السيوف جفونا	
شمس لطلعتها الهلال قد انحنى	14
أدبا فأصبح يشبه العرجونا	
والورق غنت إذ تثنى قدها	15
طربا فأعرب لحنه التلحينا	
لا تسألن إذا قصدت قصورها	16
وأقصد بحيث ترى الجمال مصونا	
وإذا أردت ترى هلال جبينها	17
فانظر الى حيث الصباح مينا	

This can be translated as follows:

May my father be ransomed for the gazelles with langourous eyelids  
dealing out death with necks and eyes

stars rising from their teeth  
locks of hair descending like darkness

throwing glances like arrows  
sent to hearts as messages

they unveiled and shyness coloured their cheeks  
have you seen a rose mixed with jonquils

5 they shied away like gazelles and wavered prettily  
they glowed like moons and bent like branches

tender (but) when they make their hips quiver you see  
around them only the prostrated and the afflicted

the blackness of their eyes they did not colour with antimony  
 beauty truly outshines adornment

O critic who is unjust in his censure  
 would you not pity one (who is) enslaved and infatuated

for I have adopted love and desire  
 as an honour for the masters of passion and as a religion

10 many a one of languid eyelids and magic glances  
 which convey to you what is hidden in the heart [have I loved]

in her glance the shedder of blood has become her cheek  
 the guide whose anemone you see is protected

one whose movements are loved her figure moved  
 a heart towards her which was previously at peace

when she bends you would think lances were pliant bodies  
 and when she glances you would imagine swords were eyelids

a sun at whose rising the moon declines  
 out of politeness and comes to resemble a palm tree

15 the turtle-doves sing when she sways her body  
 out of joy and its tune expresses the melody

do not ask if I aim at her castles  
 and aim at the place where you see beauty is well guarded

if you want to see the moon of her brow  
 observe where the morning is appearing.

[ for ease of consultation, the Arabic text  
of the poem is shown also in Appendix 19 ]

### (iii) Analysis

The poem consists of two main and almost equal sections, lines 1-7 and lines 10-15, which describe respectively the attractions of women in general and of the beloved in particular. Lines 8-9 provide a coda to the first section, as well as containing the central message of the poem, while lines 16-17 provide a coda to the second section as well as a conclusion to the poem.

The first three lines form a unit, formally and semantically. Their theme is the fatal quality of women's attractions, the women being represented by gazelles with langourous eyelids (الفاترات جفونا) dealing out death (الفاكات) in line 1 and despatching arrows at hearts (المرسلات إلى القلوب) in line 3. Sandwiched between these two lines, line 2 gives a physical description of the gazelles/women, which contains the double antithesis of stars rising from their teeth (i.e. their saliva) and their hair descending like darkness. Two features reinforce the unity of these first three lines. The first is the internal rhyming of a succession of 'ā's and 'a's (*bi-'abī - zibā'u - fātirātu - fātikātu - sawālifan - 'uyūnan - mutli'ātu - kawākiban - musbilātu - dujunnan - rāshiqātu - lawāhiz - ashuman - mursilātu - ilā - matūnan*). The second is the syntactical parallelism of the lines: each hemistich starts with a noun (بأبي - الفاتكات - المرسلات) and in lines 2 and 3 each hemistich consists of a noun followed by a preposition of direction, another noun governed by the preposition and finally by an adverbial accusative of specification (*tamyīz*). The prepositions change direction in the final hemistich, when *min* changes to *ilā*, thus neatly switching attention to the target of the gazelles' fatal charms: the hearts (القلوب).

In lines 4-7, the focus switches from the fatal qualities of the gazelles' glances to their more passive charms, starting with the effective image of the gazelles blushes

as ‘a rose mixed with jonquils’. The switch is marked by verbs replacing nouns as the opening words of the first four hemistiches (سفرُوا - أرأيت - ونفرن - وسفرن). In line 5 the gender of the verb changes from masculine (سفرُوا) to feminine (نفرن), indicating that the image of the gazelles is being replaced by a description of the ladies they were representing. This change is emphasized by the phrase ‘like gazelles’ (غزلانا) and by the *tajnīs* between سفرُوا (they unveiled) in line 4 and سفرن (they glowed) in line 5. Line 5 consists of a succession of four verbs followed by accusatives of *tamyīz* (ملن غصونا - سفرن أقمارا - تهن غوانيا - نفرن غزلانا) in a pattern which enhances the image of the ladies swaying gracefully. The grammatical structure changes in line 6, which opens with an accusative of *tamyīz*: غيدا (tender), which continues the theme of lines 4 and 5. Through its opening position, it is contrasted strongly with the adjectives which end the line: while the ladies are ‘tender’, they are surrounded only by ‘the prostrated and afflicted’ (صريعا... طعينا). Line 7 completes the first section of the poem by combining a descriptive 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich (‘the blackness of the eyes is not from antimony’) with a gnomic 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich (‘beauty outshines ornament’), which serves as a ‘cadence’ to indicate the end of the section and a shift of subject.<sup>507</sup>

In lines 8-9, the focus shifts from the women’s attractions to the poet who has been subjected to them. It provides a conclusion to the first section as well as forming the centre of the poem, by containing an expression of Ḥamzah’s love which lies at the heart of the poem. The stress in line 8 is on the two concluding adjectives which describe his condition: ‘enslaved and infatuated’ (متيما مفتونا). Then line 9 affirms its position as the central line, and as containing a key statement, by opening with ‘and I’ (فأنا). In the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich his feelings are presented as a mixture of love (محبة) and desire (هوى), which are reflected in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich by references to both passion (غرام) and religion (دين).

Whereas the first section of the poem (lines 1-7) described the fatal attractions of women in general, the second main section (lines 10-15) strikes a more personal tone as it focuses on the individual beloved and her effect on the poet. The change is evident in the switch from the plural number of line 7 to the singular of line 10,

<sup>507</sup> Hamori (1992) p.19

as ‘the blackness of their eyes’ (سود النواظر) is replaced by ‘the magic of her glance’ (ساحر لحظها). Although starting a new section, line 10 links with line 9 in expressing the same dichotomy between the mental and the physical aspects of love: the physical aspects of the beloved, as described in the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich (‘the ill-effects of the eyelids’ and ‘the magic of her glance’), are contrasted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich with the invisible emotions of ‘what is hidden in the heart’ (عما في الفؤاد كميناً).

In line 11, the reference to ‘the shedder of blood’ (السفاح) in her glance, in the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich, echoes the description of gazelles ‘dealing out death with ...eyes’ in line 1, but there is antithesis as well as similarity between the two lines: in line 1, the eyes ‘deal out death’ (الفاتكات), but in line 11 the glance has become her cheek ‘whose anemone is protected’ (نعمانه مأمونا) (the contrast being reinforced by the alternative meaning of نعمان as ‘blood’). This reflects a change in mood between the two halves of the poem: whereas the first section focuses on the pain caused by women’s fatal attractions (which leave the lover ‘prostrated and afflicted’, for example), the final section focuses more on the joy to be found in the appearance of the beloved. Line 11 is also remarkable for a succession of three puns on the names of early Abbasid Caliphs: al-Saffāḥ, al-Hādī and al-Ma’mūn.

Antithesis is used effectively also in the next three lines. In line 12, the turmoil caused by the beloved’s appearance, stressed by the repetition of حرك (moved), is contrasted with the previous tranquillity (سكون) of Ḥamzah’s heart and extra emphasis is added by the *tajnīs al-maqlūb*<sup>508</sup> of قلبا (heart) with قبل (before). In line 13, the two hemistiches both start with وإذا (whether) and state that there is no escaping the agony of love: lances and swords ‘pierce’ whether the beloved turns away (انثنت) or whether she returns the lover’s gaze (رنت). Then the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich of line 14 contains a double antithesis in the image of the rising sun and the declining moon.

This line marks a change from the previous warlike tone of the imagery, referring to ‘murder’, ‘swords’ and ‘arrows’, which were suitable for describing the effect of

<sup>508</sup> Defined by Arberry as ‘two words with identical letters but in a different order’ (Arberry (1965) p.23)

the beloved's appearance on the lover. The focus now is simply on the beloved's beauty and the delight which it causes and this is reflected in the use of أدبا at the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich: the moon declines 'out of politeness' rather than from the use of force. The tone is continued in line 15, where the word at the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich is طربا: the beloved's swaying body causes turtle-doves to sing 'out of joy'.

Lines 16-17 play the same role as lines 8-9 in providing a conclusion to the preceding section, as well as providing a conclusion to the poem as a whole. In line 16, each hemistich opens with an imperative: لا تسألن (don't ask!) and أفسد (aim!), and the latter echoes the قصدت (I aimed at..) in the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich. The effect is to stress the final words of each hemistich, contrasting قصورها (her castles) with الجمال المصوننا (the beauty well-guarded). The poet is concerned to obtain not the external attractions of the beloved but her innermost heart. In line 17, the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich repeats the ترى (you see) of the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich of line 16, but the object of sight has reverted to the physical: 'the moon of her brow' (هلال جبينها). The theme of 'vision' is repeated in the final hemistich of the poem, where a note of hope for the future is implied in the instruction to look at 'where the morning is appearing' (حيث الصباح مبينا). The ending of the poem thus provides a striking contrast with its opening lines where 'death' and 'darkness' set the tone.

The theme of 'sight' recurs throughout the poem and acts as a unifying element: there are nine references to sight or eyes (in lines 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 16 and 17), including five repetitions of the verb رأى (to see). Another thread running through the poem is the contrast between light and darkness: dark hair (line 1) and black eyes (line 7) are contrasted with stars rising from teeth (line 3), cheeks blushing like roses and jonquils (line 4), moons glowing (line 5) and suns rising (line 14). Finally, also present as a key theme is the contrast between what is visible and what is hidden. Just as 'unveiled' (سفروا) in line 4 marks the move from darkness to light in the first section of the poem, so the final word of the poem: مبينا (is appearing) is in opposition to the final word of line 10: كميننا (hidden), highlighting the poem's moral that love is different from physical attraction (hence the poet's insistence that he aims at 'the beauty well-guarded').

## D. Form and structure of the poetry

### (i) Form and structure of poem 6

The poem complies with classical conventions in consisting of 2-hemistich lines, using a monorhyme and a *kāmil* metre. It uses a wide range of formal and rhetorical elements to achieve its effect, apart from its unified structure and themes. In the first three lines alone, as noted above, there is extensive use of love imagery (albeit conventional), internal rhyme, syntactical parallelism and antithesis. They are found also in the rest of the poem, together with *tajnīs* (e.g. line 5).

### (ii) Formal characteristics of the poetry as a whole

All the poems comply with classical convention in consisting of lines of two equal hemistiches and having a monorhyme, apart from two strophic *musammāt* (poems 25 and 27<sup>509</sup>). Interestingly, both occur in quick succession at the ends of letters exchanged between Mihrdukār and Ḥamzah when they are separated by Ḥamzah's expedition to subdue Andahūq.

The strophic form is used to provide an effective structure to the poem's content. This can be seen in poem 27, which is addressed by the poet/lover to his beloved, where the focus and theme of the poem change in each stanza, as highlighted by the syntactical parallelism of the transitive verbs which open each stanza: *وخلت - فضجت - وأعيدوا - سأنتي - حرمت - سجننت - حويت -* (you would shame - I imagined - I embraced - you made a prisoner of... - you have forbidden - I will praise - may they be restored). The author of this poem is identifiable as Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥilfī<sup>510</sup> and it is a good example of how successfully the Narrator can make such a borrowing fit into his narrative. The poem is a fitting and credible end to Ḥamzah's letter, which is

<sup>509</sup> *Sīrat Ḥamzah* pp.142 and 143

<sup>510</sup> al-Ḥilfī (1956) p.269, as identified through <http://www.adab.com>.

addressed to “my sun and my moon” (يا شمسي ويا قمري) and describes how he is thinking of Mihrdukār and longing for her. It is therefore easy for the audience to identify the poet/lover and the beloved as Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār.

The poems abide by convention also in using the canonical classical metres. By far the most frequent metre in the section is *kāmīl* (in 15 poems) which may be due to what has been described as its suitability to express ‘strong, active emotion’<sup>511</sup>.

### E. Introductory formulas

The verse in *Sīrat Ḥamzah* is introduced with greater clarity and explanation than in *Fīrūz Shāh*. The 7 quotations, for example, are all clearly indicated as such, using normal wording such as ... كما قال فيه... (as was said about it...) (poem 20)<sup>512</sup>. The only unusual variation occurs before poem 28<sup>513</sup>, where the Narrator is describing the scene, in which Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār are relaxing and drinking wine after a meal together, and the verse is introduced by: ... لسان حاله يقول... The dictionary calls the words لسان الحال ‘silent language’ and translates this phrase as ‘with an expression as if he wanted to say...’.<sup>514</sup> It is, however, also an apt description of poetry’s role as a means for people to express their ‘condition’ (حال). This point is discussed further in section F (ii) (d) below.

Non-quotations are all preceded by short explanations of the reasons for the verse, except for the 10 pieces which form part of letters. Since most of the poems are soliloquies by Ḥamzah or Mihrdukār, the verse is normally the result of their thinking of their beloved and of their feelings needing an outlet. Typical is poem 17, where Ḥamzah has set off on his mission against Andahūq and is reflecting on

<sup>511</sup> al-Nuwayhi, Muhammad, *A reappraisal of the relation between form and content in classical Arabic poetry*, in *Atti Del terzo Congresso Di Studi Arabi E Islamici*, Ravello, I.U.O., Naples, 1967 pp.519-540, quoted in Bencheikh (1989) p.233

<sup>512</sup> *Sīrat Ḥamzah* p.138

<sup>513</sup> *ibid* p.154

<sup>514</sup> Wehr (1994) p.1016

the pain of being parted from Mihrdukār and on the way he has been treated by Kisrā, until ‘he revealed what was in his mind and recited saying...’.<sup>515</sup>

In the case of the 10 pieces included in letters, the verse is generally inserted without any introductory comment, because it fits naturally into the context. An example is poem 13, where Ḥamzah is writing to express his love for Mihrdukār: in the words leading up to the verse, he says that he thinks constantly of the window where he saw her standing and ‘in my mind I imagine the brilliance of your face in it, and your appearing like the moon piercing thick clouds...’, and the thought is continued in the opening of the poem: ‘beauty shone from the full moon in its splendour’ ( جلا الحسن عن بدر التمام اجتلاؤه ).

## F. Content and role of the poetry

### (i) Content and role of poem 6

Poem 6 has a number of features which it shares with most of the poems in the section. It is:

- a soliloquy;
- spoken by one of the two main characters, Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār; and
- on the theme of love.

The other aspect of poem 6, which has been noted with respect to the verse in the other *siyar* and which is also found in many of the poems in *Sīrat Ḥamzah*, is its power and effectiveness as stressed in the words immediately following the poem: ‘while he was reciting, he was aware of the rapture within him and of his joy at the one whom he loved and he was amazed at himself and at that rapture, for he had never before followed the path of passion and did not understand the reasons forcing him down it or keeping him on it’.

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<sup>515</sup> *Sīrat Ḥamzah* p.126

(ii) **Content and role of the poems as a whole**

(a) introduction

The narrative context of each poem is shown in Appendix 18: 'Placement of poems in *al-Amīr Ḥamzah* (book 1)'.

The content and role of poem 6, examined above, are typical of most of the poems in the *sīrah*. In particular, it is spoken by one of the two main characters; it is not part of a dialogue; and it is on the theme of love. If these features are considered in relation to the other poems in volume 1, the results are:

- of the 34 poems which are not quotations, 31 are spoken by Ḥamzah (15) or Mihrdukār (16);
- poems are frequently addressed to the present, or absent, beloved, but the only poems which can be said to form part of an exchange of dialogue are those contained in letters between Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār; and
- only 4 of the 41 poems are not wholly concerned with themes of love or the beloved.

These features are very similar to those found in the poetry of *Fīrūz Shāh*. However, it will be seen that there are some fundamental differences in the nature of the love poetry.

(b) quotations

There are seven quotations, which, as noted above, are all clearly presented as such. Like the quotations in *Fīrūz Shāh*, they are all concerned with the topic of love or the beloved. One difference, however, is that two of the quotations by the Narrator contain physical descriptions, both of Mihrdukār's beauty (poems 20 and 21)<sup>516</sup>. The three other quotations used by the Narrator describe the pleasures of Ḥamzah's

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<sup>516</sup> *ibid* p13

wedding-night with Miryam (poem 34)<sup>517</sup> and extol pleasure and love in setting the scene for Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār drinking wine together (poems 28 and 29)<sup>518</sup>. All these quotations play a similar role to those in the other *siyar*, in providing a means for the Narrator to illustrate his story, as well as to stress his own role in the telling of it.

(c) love poetry

Like *Fīrūz Shāh*, *Sīrat Ḥamzah* is almost totally lacking in spoken dialogue in verse. Six pieces in the chosen section are spoken by Ḥamzah or Mihrdukār in each other's presence, about each other, but they refer to the beloved in the third person and are not presented as a true 'exchange' between them. Poems 7 and 8<sup>519</sup> are typical, which are recited by Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār respectively at their first meeting, when they are drinking wine together (having both fallen in love at first sight, at a distance). Mihrdukār has forbidden speech, because she is 'afraid of overexciting' Ḥamzah, claiming that she would rather 'enjoy the moment' drinking wine, but 'after closely observing her beauty' Ḥamzah cannot resist reciting a poem in which he describes her ethereal quality:

تبرقعت بسحاب برقها فما أبهى طلوع البدر في الأسحار

she veiled herself with the clouds of her veil and no

more beautiful is the appearance of the moon in the early morning.

After a period of silent contemplation, Mihrdukār prepares to drink another cup of wine but 'she wanted to mix it with her picture of the water of his beauty so that she could drink the wine and the beauty in one cup' and, after gazing at him for five minutes, she recites a poem which describes Ḥamzah's beauty in terms similar to his own recitation:

وافى وأرواح العذيب نواسم والليل فيه من الصباح مياسم

he appeared with pleasant fragrant breezes

<sup>517</sup> ibid p.185

<sup>518</sup> ibid p.154

<sup>519</sup> ibid pp.90 and 91

and the night is marked by the morning.

The 10 poems forming part of letters between Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār (poems 3, 4, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 25, 26 and 27)<sup>520</sup>, offer an interesting contrast to the ‘spoken’ poems. Similar to the spoken verse, in being love poems and in containing very similar love imagery, they tend to be more direct and personal despite being written. A good example of this is poem 3, which comes at the end of a letter from Mihrdukār to Ḥamzah:

خذ سطوراً اليك قد بعثت      تروم للنفس ما يعللها  
أكتبها والدموع تنقطها      بعبرة لا زلت أهملها  
نعم فظني إذا بصرت بها      نيابة عن فمي تقبلها

Take lines which I have sent to you  
they wish for the soul what will please it  
I write them while tears are pointing them  
and with a tear<sup>521</sup> I am continually leaving them unpointed  
yes for I think when you see them  
you will kiss them in place of my mouth.

The simplicity and directness of this short poem are not always found in the other written poems, but they all use the first person in referring to the writer’s feelings, although the recipient is sometimes referred to in the third person.

Common to all these poems is their powerful effect on the recipient. After reading poems 3 and 4, Ḥamzah is described as greatly disturbed (زادت به الوسوس) and ‘the hands of love played with him and began to twist him to right and to left as he was bowed to the ground and he looked at himself in astonishment’. Similarly, after reading poem 13, Ḥamzah ‘was delighted with Mihrdukār’s writing and the gracefulness of her poetry and the splendour of her love and his heart trembled with joy and pleasure’.

<sup>520</sup> ibid pp.69, 69, 112, 113, 114, 140, 141, 142, 143 and 143

<sup>521</sup> the alternative meaning of بعبرة, ‘advice’ or ‘warning’, is also relevant here

(d) Ṣūfī elements

The imagery noted in poems 6 and 39 above is typical of the poems overall. They abound in ‘gazelles’ and ‘glances like arrows’ and the beloved is portrayed typically as in poem 32<sup>522</sup>:

وقامتها والردف غصن وبانة ومقلتها والصدغ سيف وعقرب  
 her figure and rump a branch and a willow  
 her eye and lovelock a sword and a scorpion.

This imagery is conventional for classical Arabic love-poetry, including poetry of a Ṣūfī character. Other such elements to be found in the poetry include references to the sleeplessness and emaciation which are part of a lover’s lot. These tend to come together in particular poems, which have potentially a more pronounced Ṣūfī tone than the poems overall: examples are poems 13, 27, 36 and 37.<sup>523</sup> Poem 13 is typical, including the lines:

مدمع سائل ووجد مذيب وفؤادي يقول هل من مزيد  
 مات نومي وعاش حي سهادي عظم الله أجركم في الهجود  
 وبراني الضنا فكدت أوارى عن شهود ولم أقل بوجود  
 tears falling and passion melting  
 and my heart says is there still more  
 my sleep has died and the life of my sleeplessness has survived  
 God has made your reward great in the vigil  
 sickness has emaciated me so that I am almost hidden  
 from sight and I do not claim to exist.

However, these poems, and the poems overall to an even greater extent, lack the intensity of feeling which was found in the poetry of *Fīrūz Shāh*. In *Ḥamzah*, there is a more courtly and frivolous tone, which runs counter to any Ṣūfī undertones. In this regard, it is instructive to consider the references to such Ṣūfī icons as ‘union’

<sup>522</sup> ibid p.165

<sup>523</sup> ibid pp.112, 143, 213 and 224

(وصل) and 'patience' (صبر). Far from being the longed-for and unattainable goal of the Ṣūfī's approach to God, 'union' is referred to more prosaically and physically: in poem 27<sup>524</sup>, for example, there is a reference to 'the pleasures of unions past' (طيب الوصول الذي مضى), and in poem 40<sup>525</sup>, as noted above, 'love is spoilt by the nature of union' (إن المحبة طبع الوصول يفسدها). Similarly, in poem 31 'patience' is not presented as an all-important virtue but rather as an impediment to pleasure:

526 من لي بصبر والتصب - ر عنك ما لا يستفاد

patience from me and forbearance

from you are of no use to me.

The playful tone, which is found even in poems containing Ṣūfī images and vocabulary, is demonstrated in poem 30<sup>527</sup>, whose author is identifiable as Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī.<sup>528</sup> The poem consists of a series of reproaches from the beloved about the lover's absence, each prefaced by 'she said' (قالت), and the lover's/Ḥamzah's justificatory replies, each starting with 'I said' (قلت), as in:

قالت تشاغلتي عن محبتنا فقلت بفرط البكاء والحزن

she said you have been distracted from our love

so I said by excess of tears and sorrow.

The light-hearted attitude to Ṣūfī principles is apparent in the final three lines of the poem:

قالت فماذا تروم قلت لها ساعة سعد بالوصل تسعدني

قالت قعين الرقيب تنتظرنا قلت فإني للعين لم ابن

أنحلتني بالصدود منك فلو ترصدتني المنون لم ترني

she said what do you want I said to her

an hour of pleasure with union would make me happy

she said an observer's eye is on us

<sup>524</sup> ibid p.143

<sup>525</sup> ibid p.256

<sup>526</sup> ibid p.155

<sup>527</sup> ibid p.155

<sup>528</sup> al-Ḥillī (1956) p.269, as identified through <http://www.adab.com>.

I said I am invisible to the eye  
 I have wasted away from your discouragement and if  
 death observed me it would not be able to see me.<sup>529</sup>

A number of the poems are recited while Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār are drinking wine together (poems 7, 8, 9, 28, 29, 30 and 31)<sup>530</sup>, but there are very few mentions of wine in any of the poems and, such as they are, they lack any of the Ṣūfī connotations found in *Fīrūz Shāh*. Their tone is generally in line with the *carpe diem* spirit of poem 28, in which the Narrator uses a quotation to illustrate the scene of luxury in which Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār are relaxing and drinking wine together before he departs on his mission to act as Kusrā's tax-gatherer. It opens with the line:

عد إلى اللذات فالعمر قصير      وحياة المرء في الدنيا غرور  
 return to pleasure for life is short  
 man's life in the world is vanity,

lists 'girls and wine and flowers' (وفتاة وخمور وزهور) among the pleasures to be enjoyed and concludes:

كل ما درنا رأينا بيننا      شادنا يشدو وكاسات تدور  
 wherever we turn we see among us  
 our singer singing and the cups going round.

It was noted in C above how the words لسان الحال, introducing a piece of verse, provided an apt description of poetry's role in expressing the speaker's 'condition'. This view is supported by the frequent use of the word حالة (condition, state) in

<sup>529</sup> This poem is included in a small number of al-Ḥilfi's poems which Rückert translated into German. He rendered these lines as

*Sie sprach: doch was erwartest du nun? ich sprach zu ihr:  
 Dass auch mein Glück mir bringe des Glückes Stund' im Jahr.  
 Sie sprach: jedoch das Auge des Spähers lauert auf;  
 Ich sprach: jedoch dem Auge bin ich schon unsichtbar.  
 So hast du mich gemagert durch dein Verweigern: wenn  
 Der Tod mir würd' auflauern, nicht würd' er mich gewahr.*

(Rückert (1988) p.53)

<sup>530</sup> *Sīrat Ḥamzah* pp.90, 91, 92, 154, 154, 155 and 155

describing the speaker's emotional state after reciting the love poems. A typical example occurs immediately following poem 16, where the weeping Mihrdukār has comforted herself in her misery at Ḥamzah's departure to Serendib: وبقيت هذه الحالة (and this condition remained her condition for all the time of the Prince's absence). Other poems, which are followed by similar use of the word حالة, include poems 10, 20/21, 23/24, 27, 31, 33, 35 and 41.<sup>531</sup>

(e) *fakhr*

There are 4 poems of *fakhr* (poems 1, 2, 11 and 17), all spoken by Ḥamzah, in which boasting is combined with statements of the values essential to Ḥamzah and to the *sīrah*. The fact that two of these poems are the first poems of the *sīrah* is consistent with what has been found in other *siyar*, such as *Zīr Sālīm*, *Dhāt al-Himmah*, *Banī Hilāl* and *Sīrat Sayf*, where the opening poems spoken by the leading character have been used to state values and to set the tone for what follows.

So in poem 1<sup>532</sup>, spoken as he leads his troops to al-Hīrah, Ḥamzah starts by expressing his high ideals:

ربيت على حب التفاخر والمجد وأبديت في نيل المنى والعلا جهدي

I was brought up to love glorious deeds

and I have shown my zeal to attain objectives and high endeavour.

The poem employs a ring structure, where the central message of lines 5-6: 'to you O Nu'mān I am coming...' (إليك أيا نعمان أسرى..), is preceded by lines vaunting his might: 'I am Ḥamzah the mighty...' (أنا حمزة العلياء...), and followed by a statement of how he uses his power, saying of his sword:

تفلق هامات الطغاة بحدها ويضمم جرح اللانثين بذا الحد

it cleaves the heads of tyrants with its edge

and dresses the wounds of refugees with its protection.

<sup>531</sup> ibid pp. 101, 138, 141, 144, 155, 167, 212 and 257

<sup>532</sup> ibid p.31

As the first line referred to glorious deeds, so the last line refers antithetically to ‘tyrants who think themselves free to terrorise’ (الطغاة توهموا خلاصاً وارهاباً). Thus the poem has been used to confirm the chivalric standing of the hero in the audience’s eyes at the very outset of the *sīrah*. This is confirmed by the reaction of Ḥamzah’s companion: ‘Aṣfarān al-Durbandī was delighted with his verse and the eloquence of his words and he realised (عرف) that Ḥamza’s being there was an enormous benefit to him and that he was the very man to whom the monk had referred in his speech and that he would accomplish amazing deeds’.

Poem 2<sup>533</sup> strikes the same note in its central line 5: ‘I destroy tyrants with a sword forcibly.’ (وأبيد الطغاة بالسيف قسراً). And again the effect of the poem on its audience (King al-Nu‘mān) is stressed: ‘when Prince Ḥamzah finished his verse King al-Nu‘mān was amazed at his eloquence, his liking for glory and his eagerness to confront dangers. He felt an increasing sympathy and affection for him and he realised (عرف) that his star would reach the pinnacle of glory, reaching the topmost heights and attaining influence, and what influence, in his time’. It is significant that the wordings following poems 1 and 2 both use the word عرف to convey the listener’s reaction: it is through listening to the verse that Aṣfarān and the King have ‘realised’ his quality as both warrior and poet. It shows that poetry has the power to impart knowledge.

The third example of *fakhr*, poem 11<sup>534</sup>, again stresses Ḥamzah’s high ideals: ‘I am one of those who want the glory of serving their people’ (أنا من تمنى المجد يخدم ساحتي), although the central message of lines 6-7 is an expression of his love for Mihrdukār: ‘I am for all time the lover of Mihrdukār’ (أنا طول الزمان حبيب مهردكار).

These *fakhr* poems, like those in *Fīrūz Shāh*, are strikingly different from the love-poetry in the *sīrah*: in the simplicity of their style and the lack of imagery, and in their containing specific references, by name, to characters in the *sīrah*. The final

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<sup>533</sup> ibid p.49

<sup>534</sup> ibid p.103

*fakhr* poem, poem 17<sup>535</sup>, also contains specific references, but otherwise it is more complex in structure and content and combines both *fakhr* and love-poetry (the text of the poem is shown in Appendix 20). The poem is recited by Ḥamzah as he sets out on his mission to collect taxes on behalf of Kusrā, having been disappointed once again through the postponement of his promised wedding to Mihrdukār. He reflects on how he is fated to be kept apart from his beloved and ‘so he revealed what was in his mind and recited saying...’. The poem expresses his determination to accomplish the task before him and his resentment at Kusrā’s behaviour, but it is primarily a declaration of his longing for Mihrdukār as well as for his homeland, the Ḥijāz. It falls into two equal sections of seven lines, divided by one central line, and each of the two sections is divided into a main unit of five lines preceded and followed, respectively, by a pair of lines. The overall structure of the lines is therefore: 2 - 5 - 1 - 5 - 2.

The focus of the first seven lines is on place rather than person, as indicated by its opening words: يا قفر (O desert), for it is an expression of his love presented in terms of his love for the land of the Ḥijāz. Lines 1-2 present the desert as his enemy, reflecting the fact that his current expedition across the desert has kept him apart from his beloved. They are a statement of *fakhr* and determination, emphasized by ‘my resolve is firm’ (متين عزمي) in line 1 and ‘I am determined’ (فانني ذو همة) in line 2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich of line 2 states his desire as being ‘to reach your furthest point’ (الوصول لمنتهى جنباتك), which may be read as a *double-entendre* referring to his beloved as well as to the desert. In lines 3-7, the focus switches to the land of the Ḥijāz, his homeland, whose earth and breezes are favourably contrasted with the desert. His beloved is associated with their delights (although she is not herself from there). Thus in lines 3-4 he asks the Ḥijāz (repeated as the second word of each 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich) to send its breezes as ‘winds from the beloved’ (ريح... عن الأحبة). Lines 5-6 describe the pleasures to be brought by the breezes: these include ‘musk which perfumes you’ (مسك يعتر ذاتك), which may again refer to both the land and the beloved. The final line of the section, line 7, is an expression of his mixed feelings as he is torn between his longings for his homeland and for his beloved whose home is the ‘home of Kusrāh’:

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<sup>535</sup> ibid p.126

يا دار كسرى إن قلبي هائم      وحينها أبدأ إلى عرصاتك

O home of Kusrā my heart is confused  
and its longing is always for your spaces.

The central line 8 expresses Ḥamzah's love, which overrides his predicament as the Arab lover of a Persian princess and which lies at the heart of the poem. His beloved is described as being in Madā'in (Ctesiphon, in Iraq), which represents former Arab glory as well as being the seat of current Persian power, but its ambivalent significance is overcome by its being the residence of his beloved and it is her glances, rather than the Persians, which are fatal to him:

لي بالمداين غادة عجمية      ماضي لواحظها بقلبي فاتك

for me in Madā'in there is a Persian girl  
whose cutting glances are fatal to my heart.

The focus remains on Mihrdukār in the second half of the poem. It opens with a description of her beauty in line 9. Then line 10 follows up the reference to her father in line 7 with the conceit that she has a new family: in the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich, she is the 'daughter of my happiness' (بنت سعدي) and 'perfection is her father' (الكمال لها) and, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich, the moon is her sister. The mention of the moon leads to her being described in terms of light in line 11: in the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich, 'may her brow shine' (لاح جبينها) and, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich, 'how she has radiated' (كم اشرفت). The next pair of lines, 12-13, describe the effects of her beauty on Ḥamzah: line 12 echoes the central line of the poem by describing Mihrdukār's glance as 'fatal' (نظرة) and in line 13 her charms 'have served to break my heart' (جبرت لكسر قلبي).

The final two lines, 14-15, provide a conclusion to the poem by returning to the themes of *fakhr* and determination of lines 1 and 2: Ḥamzah insists that he will destroy the enemy, reinforcing his statement by repeating 'I will destroy them' (سأبيدهم) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich of line 14 and the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich of line 15. However, this time the *fakhr* is combined with the theme of love as he addresses the absent Mihrdukār, swearing on her life (وحياتك) and ending with the promise: 'when they

perish I will pluck the rose from your cheeks' (إذا هلكوا قطفت الورد من وجناتك). It is a fitting conclusion to a poem which provides a convincing account of the thoughts of a love-struck knight going to the wars: he is determined to do his duty and be victorious on the field, but thoughts of his beloved are in the forefront of his mind and add to his confidence and determination. While the first line of the poem was addressed to the desert (يا قفر), the final line is addressed to his beloved.

The wording following the poem describes its effect on his companion, Prince Ma'qil, and once again, as was seen in the words following poems 1 and 2, the verb *عرف*, albeit in a derived form, is used in conveying Ma'qil's reaction: وقال له لا بد ان الدهر يعترف بفضلك (he (Ma'qil) said to him: time is bound to recognise your merit).

(f) other

There remains one poem which fits into none of the above categories. That is poem 38<sup>536</sup>, which is spoken by 'Umar to Ghaitsham, one of the Egyptian leaders. 'Umar has gained admittance to Ghaitsham's presence through being disguised as a blind beggar and the poem is a piece of false *madīh* designed to win Ghaitsham's confidence, whose tone is set by the opening line:

ألا يا فتى العليا الهمام المفضل      ويا شائد الحسن الأغر المكمل

O knight of great renown and merit

O source of the most wonderful perfect excellence.

The poem achieves its desired result, and it is similar to the dissembling poems found in other *siyar*, such as *Dhāt al-Himmah*, in demonstrating the power of verse, for Ghaitsham welcomes 'Umar effusively and begs him to stay in Egypt, for 'you are without doubt one of the outstanding people in Egypt and amongst the blind and you will certainly be treated with honour'.

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<sup>536</sup> *ibid* p.232

## G. Conclusion

The poetry in *Ḥamzah* is largely confined to love poetry and this lacks the Ṣūfī dimension found in *Fīrūz Shāh*. The difference in tone between the two *siyar* may be due to the lack of Ṣūfī influence in *Ḥamzah*, but it is also consistent with the differences in character and behaviour between the two heroes. Whereas *Fīrūz Shāh* is totally and single-mindedly devoted to ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt and refuses all approaches from other women, Ḥamzah is made of less stern stuff and succumbs easily to the attractions of other women such as Zahrbān, Miryam and Salwā. The poetry succeeds in depicting both the fervour of Ḥamzah’s passion and the fact that it is not all-consuming. It can be said that the poetry has again played an important role in the presentation of the main characters.

The *fakhr* poetry, although very infrequent, is also important in its depiction of Ḥamzah’s chivalric character. The fact that the *fakhr* poetry is similar to that in *Fīrūz Shāh*, in its relative simplicity and its containing specific references to characters in the *sīrah*, again suggests that these poems may have been part of an earlier version to which the more generic love poems were added.

The poetry is also similar to that of the other *siyar* in the influence which it is seen to exert over the characters, as has been noted in respect of a number of the poems. A particular feature of this influence has been the recurrence of the word عرف in describing the listeners’ reactions. It is through the verse that people’s characters are first ‘recognised’. Poetry is thus linked to truth, as shown by Mihrdukār’s reaction to Ḥamzah’s expression of love in poem 7<sup>537</sup>: ‘what he recited about her and her beauty made her face light up with joy and convinced her that his love was true’. Poetry is shown to be a source of revelation as well as power.

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<sup>537</sup> *ibid* p.91

## Chapter 10

*Sīrat al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars*

## A. Introduction

*Sīrat Baybars* is different from the other *siyar* previously examined in a number of ways. The first point of difference is the fact that its hero, *al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars*, is based, however loosely, on a real Arab hero whose deeds are well-documented: a mamlūk in the service of the Ayyūbid Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ and his successors, he played a major role in driving out the Mongol invaders from the Islamic empire before himself becoming Sultan in 1260 until his death in 1277 (his tomb is a well-known monument in Damascus). His achievements as Sultan include destroying the remnants of Christian Crusader power. Although the *sīrah* covers Baybars' political and military battles against the Christians, another point of difference lies in the fact that a lot of the action takes place in Cairo and Damascus and concerns the lives of ordinary citizens, particularly the tradesmen and the underworld. Thomas Herzog has expressed the peculiar character of the *sīrah*: 'La *Sīrat Baybars* nous apparaît donc comme un texte essentiellement citadin qui exprime une vision populaire de la société.'<sup>538</sup>

Finally a major point of difference lies in the considerable amount of scholarly attention which the work has received, particularly in recent years. The earliest pioneering study of the *sīrah* was Helmut Wangelin's abbreviated version of the work in German, with an introduction, in 1936.<sup>539</sup> More recent work by French scholars has included the first 10 volumes of a translation of an Aleppine manuscript<sup>540</sup> as well as a complete annotated edition of a Damascene manuscript<sup>541</sup>. Other works include Thomas Herzog's major study of the *sīrah*'s social-political dimensions (including a comparison of all the major manuscripts)<sup>542</sup>, Francis Guinle's study of narrative strategies in the Damascene version<sup>543</sup> and numerous papers<sup>544</sup>. Also, unusually, two of these recent papers have concentrated on the poetry of the

<sup>538</sup> Garcin (2003) p.51

<sup>539</sup> Wangelin (1936)

<sup>540</sup> Bohas and Guillaume (1985-1998)

<sup>541</sup> Bohas and Zakharia (2000-2009)

<sup>542</sup> Herzog (2006)

<sup>543</sup> Guinle (2011)

<sup>544</sup> These include 12 papers published in Garcin (2003) (by Pierre Larcher (2), Thomas Herzog (2), Jean-Patrick Guillaume, Jerome Lentini, Jean-Claude Garcin, Nasr al-Dīn Naamoune, Yannick

*sīrah* : George Bohas<sup>545</sup> has examined the sources of the poetry contained in the first 3 volumes of the new edition, while Katia Zakharia<sup>546</sup> has examined their *genres*.

This study is based on the text published originally in Cairo in 1908-09 (republished in 1996) and based on an Egyptian manuscript. It varies considerably from the latest edition of the *sīrah*<sup>547</sup>, which is based on a Damascene manuscript. Among the differences between the two texts are the quantity and content of the poetry: for example, the first 100 pages of the Cairo text include 36 poems amounting to 337 lines, while the first 100 pages of the Damascene text include no more than 12 poems amounting to 19 lines (none of the poems are identical). Another difference is that while the language used in the Cairo text is a ‘middle Arabic’, similar to the language of the other *siyar*, the language of the Damascene text is predominantly colloquial. It is proposed to examine the Damascene text also, albeit in less detail than the Cairo text, in order to explore the differences between the two texts (see section G below).

NB: All references to the text of *Sīrat Baybars* are to the text published in ten volumes in Cairo in 1908-09.

All references to the text of *Sīrat Baybars (Damas)* are to the text edited by Bohas and Zakharia and published in Damascus in 2000-09.

Poems are numbered as shown in Appendices 21 and 23.

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Lerible, Denis Gril, Claude Audebert and Eric Vial), and 6 papers published in Arabica 51, 1-2 (2004) (by Thomas Herzog, Ana Ruth Vidal Luengo, Djamel Eddine Koulough, Jean-Patrick Guillaume, George Bohas and Katia Zakharia)

<sup>545</sup> Bohas (2004)

<sup>546</sup> Zakharia (2004)

<sup>547</sup> Bohas & Zakharia (2000-09)

## B. Section chosen for analysis

### (i) Volume and distribution of verse

The ten volumes of *Sīrat Baybars* contain 585 pieces of verse, amounting to a total of 3,674 lines. The following table shows their distribution between the volumes:

<u>vol.</u>	<u>pages</u>	<u>poems</u>	<u>lines</u>	<u>ave.lines per poem</u>	<u>% of total text</u>
1	392	94	811	8.6	9.4%
2	390	86	430	5.0	5.0%
3	390	83	726	8.7	8.5%
4	390	86	579	6.7	6.7%
5	390	78	391	5.0	4.6%
6	357	42	222	5.3	2.8%
7	394	36	198	5.5	2.3%
8	344	38	166	4.4	2.2%
9	310	15	71	4.7	1.0%
10	277	27	80	3.0	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,634</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>3,674</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>4.6%</b>

It can be seen that it follows the pattern found in other *siyar* of containing a higher proportion of verse in the earlier part of the *sīrah*.

The above table shows that the poetry is approximately 4.6% of the total text (measured in lines). This is very similar to the proportion found in *Dhāt al-Himmah* (4.7%), *Ḥamzah* (4.5%) and *Fīrūz Shāh* (4.0%).

The poems vary in length from 1 to 115 lines. The breakdown of the lengths of all the lines is as follows:

<u>number of lines</u>	<u>number of poems</u>
1 - 2	206
3 - 5	133
6 - 10	155
11 - 20	72
20 +	19

The section chosen for detailed examination is the first two of the *sīrah*'s fifty parts, which comprise the first 200 pages of the first of the ten volumes. It contains 67 verse passages, amounting to 601 lines. Their average length is 9 lines and there are only three poems of more than 20 lines (poems 20, 21 and 28<sup>548</sup> with 53, 22 and 31 lines respectively).

**(ii) Synopsis of section's plot**

A detailed summary of the plot, and of how the poems fit within it, is contained in Appendix 1: 'Placement of poems in *Sīrat Baybars* (parts 1 and 2)'. The role of the section within the *sīrah* is to set the scene for the main action to follow by charting the accession of al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb to the throne of Egypt and Syria, his purchase of Baybars as a mamlūk and the latter's adventures in Damascus before he arrives finally at al-Şāliḥ's court in Cairo.

The *sīrah* opens with the conquest of Baghdad by the Persians under King Mankatam and the imprisonment of the Muslim Caliph. It relates how he is rescued by Şalāḥ al-Dīn and his troop of Kurds, whom he rewards with the thrones of Egypt and Syria. At the same time he makes a present of Egypt to his daughter Fāṭimah (also known as Shajarat al-Durr). Years pass until Şalāḥ al-Dīn dies and is succeeded first by his sons and then by al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb, a pious ascetic who marries Fāṭimah and becomes renowned for his just rule.

As a result of a dream, al-Şāliḥ commissions a slave-trader to buy him 75 mamlūks, plus a special one who must know the Qur'ān well. The latter turns out to be Maḥmūd, who is found in Iraq, where he is very ill, and taken to Damascus. There he is adopted by a lady and assumes the name of her dead son, Baybars. He becomes involved in fighting the Franks to defend his adoptive mother's interests and is betrayed by 'Isā, the governor of Damascus, but he is rescued by the Ismailis, under their leader 'Āsif, who become his life-time supporters, after a revelation from a holy man that he is destined to lead Islam to victory over its enemies.

<sup>548</sup> *Sīrat Baybars* vol.1, part 1, pp.64, 67 and 84

C. Example: poem 45<sup>549</sup>

(i) Introduction

This short poem is spoken by Baybars (or Maḥmūd as he was then called) when he is lying seriously ill in the baths at Burṣa, where he is discovered by ‘Alī the slave-trader. It has been selected for analysis because it is typical of the poetry in the *sīrah* in its theme and style. It is also of special interest as the first poem spoken by Baybars and therefore as the first presentation of his character, which is particularly evident in the abundance of Qur’ānic references.

(ii) Text

هو القدير على كل الامور	سأحمد رب العرش وخالق الورى	1
واحده حقا برغم كل كفور	واشكر الهى على ما أصابنى	2
وانه للشاكرين شكور	واسأله العفو من فضله	3
واسأله الصبر على المقدور	وقد رضيت منه بقسمتى	4
واخذل يا رب جاه كل عقور	فيا رب خذ بيد كل حبيب	5
ودبرنا يا مولاي فى كل الامور	واعطنا السلام منك فضلا	6
ومن سواك يرحم المكسور	فلقد وهى جسمى وانت عليم	7
واشفى ما بقلبى والصدور	هب لنا لطفا ودبر امرنا	8
واعطه فى الجنان خير قصور	واجبر بخاطرى من حر ضعف جسمى	9
فانت المسامح وانت الغفور	وسامح يا رب من اساءنى	10
محمد المبعوث بكل الامور	وبعد ذا اصلي على خير الورى	11
ما هب ريح على جميع زهور	عليه صلاة مع سلاما دائما	12
وما تناكحت فى الوكور طيور	وما رحت اطيار الفيافى	13
والتابعين لهم بطول الدهور	وكذا الآن والاصحاب جمعا	14

<sup>549</sup> ibid vol.1, part 2, p.16

It can be translated as follows:

I will praise the Lord of the Throne and the creator of mankind  
He is omnipotent

I thank God for what has befallen me  
and I praise Him truly in defiance of all unbelievers

I ask Him for pardon in His goodness  
indeed for the grateful He is the Grateful

I have been content with the lot which He has given me  
and I ask Him for endurance against fate

5 O Lord take into Your hand everyone who loves  
and O Lord Almighty abandon everyone vicious

give us peace as a boon from You  
and my God put all our affairs in order

for my body has become frail and You are the All-Knowing  
and who but You will take pity on the wretched

send us grace and order our affairs  
and put right what is in my heart and bosom

comfort me through kindness for the weakness of my body  
and give it the finest palace in Paradise

10 forgive O Lord whoever has wronged me  
for You are the Magnanimous and You are the Forgiving

then pray for the best of mankind

Muhammad to whom all matters are delegated

bless Him with peace always

for as long as the wind blows on every flower

for as long as the birds of the desert fly

and for as long as birds make love in the nests

and so now all the Companions together

and the Followers for them forever.

[ for ease of consultation, a copy of the Arabic  
text is shown also in Appendix 22 ]

### (iii) Analysis

The poem falls into three distinct sections: a central section of six lines (lines 5-10) is bracketed by two sections, each of four lines. Taking each of these sections in turn:

#### lines 1-4

The opening four lines are a statement of Baybars' relationship with God. Each line starts with a verb or verbal phrase in the first person which summarises that relationship: praise (سأحمد), thanks (واشكر), seeking forgiveness (واسأله العفو) and contentment (وقد رضيت). Line 1 is a statement of God's might and contains the first three of many Qur'ānic references in the poem: the first hemistich uses two of the 99 names of God: Lord of the Throne (although in the Qur'ān the words used are <sup>550</sup>ذِي الْعَرْشِ rather than رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ) and Creator of mankind (خالق (الورى), and the second hemistich uses a quotation from the Qur'ān in calling God

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<sup>550</sup> Qur'ān 17:42

omnipotent (although again with a slight variation, so that <sup>551</sup> أنه على كل شيء قدير becomes هو القدير على كل الامور). Baybars' position as an admirer in the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich is in antithesis to God's position of omnipotence in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich. Lines 3 and 4 contain three more references to God's names: in line 3 to the Forgiving (*al-Afūw*<sup>552</sup>), from the same root as 'pardon' (*al-'afw*), and to the Grateful (*شكور*<sup>553</sup>), and in line 4 to the Patient (*al-Ṣabūr*) from the same root as 'endurance' (*sabr*<sup>554</sup>).

Lines 1-4 are structured as two parallel pairs of lines, where lines 1 and 3 start with a statement in the first person in the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich ('I will praise...', 'I ask him for pardon...') followed by an epithet of God in the third person in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich ('He is omnipotent', 'He deserves the thanks...'), and lines 2 and 4 each contain two statements in the first person (e.g. in line 2 'I thank God...', 'I praise Him...'). The parallelism is emphasized by the repetition of the first word of lines 1 and 3 as the first word of the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistiches of lines 2 and 4: اسأله and أحمد. These two words contain the essence of the whole poem, which is a combination of praise of God and requests of Him.

#### lines 5-10

The six lines which form the central section of the poem contain a series of requests of God; five of the six lines have imperatives in their 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich and four of them also in their 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich. The lines divide into pairs, as in the first section. Lines 5 and 6 contain four imperatives at or near the start of each hemistich: خذ - اخذل - اعطنا - دبرنا and each line has كل as their penultimate word (the كل الامور at the end of line 6 repeating the ending of line 1). The lines are again full of Qur'ānic references: خذل is used in the Qur'ān to describe God 'forsaking' someone<sup>555</sup>, سلام is a name for God as 'the Source of Peace'<sup>556</sup>, دبر is used in the Qur'ān to mean 'govern' or 'manage'<sup>557</sup>, and والي refers to the name of God as 'the Protector' (والي<sup>558</sup>).

<sup>551</sup> Qur'ān 22:6

<sup>552</sup> Qur'ān 58:2

<sup>553</sup> Qur'ān 31:31

<sup>554</sup> Qur'ān 2:45

<sup>555</sup> Qur'ān 3:160

<sup>556</sup> Qur'ān 6:127

<sup>557</sup> Badawi and Haleem (2008) p.297

<sup>558</sup> Qur'ān 22:78

Line 7 and 8 are the central lines of the poem and summarise the purpose and content of the whole poem, spoken as it is by Baybars as he lies sick in a strange place and fearing that he may be dying. In line 7 he states ‘my body has become frail’ and he can look for help only to God who ‘takes pity on the wretched’, while in line 8 he asks God for help not only in ordering his affairs but also in putting right ‘what is in my heart and my bosom’. This can be understood as referring to his moral and spiritual, rather than physical, condition. That is consistent with the following line 9, where he asks that his poor body should have a fine palace in Paradise. Line 10 concludes the section with a request for God’s mercy for whoever has wronged him and refers to one more of the Qur’ānic names of God: the Forgiving (الغفور<sup>559</sup>).

#### lines 11-14

In the final four lines of the poem, the focus switches to Muhammad, ‘the best of mankind’. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich of line 11, the description of him as المعبوث بكل الامور (to whom all matters are delegated) refers back to the description of God in the 2<sup>nd</sup> hemistich of line 1 as القدير على كل الامور (with power over all matters). God’s blessing on Muhammad is invoked in lines 12 and 13, the blessing being prolonged in three successive hemistiches using a syntactically parallel structure of ما plus verb in the perfect tense. The final line of the poem extends the blessing to all the Companions and Followers forever, the final phrase ‘for all times’ (بطول الدهور) echoing the infinite tone of the ending of line 1: ‘over all matters’ (على كل الامور).

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<sup>559</sup> Qur’ān 58:2

## D. Form and structure of the poetry

### (i) Form and structure of poem 45

The poem complies with classical conventions in consisting of 2-hemistich lines using a monorhyme and a *basīt* metre. The main feature of the poem's form is its simplicity: there is no use of imagery and the only rhetorical feature noted in the above analysis has been syntactic parallelism between and within lines. It has, however, been carefully structured into its three sections, with symmetry between sections 1 and 3 and with the central pair of lines containing the main message of the poem.

### (ii) Formal characteristics of the poetry as a whole

Rhyme and metre abide by classical conventions. The only example of anything unusual in the chosen section is poem 32<sup>560</sup>, recited by the *Jāwīsh* of the *dīwān* after prayers, which takes the form of 2 conventional lines followed by a shorter one. However, in the subsequent parts of the *sīrah* there are a number of strophic forms, including many examples of *mawwāl*. What is most remarkable is that the *mawwāl* form is chosen for almost all 'Utmān's utterances in verse (until 'Utmān's role virtually disappears after the first 4 volumes)<sup>561</sup>. They are either specifically introduced by the Narrator as being a '*mawwāl*' or preceded by 'Utmān saying '*yā layl*'. This may be a unique case in the *siyar* of the form of the verse being used to illustrate a person's character. The link between the character and the form of poem may lie in the origins of the *mawwāl* as a poem to be sung by lowly non-Arab Muslims (hence their use of a colloquial, non-classical form) to their masters<sup>562</sup>, so that it could be seen as a reminder of 'Utmān's lowly origins.

<sup>560</sup> *Sīrat Baybars*, part 1, p.99

<sup>561</sup> *ibid* vol.1, part 4, pp.17 and 27; vol.2, part 5, pp.3 and 53; part 6, pp.11 and 54; part 7, p.19; part 9, pp.3, 50 and 64; vol.3, part 10, p.16; part 11, p.3; part 4, p.15

<sup>562</sup> Cachia, P. (1977) p.80, although he describes this explanation as 'somewhat legendary'

### E. Introductory formulas

Almost all the quotations are introduced by words which have been standard in the other *siyar*, such as ... قال الشاعر... (the poet said). Five quotations are introduced by approbatory wording, either of the quotation, as found with poem 27<sup>563</sup> which is introduced by ‘and the speaker has spoken these lines which are correct’, or of the speaker such as the words introducing poem 34<sup>564</sup>: ‘as the poet devoted to God’s service (الشاعر محرر<sup>565</sup>) said about it...’.

Introductions to the non-quotations tend to be emotional and/or explanatory. Typical examples are poems 2 and 3<sup>566</sup>, which are spoken by the Caliph after being imprisoned and released respectively. Poem 2 is introduced by ‘then he wept and lamented and recited saying...’, and poem 3 by ‘then after that he wept from the enormity of his relief and the end of his anxiety and grief and he thought back on what had happened to him and what suffering had been inflicted on him and he recited all that in his account of it and he began to recite saying...’.

It will be noted that, as the *sīrah* progresses, almost all of the poems of more than a few lines are either devoted to battle or to God, or to a mixture of them both. Both these categories tend to be prefaced by repeated formulas. Battle poems are preceded by the speaker shouting ‘*Allāh Akbar*’ and poems addressed to God by *yā rabb*. A typical example of the former is found in the description of Ibrāhīm going in to fight the Franks: ‘Ibrāhīm met them shouting at the top of his voice ‘Allah is great, may Allah be victorious’ (فتلقاهم ابراهيم وصاح بملء رأسه الله اكبر فتح الله)<sup>567</sup>.

<sup>563</sup> *Sīrat Baybars*, vol 1, part 1, p.76

<sup>564</sup> *ibid* vol.1, part 1, p.100

<sup>565</sup> a reference to the Qurān, 3:35 (Badawi and Haleem (2008) p.199)

<sup>566</sup> *Sīrat Baybars*, vol.1, part 1, pp.12 and 17

<sup>567</sup> *ibid* vol.4, part 16, p.40

## F. Content and role of the poetry

### (i) Content and role of poem 45

Poem 45 has two key features which recur in many of the *sīrah*'s poems:

- it is centred on God, on praise of Him and on requests addressed directly to him; and
- it contains a large number of imperatives, through which these requests are made.

The fact that verse is used to make such requests of God confirms its status as a powerful medium for obtaining results. It is the essential language of persuasion and supplication. The power of verse is also shown by the reaction of Aydemar, who overhears Baybars' poem: 'Aydemar was astonished at his words and realised that he was a master of eloquence and serenity... and his heart went out to him and he was seized with affection for him and he answered him in the same metre...'<sup>568</sup>.

The other main feature of poem 45 is the number of references to the Qur'ān. This fits the fact that this is Baybars' first poem and is therefore presenting the essence of his character. As mentioned above, his knowledge of the Qur'ān is one of the criteria which have been set by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb for identifying the extra and special mamlūk to be added to the core troop.

### (ii) Quotations

17 of the 67 poems in the chosen section are quotations. Ten are descriptive, of which nine are describing people<sup>569</sup> and one a lion<sup>570</sup>. Six can be classified as 'gnomic'<sup>571</sup>. The final quotation is cited by the Narrator to describe how Fāṭimah's retinue prepared for the journey to Egypt and is in praise of God and Muhammad<sup>572</sup>.

<sup>568</sup> ibid vol.1, part 2, p.16

<sup>569</sup> ibid poems 23, 27, 40, 41, 44, 48, 51, 54 and 59 in vol.1, part 1, pp.70, 76; part 2, pp.7, 7, 15, 18, 28, 45 and 59

<sup>570</sup> ibid poem 34, in vol.1, part 1, p.100

<sup>571</sup> ibid poems 1, 14, 17, 18, 30, 36 in vol.1, part 1, pp.12, 54, 63, 63, 94 and 107

<sup>572</sup> ibid poem 16, in vol 1, part 1, p.62

Most of the quotations (13 out of 17) are spoken by the Narrator, including both descriptive and gnomic pieces.

### (iii) Non-quotations

#### (a) introduction

50 of the 67 verse passages in the chosen section are spoken by characters without being presented as quotations from third parties. The poetry is not significantly different from other *siyar*, with the exception of *Zīr Sālīm* and *Banī Hilāl*, in consisting primarily of soliloquies, appeals to God or statements rather than in forming part of a dialogue. It will, however, be seen that there are two significant differences from the other *siyar*. The first is a lack of love poetry. The second is the number of requests and prayers contained in the poems, which is evidenced by the frequency of imperatives and optatives.

#### (b) praise or supplication of God

The features, which were noted above in poem 45, are those which dominate the poetry of the *sīrah*. By far the largest category of non-quotations in the chosen section are those concerned with God or religion, which account for 32 out of the total of 50 poems. They are either addressed to God or in praise of God. And almost all of them contain requests expressed as optatives or imperatives: 38 poems contain at least one imperative and there are five poems containing ten or more<sup>573</sup>. Verbs which constantly recur are ‘to request’ (طلب) and ‘to beseech’ (توسل).

Often the imperative(s) occur at the end of the poem as its climax and logical conclusion. An example of this is poem 20<sup>574</sup>, a poem of 53 lines recited by the minister Shāhīn, when he is in Medīnah accompanying the Caliph’s daughter on a pilgrimage. Shāhīn has been reading the Qur’ān and is described as being in ‘a state

<sup>573</sup> poems 33, 45, 46, 47 and 63, *ibid* vol.1, part 1, p.99 and part 2, pp.16, 17, 18 and 84

<sup>574</sup> *ibid* vol.1, part 1, p.64

of extreme reverence'. It is in the form of a prayer addressed to the Messenger of God, each line ending with 'You' or 'Your' through the monorhyme *āk*, as in the opening line:

ألا يا رسول الله جننتك قاصدا أرجو رضاك وأحتمي بحماك  
 O Messenger of God I have come to you deliberately  
 I hope for your approval and your protection.

The first 45 lines of the poem are concerned with singing Muhammad's praises, focusing particularly on his role as intercessor on behalf of mankind:

انت الذي فينا سألت شفاعة ناداك ربك لم تكن لسواك  
 you are He who interceded for us  
 your Lord called you and no-one other than you.

They lead up to the last 8 lines, where he asks for help: 'O my master be my intercessor in my hour of need' (يا مالكي كن شفاعي من فاقتي). The power of the poetry is proved by the immediate and miraculous appearance of the King, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, who has been transported from Cairo (thus revealing his special powers as one of God's chosen). This suggests also that there is a magical quality in that power, which is consistent with the ambivalent status of poetry in early Islam: if poetry is not used by those 'who believe and do good'<sup>575</sup>, poets are classed with soothsayers and other liars who are under the influence of the *shayātīn*.<sup>576</sup>

Six short passages of verse, of 2-5 lines each, form a sub-category of poems recited by the *Jāwīsh* at the close of the religious rituals which conclude the meetings of the King's *dīwān*. The wording which introduces them hardly varies from: قرأ القارى وختم ودعى الداعى وختم ورقى الراقى وختم صاح جاويش الديوان وهو يقول صلوا على الرسول (the reciter recited and finished, the caller summoned and finished and the worshipper

<sup>575</sup> Qur'ān 26:227

<sup>576</sup> Bürgel (1988) p.9

made his prostration and finished and the *Jāwīsh* said ‘pray for the Messenger’ ...) <sup>577</sup>. Poem 24 <sup>578</sup> is typical, whose opening line is:

الملك لله دون الورى      وكل ما سوى الله باطل  
 the king of God is different from mankind  
 and everyone except God is worthless.

(c) *fakhr*

The subject-matter of the first part of the *sīrah* provides no call for *fakhr* or battle poems, but the first example occurs in the second part and they become more frequent as the *sīrah* progresses and wars proliferate. As was found to be the case in *Fīrūz Shāh* and *Ḥamzah*, the *fakhr* poems tend to be the only ones which contain specific references to the people and events of the *sīrah*. They contain relatively little *fakhr* and no pre-battle exchanges with opponents, but they are true to the overall religious and Muslim theme of the *sīrah*’s poetry in presenting Baybars and his fellow warriors primarily as worthy fighters for the True Faith.

Poem 61 <sup>579</sup> is the first such poem spoken by Baybars <sup>580</sup> and it strikes a typical tone. The first half of the 18-line poem is *fakhr*, warning the enemy of the fate awaiting them, where the key statement is: ‘I ask for victory from my Creator’ (وأطلب النصر (من خالقي), and the second half is concerned solely with his relationship with God and his role as one of God’s warriors: شهيدا رشيدا مغازيا (a martyr of the true faith striving for victory).

As the *sīrah* proceeds, the battle poems become more frequent and share the spotlight with the religious poems. It is remarkable that, after the first volume, in the whole of the *sīrah*, there are no more than two or three poems of more than 6 lines which do not fall squarely into one of these two categories. Another common feature is that they tend to occur in clusters, in which two or three Muslim leaders

<sup>577</sup> *Sīrat Baybars* vol.3, part 12, p.39

<sup>578</sup> *ibid* vol.1, part 1, p.71

<sup>579</sup> *ibid* vol.1, part 2, p.76

<sup>580</sup> *ibid* vol.1, part 2, p.76

recite one after another and sometimes share a common rhyme and metre. The verse in part 32 of the *sīrah*<sup>581</sup> is typical of one of the parts dealing primarily with warfare: of the 9 poems in this section, consisting of 59 lines, 5 poems totalling 49 lines are pre-battle poems and 3 of them occur in a cluster, recited by Baybars, Ibrahīm and Sa‘d respectively, using the same rhyme and metre.

(d) other

Of the other 18 poems in the first two parts, which are not quotations, eight can be classified as greetings (poems 8, 9, 10, 25, 26, 31, 66 and 67)<sup>582</sup>. Four of them form the beginning or ending of letters, including poem 9<sup>583</sup>, which is the conclusion of a letter from Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn to the Caliph in Baghdad reporting on events in Egypt. This contains a statement which conveys the importance of using poetry to convey one’s innermost feelings:

ولو انى شرحت ما بقلبي الى العشاق لفاض فيضا كثير  
ولكن قلبي اليك رسولا يترجم عنه لديك بشعري  
If I revealed what is in my heart  
to lovers a great flood would overflow  
but my heart is a messenger to you  
which tells you of it in my poetry.

G. The Damascene text of *Sīrat Baybars*

(i) Introduction

It is interesting to compare the poetry in the text discussed above with the poetry in the other existing, and edited, printed version: the text published in Damascus in 2000-2009<sup>584</sup>. As mentioned above, the former text is based on an Egyptian

<sup>581</sup> ibid vol.7

<sup>582</sup> ibid vol.1, part 1, pp.33, 34, 36, 72, 72, 96; part 2, pp.92 and 96

<sup>583</sup> ibid vol 1, part 1, p.34

<sup>584</sup> Bohas and Zakharia (2000-2009)

manuscript and the latter on a Damascene one; there are substantial differences in content and emphasis, which have been examined in detail by Thomas Herzog<sup>585</sup>.

The following table shows the amount of poetry and its distribution in the Damascene text:

<u>vol.</u>	<u>pages</u>	<u>poems</u>	<u>lines</u>	<u>ave.lines per poem</u>	<u>% of total text</u>
1	317	28	49	1.7	0.7%
2	313	32	131	4.1	2.0%
3	353	84	456	5.4	6.2%
4	307	86	354	4.1	5.5%
5	342	53	313	5.9	4.4%
6	354	29	149	5.1	2.0%
7	405	25	222	8.9	2.6%
8	317	20	148	7.4	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,708</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>1,822</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>3.2%</b>

If this is compared with the Cairo text, it can be seen that it contains considerably less poetry than the latter:

	<u>Damascus</u>	<u>Cairo</u>
pages:	2,708	3,634 <sup>586</sup>
poems:	357	585
lines:	1,822	3,674
ave.lines per poem:	5.1	6.3
verse as % of text:	3.2%	4.6%

The lesser quantity of poetry is partly explained by the shorter length of the text, but the proportion of verse in the Damascene text is still almost 30% less than in the Cairo text. The other major difference is the pattern of occurrence of poetry in the Damascene text, which is significantly less frequent in the early parts and therefore unlike what has been found in the other *siyar*.

For the purpose of this study, detailed examination of the Damascene text has focused on the first 26 of the *sīrah*'s 80 parts, which form the whole of volumes 1

<sup>585</sup> Herzog (2006)

<sup>586</sup> For the purpose of this comparison, the Cairo text is assumed to finish at p.31 of vol.10, part 48, which marks the end of the *sīrah*. The remaining 109 pages consist of dates and details (including some photographs) of all the rulers of Egypt since the Hijrah and of a series of patriotic poems by 'modern' Egyptian poets (including Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm).

and 2 and pages 1-243 of volume 3 of the eight printed volumes. It contains 104 pieces of verse, amounting to 448 lines. Much of the action in the chosen section falls after the end of the period examined in the Cairo text, since the text starts with al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's dream (which does not occur until page 100 of the Cairo text) and covers the period of Baybars' rise to a position of authority in Cairo and his appointment as ruler of Syria. The placement of poems within the plot of the section is shown in Appendix 23: 'Placement of poems in *Sīrat Baybars (Damas)* (parts 1-26)'.

As well as the difference in subject-matter between the two texts, there is a significant difference in tone and overall theme. Whereas the Cairo text emphasizes Baybars' role as the champion of Islam, the Damascene text emphasizes his role as the righter of injustice. It will be seen that this difference is reflected in the poetry.

## (ii) Quotations

A striking feature of the poetry in the Damascene text is the large number of passages presented as quotations: 56 in the chosen section, which is more than half of the total poems. Also remarkable is the fact that, of the 56 quotations, 47 can be classified as 'gnomic' in character. Of these 47 poems, 32 are of only one or two lines, but they include also the two longest poems in the section (in the whole *sīrah* there are only three other poems of greater length), poems 62 and 85, of 44 and 30 lines respectively. A common feature of more than half these quotations is the use of approbatory wording in the words leading up to them, so that the normal introduction of 'as the poet said...' is qualified by the addition of words such as 'he spoke the truth' (صدق) or 'rightly' (من حقه) or the poet is described as 'wise' (حكيم) or eloquent (احد الفصحاء), which are entirely appropriate to support gnomic comments.

Poems 1 and 3 are typical of the shorter quotations:

poem 1<sup>587</sup>: this quotation is used by the merchants of Damascus to

<sup>587</sup> *Sīrat Baybars (Damas)*, vol.1, p.22

console ‘Alī Āghā when his business has fallen on hard times:

إذا سلمت رؤس الرجال من الردى      فما المال إلا مثل قص الأظافر  
when the heads of men are saved from destruction  
money is no more (important) than nail clippings.

It is used also in *1001 Nights* (Night 981) in similar circumstances, when someone is comforting his brothers who have survived a shipwreck but have lost all the profits of their voyage.

poem 3<sup>588</sup>: ‘Alī Āghā uses this quotation to comfort his wife and support his view that ‘after trouble there is only comfort’:

قل لمن يحمل هما      ان همك لا يدوم  
مثلما يفنى السرور      هكذا تفنى الهموم  
say to someone borne down with worry  
your worry will not last  
just as happiness disappears  
so worry disappears.

This saying is used also in *1001 Nights*<sup>589</sup> (in the prologue) by Shahrazād to her father, when she finds him looking worried.

These short quotations, which are often like proverbs, play an important part in creating the gnomic tone which permeates the *sīrah*. Their importance is emphasized by the fact that one of them forms Baybars’ first piece of verse, poem 13<sup>590</sup>, when he rebukes Ahmad Bāshā for telling him that he cannot enforce justice against the Governor of Damascus:

وما يد إلا يد الله فوقها      وما بظالم إلا سيلى باظلم  
there is no hand without the hand of God being on top of it

<sup>588</sup> ibid vol.1, p.26

<sup>589</sup> Bohas (2004) p.4

<sup>590</sup> *Sīrat Baybars (Damas)* vol.1, p.119

and no oppressor who will not experience oppression.

Despite being a short gnomic quotation, this succeeds in following the pattern of heroes' first poems in other *siyar* by indicating the main trait of his character: his constant fight against injustice. This saying is also found in the *1001 Nights* (*Night* 436), where it concludes the tale of *The Pilgrim Who Lost his Way* by pointing the moral of man's injustice to man.

The two longest quotations, poems 62 and 85 as mentioned above, are both remarkable poems. Poem 62<sup>591</sup> could be classified as a 'lament', since it is recited by King Ṣāliḥ to Baybarṣ when he is reflecting on his own coming death and is effectively an auto-elegy, but it is also a reflection on death: the meaning of death, what precedes it and what comes after it. Kate Zakharia comments that this poem alone would provide material for a long article and she describes it as 'un récit qui entremêle le réalisme, les predictions, l'intuition des fins dernières, les propos édifiants et la description de certains aspects de l'existence *post mortem*'<sup>592</sup> (a narrative which mixes realism, predictions, intuition of the final conclusions, moral precepts and the description of certain aspects of life after death). Its tone is caught in its first line:

ليس الغريب غريب الشام واليمن بل الغريب غريب اللحد والكفنى

the stranger is not the stranger of al-Shām or the Yemen

but the stranger is the stranger of the grave and the winding-sheet.

Poem 85<sup>593</sup> is a strophic poem spoken by the minister Shāhīn to a group of ministers and officials who are being hostile towards Baybarṣ and it is designed to change their attitude. Although introduced by words of anger ('the minister Shāhīn shouted, making a sound like a roll of thunder'), the poem is actually, in Katia Zakharia's words, an 'éloge de l'amitié' (praise of friendship) and each of the five stanzas describe a different aspect of the subject. Even in a situation of crisis and

<sup>591</sup> ibid vol.3, p.28

<sup>592</sup> Zakharia (2004) p.205

<sup>593</sup> *Sīrat Baybarṣ (Damas)* vol.3, p.188

heightened emotions, the verse does not lose the objective, gnomic quality which is characteristic of the *sīrah*.

11 of the 57 quotations are presented as interventions by the extra-diagetic Narrator and 5 of these are gnomic in character. This reflects a difference from the other *siyar*, where the Narrator's quotations have tended to be exclusively descriptive, of scenery or people.

### (iii) Non-quotations

#### (a) introduction

47 of the 104 verse passages in the chosen section are spoken by characters without being presented as quotations from third parties. As in the Cairo text, the poetry consists primarily of soliloquies, appeals to God or statements rather than in forming part of a dialogue. Indeed, it is the quotations which tend to form a natural part of the characters' conversation, while the non-quotations stand out as being exceptional.

The poetry shares the Cairo text's lack of love poetry, but it differs in lacking also the Cairo text's quantity of requests and prayers and its frequent use of imperatives and optatives. Two special features of the Damascus text are the large category of poems which can best be described as 'greetings' (also present, but in less quantity, in the Cairo text) and the gnomic tone of the poetry which is maintained in all categories, as in the quotations.

#### (b) greetings

15 of the 47 pieces of verse fall into the category of 'greetings', which are spoken by one character to another on the occasion of their meeting. 13 of them are spoken by Baybars or one of the other leading characters as salutations on entering the King's presence. They tend to be short pieces: only one is more than 5 lines (poem

46<sup>594</sup> with 10 lines). Katia Zakharia classifies these poems as *madīh*<sup>595</sup>, but there are also other elements. Some pieces are simply expressions of good wishes: an example is poem 21<sup>596</sup> (this poem is identical to poem 31<sup>597</sup> and is found also in *1001 Nights: Nights 21 and 981*<sup>598</sup>), which is spoken by Baybars to the King on entering his presence:

تصبحك السعادة كل يوم      على رغم الحسود  
فلا زالت لك الايام بيض      وايام من عاداك سودو  
may good fortune attend you every day  
in spite of envies  
may your days remain white  
and your enemies' days black.

Another example of pure 'good wishes' is poem 41<sup>599</sup>. Equally there are examples of pure *madīh*, such as poem 24<sup>600</sup> spoken by Baybars to the King in similar circumstances to poem 21:

انت سليمان يوم العرض هدهده      اهدت جرادا له قد كان في فيها  
وانشدت بلسان الحال قائلة      ان الهديه على مقدار هاديتها  
لو كان يهدى للانسان قيمته      لكلا ان يهدى لك الدنيا وما فيها  
on the day of Judgement Hudhudah [a hoopoe] came to Solomon  
she gave him a present of a locust which was in her mouth  
and she recited silently saying  
that the gift was in keeping with the status of the giver  
if (the giver) was giving to someone what he was worth  
he would give you the world and what is in it.<sup>601</sup>

<sup>594</sup> ibid vol.2, p.216

<sup>595</sup> Zakharia (2004) p.195

<sup>596</sup> *Sīrat Baybars (Damas)* vol.1, p.193

<sup>597</sup> ibid vol.2, p.53

<sup>598</sup> albeit in a slightly less simple version:

سعادات تجدد كل يوم      وإقبال على كيد الحسود  
فما زالت لك الأيام بيضا      وأيام الذي عادك سود

<sup>599</sup> ibid vol.2, p.129

<sup>600</sup> ibid vol.1, p.271

<sup>601</sup> the editors point out that this poem refers to *Sūrat al-Naml* 16-20

Other examples of pure *madīh* are poems 51, 69, 70, 87 and 92<sup>602</sup>. Several poems combine good wishes and *madīh*, such as poem 9<sup>603</sup> spoken by the merchant ‘Alī Āghā to the King. It starts in line 1 with good wishes: ‘I have asked God to perpetuate your good fortune with good health’ (سئلت الله يديم سعدك بالهنا) and concludes with *madīh*: ‘you are performing heroic deeds always’ (انت همام للمهمات) (دانما). Another poem which combines good wishes and *madīh* is poem 46<sup>604</sup>. Other greetings include an expression of affection (poem 58<sup>605</sup>), an apology (poem 25<sup>606</sup>) and a request for pardon (poem 50<sup>607</sup>).

It is noteworthy that these passages are all generic and contain no specific references to anything or anybody in the *sīrah*. Also there are no occasions when greetings are exchanged in verse, although there are often brief acknowledgements in prose. For example, poems 32, 41, 50 and 58 all elicit the same response from the King: ‘may God give you good health!’ (الله يعطيك العافية). And sometimes the recipient’s reaction is noted: for example, after Baybars’ good wishes in poem 9 ‘the king smiled’ (فتبسمت الملك) and after poem 21 the King says ‘Allāh! Allāh!’.

Most of the pieces classified as ‘greetings’ are spoken by people entering the presence of the King or of someone superior in rank. This supports the view that poetry is suitable for the high status of the addressee as well as being the best means of introducing oneself. These poems point to one of the important roles of poetry in the *siyar*, which is to provide an effective means of inter-personal communication. They facilitate encounters between people and serve to formalise their relations.

### (c) *fakhr* and battle poems

There are 11 poems in the chosen section which can be classified as *fakhr* or battle poems, all spoken by Baybars or other Muslim leaders as they go in to fight the

<sup>602</sup> ibid vol.2, p.258; vol.3, pp.61, 61, 190 and 199

<sup>603</sup> ibid vol.1, p.38

<sup>604</sup> ibid vol.2, p.216

<sup>605</sup> ibid vol.2, p.298

<sup>606</sup> ibid vol.1, p.274

<sup>607</sup> ibid vol.2, p.257

Christians or other unbelievers. They differ from similar poems in other *siyar* by not including any exchanges of verse between warriors, which reflects the fact that there are no incidents of single combat. Even poem 15<sup>608</sup>, which is addressed by Baybarṣ to Sarajwīl, occurs when they are both part of a general mêlée.

One characteristic which most of these poems share with similar poems in the Cairo text, as well as in other *siyar* such as *al-Amīr Ḥamzah* and *Fīrūz Shāh*, is their specificity in contrast to the other poetry in the *sīrah*. Only three of the poems do not include a statement of identity by the speaker: the first line of poem 43<sup>609</sup> is typical:

الله اكبر انا الموصوف ببيرص دو الهمم لي ضربات يوم اللقا نفلق القمم  
 God is great I am called Baybarṣ the resolute  
 on the day of battle my blows cleave heads.

This line demonstrates another feature of these poems: the *fakhr* is always associated with the cause of God and the true faith. The very first poem spoken by Baybarṣ (other than the quotation discussed in (ii) (a) above) is poem 15<sup>610</sup>, which Baybarṣ addresses to Sarajwīl in the middle of a battle, where Baybarṣ introduces himself in line 4 as follows:

انا ببيرص وسيطي فاق فعلي احب الموت واكره للحياتي  
 I am Baybarṣ my Intercessor is above my deeds  
 I love death and life is hateful to me.

Poems often refer to the religious nature of the battle: in poem 15, for example, Baybarṣ addresses Sarajwīl as ‘blasphemous dog’ (كلاب الكفرانى) and poem 45<sup>611</sup> starts by addressing the enemy as ‘heathen dogs your coming has ignited the champion of wars’ (كلاب الكفر وأوقد جائكم بطل الحروب). The poems also end invariably

<sup>608</sup> ibid vol.1, p.151

<sup>609</sup> ibid vol.2, p.189

<sup>610</sup> ibid vol.1, p.151

<sup>611</sup> ibid vol.2, p.212

with an invocation of God: typical is the line which concludes both poems 43 and 100:

محمود اسمي والتفاخر للذي اسمه محمد المبعوث رحمة للامم

Maḥmūd [praised] is my name and the glory belongs to Him  
whose name is Muḥammad the Messenger (who came) out of mercy for  
mankind.

Katia Zakharia has commented on the difference between these poems and their pre-Islamic models: ‘Si ces poèmes puisent leurs racines dans le passé pré-islamique, ils s’en démarquent systématiquement: le dernier vers est toujours associé à l’Islam, par le biais d’un éloge sacralisant le prophète Muḥammad. Ce vers transforme retrospectivement la signification de l’ensemble, valorisant le courage brutal revendiqué par le récitant en le mettant au service de la foi.’<sup>612</sup> (If the roots of these poems lie in the pre-Islamic past, they systematically differentiate themselves from it: the last line is always associated with Islam by means of praise in honour of the prophet Muhammad. This line retrospectively transforms the meaning of the whole, justifying the brutal courage claimed by the speaker by laying it in the service of the faith).

These poems are further evidence of poetry’s power as a means of communication. The purpose of the poems is always to encourage either the speaker or his troops, or both, as they go in to fight. And their effectiveness is always stressed, generally as evidenced by the zeal and success of the combatants. A typical reaction to the poems is that shown by Baybarṣ and his troops to poem 43<sup>613</sup>: ‘when he had finished speaking he went into battle as though he was a raging lion and his soldiers went into battle behind him as if they were beasts of the jungle’ (حمل كانه اسد هجام وحملت عسكره وراه كانه سباع الاجام).

(d) religious

<sup>612</sup> Zakharia (2004) p.194

<sup>613</sup> *Sīrat Baybarṣ (Damas)* vol.2, p.189

Five poems are mainly concerned with God and faith. Four of them are relatively short, between 2 to 5 lines, and are wholly devoted to religious themes (poems 34, 39, 75 and 76)<sup>614</sup>. Typical is poem 34: this 2-line poem, addressed to God, is spoken to Baybars by his foster brother when he is describing the impact of his love for a girl and excusing it by referring to God's creation of beauty:

أنت جميل وتحب الجمال فكيف عبادك لا يعشقوا

You are beautiful and you love beauty  
so how can your servants not fall in love.

Bohas and Zakharia point out that these lines are based on a *hadīth*, as well as being found in *1001 Nights (Night 964)*.<sup>615</sup>

The most substantial and significant of the religious poems is poem 88<sup>616</sup>, addressed to Baybars by a mysterious dervish (later identified as Shīhah), who visits Baybars when he has isolated himself in his castle, after somehow gaining entry despite the drawbridge having been lifted. Baybars has become the governor of al-Shām, but has consistently declined to assume the throne of Egypt and the caliphate. Shīhah has come from a meeting with al-Khiḍr and he uses a blend of religious and political advice to urge Baybars to take action on behalf of his people. It is a relatively long poem, at 18 lines, and falls into two unequal sections. Lines 1-7 contain the call to action, the advice and the invocation of God, while lines 8-18 are *madīḥ* of Baybars' achievements to date. The first seven lines are an extremely effective blend of praise, encouragement, invocation of God and urge to action, as exemplified by line 2:

ومهد الارض فهي الآن خاضعة بحزم رايك والرحمن يرشده

put the land in order for it is now submissive  
with the resoluteness of your judgement while the Merciful One  
will show it the way.

<sup>614</sup> ibid vol.2, pp.82 and 125; vol.3, p.76

<sup>615</sup> ibid vol.2, p.82, footnote 37

<sup>616</sup> ibid vol.3, p.191

Lines 8-18 are more straightforward praise of Baybars' achievements, at whose heart are four lines, 11-14, which all start with 'how many...' (وكم...), such as line 14:

وكم عارض جعل الدنيا بهجمته      حتى هجمت بسيف الحق تطرده  
 how many opponents have seized the world with their assaults  
 until you attacked with the sword of truth to drive them away.

This is Shīhah's first appearance in the *sīrah* and the poem prefigures the important role which he will play as Baybars' adviser. It also encapsulates the themes of justice and religion which underlie the whole of the *sīrah*.

(e) other

There are 17 poems which do not fall squarely into any of the above categories, but mostly have elements of one or more of them. They include two which can be classified as elegies for the dead (in addition to poem 62 examined in D (ii) (a) above): poems 63 and 98<sup>617</sup>, and four which can be classified as laments: poems 52-56<sup>618</sup>.

They include also a remarkable variant on a *khamrīyah* in poem 71<sup>619</sup>, which King 'Isā al-Ghāzī recites as he sits on a dais watching a battle with a cup of wine in his hand, which has been handed to him by his constant companion and servant Jannantū. The poem is addressed affectionately to his wine, which he describes as 'possessed of all good qualities without exception' (من حاز كل المحاسن طراً), but it displays also an awareness of the evils of his addiction when he describes his devotion to it as 'my disgrace and my shame' (ذلي وافتضاحي). The poem could be described as a *khamrīyah*, but it lacks any overtone of mystical symbolism for it is wine itself to which 'Isā is devoted. Katia Zakharia classifies the poem as a *ghazal ghilmānī*, which is addressed to Jannantū as well as to the wine, and points out that, while it quite usual for wine to be identified with a female beloved, 'l'équation vin = éphèbe est plus rare et peut être considérée comme l'une des (nombreuses)

<sup>617</sup> ibid vol.3, pp.31 and 222

<sup>618</sup> ibid vol.2, pp.273, 274, 277 and 282

<sup>619</sup> ibid vol.3, p.69

marques de litt rarit  et d'originalit  du r cit' (the equation of wine = ephebe is more rare and can be considered as one of the (many) signs of literariness and originality in the narrative).<sup>620</sup> The identification is entirely suitable to the position of the poem in the narrative: the poem contains  Is 's final words before he falls to his death from the dais and so it represents a sort of deathbed confession of the two vices which have made him such an unsuitable king: wine and pederasty.

#### (iv) Sources of the poems

George Bohas's research<sup>621</sup> has identified the authors of 24 out of the 103 poems<sup>622</sup> and has found citations of (all or part of) 34 of the 103 poems. It has been possible also to trace citations of a further 12 poems<sup>623</sup>. A list of authors and primary citations is shown in Appendix 24: 'Sources of poems in *S rat Baybars (Damas)* (parts 1-26)'.

It is noteworthy that the identified poems comprise both 'quotations' and 'non-quotations' within the *s rah*. This suggests that the presentation of verse passages as 'quotations' is a deliberate narrative device employed by the author or narrator.

It is also noteworthy that 26 of the passages are found in *1001 Nights*. The obvious explanation is that the Narrator was familiar with the *1001 Nights* and used it as a convenient source for his recitations. It provides evidence for the importance of the part played by a narrator in creating a particular text. However, it points also to the fact that the use of verse in *S rat Baybars* is very similar to its use in *1001 Nights*, where poems tend to be short and gnomic and to be commenting on the action rather than expressing characters' emotions. It is consistent with Wolfhart Heinrichs's description of the verse in *1001 Nights* as 'illustrative'<sup>624</sup>, although Heinrichs is referring to pieces which are descriptive as well as gnomic.

<sup>620</sup> Zakharia (2004) p.202

<sup>621</sup> Bohas (2004)

<sup>622</sup> in 3 cases the identification refers only to certain lines - see Appendix 3

<sup>623</sup> with the help of Q sim Mukhalaf al-Kurdi's edition of all the verse in *1001 Nights* (al-Kurdi (2002) )

<sup>624</sup> Heinrichs (2007) p.362

It is interesting, although perhaps not relevant to the sharing of quotations, that parallels can be drawn between the underlying themes of *Sīrat Baybars* and *1001 Nights*. Yannick Lerible has described the *sīrah*'s concentration on the importance of establishing a just society and how this was in accord with its public 'dont la principale préoccupation était vraisemblablement le triomphe final de l'idée de justice, véritable obsession des *Mille et Une Nuits* et de la pensée islamique en général'<sup>625</sup> (whose principal preoccupation was probably the final triumph of the concept of justice, a true obsession of *1001 Nights* and of Islamic thought in general).

## F Conclusion

There are considerable differences in the content of the poetry in the two versions of *Sīrat Baybars*. These include the strikingly large number of gnomic quotations in the Damascene version and of poems in praise or supplication of God in the Cairo version. It is possible that the differences reflect the poetic repertoires and skills of different narrators. This would be consistent with the results of George Bohas's research into the sources of poems in the Damascene version, since the number of pieces found also in the *1001 Nights* suggests that the narrator/author shares a similar repertoire. However, the differences are also consistent with an overall difference in emphasis between the two versions. Both versions portray Baybars as a Muslim hero fighting for his faith, but the Damascene version places more emphasis on his role as a just ruler while the Cairo version stresses his religious faith.

The poetry is playing the same role which it has played in other *siyar*, namely that of highlighting and promoting the central theme and 'agenda' of the *sīrah*. It has to be understood in the context of that theme, or of what Sa'īd Yaqtīn has called the *waḏīfah markazīyah*. For Yaqtīn, in *Sīrat Baybars* the event which points to the *waḏīfah markazīyah* is the dream of King al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb which prompts him to

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<sup>625</sup> Lerible (2004) p.160

buy mamlūks to protect his kingdom.<sup>626</sup> Baybarş is the leader of the pack of lions in al-Şāliḥ's dream, whose role as a Muslim warrior is to destroy the pack of jackals who represent the unbelievers. The poetry's main aim is to present what Yannick Lerible has described as 'un véritable idéal politico-religieux, une idéologie sous-jacente'<sup>627</sup> (a veritable politico-religious ideal, an underlying ideology). It is the poetry which is creating this ideal Muslim nation. In doing so, it is fulfilling the role played in other *siyar* which is caught by Heidegger's description of poetry as 'the founding of being'<sup>628</sup>, or as expressed by Hölderlin in the poem quoted by Heidegger: '...what remains is founded by the poets'.<sup>629</sup>

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<sup>626</sup> Yaqtīn (1997) p.45

<sup>627</sup> Lerible (2004) p.159

<sup>628</sup> Heidegger (2000) p.61

<sup>629</sup> *ibid* p.51

## Chapter 11

## Conclusion

It is hoped that the above chapters have demonstrated not only that the poetry of the *siyar* is interesting and worthwhile as poetry but also that it plays a central, if different, role in each *sīrah*. This concluding chapter will attempt to summarise the characteristics which make poetry's role both special and essential.

The poetry plays a very different role from that of the prose. There are very few examples of narrative poetry in the *siyar*, apart from the longer historic/prophetic poems in *Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan* and *Zīr Sālim*. It is the prose which has to undertake the basic narrative role. The poetry, however, is crucial to the presentation of themes which lie at the heart of each *sīrah*. It is necessary to distinguish *Zīr Sālim* and *Banī Hilāl* from the other *siyar*, since they can fairly be described as 'prosimetric dramas', where verse is used as the main medium of speech; it is used for every statement of any consequence, it occurs at every moment of tension, it affects the course of every event and each piece of verse is prefaced with a statement of identity which affirms the existence and character of the speaker. The very much lower proportion of poetry in the other *siyar* means that it is used more selectively, but in each case it is used to highlight themes at the heart of the *sīrah*. *Dhāt al-Himmah* is a paean in praise of Muslim chivalry and the poetry's linking of 'valour and eloquence' ( الشجاعة والفصاحة ) embodies the key qualities of the Muslim hero. Similarly 'Antarah is renowned equally as poet and warrior; he uses his eloquence as well as his valour to overcome the handicaps of his birth and colour; and his verse celebrates his achievement. Poetry is at the very heart of 'Umar al-Nu'mān, for it is the different treatment of love in each of the three tales which links them and makes the frame structure effective, and it is the poetry in each tale through which the love is expressed. In *Sayf Ibn Dhī Yazan* the poetry, like the action, is wholly centred on Sayf and reflects his own concerns with religion and fate as well as providing him with a means to confront stress and danger; a special feature of the verse are the longer narrative/prophetic poems, which convey the sense of history and destiny at the heart of the *sīrah*. In both *Fīrūz Shāh* and *Ḥamzah*, poetry is used to develop the themes of love, between Fīrūz and 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt and Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār, which run alongside the heroes'

exploits as warriors and leaders. The theme is given a particular intensity in *Fīrūz Shāh* by the extensive use of *Ṣūfī* language and *motifs*. Finally, in *Baybars* the poetry again reflects the central theme of the *sīrah*, which is the creation of an ideal Muslim nation, and a large number of the key poems are prayers or requests addressed directly or indirectly to God.

The *siyar* are works of *prosimetrum* and poetry's role must be considered in relation to the prose which surrounds it. It is helpful to look again at Wolfhart Heinrichs's study of 'prosimetrical works in classical Arabic literature'<sup>630</sup>, which was discussed with reference to *Zīr Sālim* in Chapter 2 above. Heinrichs found three roles for poetry (based mainly on the evidence of the *ayyām al-‘arab* and the *maqāmāt* and excluding what he calls 'action poetry and poems that are objects within the narrative'): 'It seems to come down to three basic situations: *shāhid* (witness poem), '*‘aqd wa ḥall* (solidification [of prose] and dissolution [of poetry] = poetry-prose equivalency) and *tamaththul* (quoting a poetic parallel)'.<sup>631</sup> In the *siyar* poetry examined above, there are very few examples which could be fitted into either of the first two categories. The notion of poetry as *shāhid* stems from the concept of poetry as the *dīwān* of the Arabs in which poetry provides what Mu‘āwiyah (as quoted by Heinrichs) called 'decisive proof' (*al-ḥukm*)<sup>632</sup>. While poetry in the *siyar* may be used to recount important events (for example, the long prophetic poems in *Sīrat Sayf*), the stress is on the importance of what is being said rather than on any need for evidence of its truth. Similarly, there is seldom any element of '*‘aqd wa ḥall*, since the poetry's role, when it follows a statement in prose which is broadly on the same subject, is generally to add a completely new dimension to what has been said in prose: a typical example would be 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt looking at the portrait of Fīrūz and then breaking into verse to express her feelings of love for him. This cannot be described as 'prose-verse equivalency'.

The third category, *tamaththul*, may be used to include all the quotations found in the *siyar*, whether descriptive or gnomic. However, the translation provided by Heinrichs - 'quoting a poetic parallel' - does not do full justice to the emblematic

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<sup>630</sup> Heinrichs (1997)

<sup>631</sup> *ibid* p.270

<sup>632</sup> *ibid* p.260

quality of the quotations. The descriptions are emblematic and ideal rather than specific and realistic. The scene is always a *locus amoenus*, reflecting the glory of God's creation, like the meadow where Sharkān first glimpses Abrīzah in *'Umar al-Nu'mān*:

ما تحسن الأرض إلا عند زهرتها      والماء من فوقها يجري بإرسال  
صنع الآله العظيم الشأن مقتدرأ      معطي العطايا ومعطي كل مفضل  
the beauty of the land lies in its flowers  
and the water that flows freely over it  
created by the power of the Almighty God  
the Giver of Gifts, Generous to the generous.<sup>633</sup>

Horses are prodigies of speed and strength, like Muznah in *Dhāt al-Himmah* who 'glided like the flowing wind' while 'lightning shone from her leaps'.<sup>634</sup> The beloved ladies also reflect the beauty of the natural world, like Laylah in *Dhāt al-Himmah*:

فاتها خلقت من ماء لؤلؤة      في كل ناحية من وجهها قمر  
(she was created like the radiance of water  
from every angle her face is a moon).<sup>635</sup>

It is significant that, in his discussion of the poetry in *1001 Nights*, Heinrichs uses the same word, *tamatthul*, but gives it a slightly different meaning as 'using poetry as a *mathal*, a "proverb"', for, like a proverb, 'the poem is...taken from its initial context, which may not be known but is clearly alluded to by the poem itself, and inserted into a similar context, thereby indicating the constancy of human emotions'.<sup>636</sup> This definition captures the emblematic nature of the poems. Also apt is Heinrichs' description of the role of poems in *1001 Nights* as 'illustrations'.<sup>637</sup> Many of the quotations are interjected by the Narrator and so serve to highlight the Narrator's role. Heinrichs has remarked on the special status of these poems in *1001*

<sup>633</sup> *Alf Laylah wa-Laylah*, vol.1, p.166, translation Lyons (2008), vol.1, p.373

<sup>634</sup> *Dhāt al-Himmah*, vol.1, p.50

<sup>635</sup> *ibid* p.99

<sup>636</sup> Heinrichs (2007), p.358

<sup>637</sup> *ibid* p.362

*Nights*: ‘What these poems amount to is that they create another level of discourse alongside the narrative’.<sup>638</sup> In so doing, they serve to enhance the special role of the Narrator. To use Gérard Genette’s terminology, these poems affect the narratological ‘voice’: that is, ‘the way in which the narrating itself is implicated in the narrative’.<sup>639</sup> The Narrator can be categorized as having what Genette terms an ‘intradiegetic-heterodiegetic’ status: ‘intradiegetic’ because he is a narrator in the second degree (a fact which is emphasized by the constant repetition of statements about his act of narration such as the usual ‘the Narrator said...’) and ‘heterodiegetic’ because he is not a character in the story which he is relating. The quotations enhance his status vis-a-vis his audience and so add weight to what he is relating.

The role of the poetry in the *siyar*, other than the quotations, is therefore different from that of poetry in classical Arabic *prosimetrum* as described by Heinrichs. Attempts by scholars to define the role have tended to focus on the lyrical qualities of the poetry and to see it as being principally a means of expressing emotion and so revealing the speaker’s innermost feelings. Thus Rudi Paret comments that most poems in the *siyar* have a lyrical (in the widest sense of the word) character and ‘es sind immer Äusserungen eines Subjekts....das sich irgendwie in einem seelisch erregten Zustand befindet’ (they are always the utterances of a person who finds himself in an emotionally heightened situation). He goes on to say: ‘Die Liederlagen sind Mittel...., seelisch Höhepunkte der handelnden Personen zum Ausdruck zu bringen’ (the poetic interludes are a means ...to give expression to a character’s emotional climaxes).<sup>640</sup> The expression of emotion, including hidden emotion, has indeed been shown to be a major reason for breaking into verse in each of the *siyar*. This is stated explicitly in the words leading up to poems, such as: ‘poetry boiled up in his mind and there appeared what was hidden deep inside him’<sup>641</sup>. However, simple expression of feelings is not the only reason for these poems; they are also a means of dealing with emotion and stress. Furthermore, when recited in public, they are a means of demonstrating control. As Dwight

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<sup>638</sup> ibid p.361

<sup>639</sup> Genette (1980) p.31

<sup>640</sup> Paret 1930 p.166

<sup>641</sup> *Sīrat ‘Antarah*, vol.1, p.158

Reynolds has pointed out, one of the reasons for Arabic poetry being used to express personal feeling ‘..may lie in the Bedouin tribal ideal of demonstrating control over one’s emotions in public’<sup>642</sup>.

There are other important reasons for the use of poetry by characters in the *siyar*. A major one is in order to achieve effective inter-personal communication. Examples are the numerous poems of ‘greetings’ in *Sīrat Baybars* and the pre-combat exchanges in *Dhāt al-Himmah*. The act of communication is always accompanied by additional motivation which affects the content of the poetry. This is particularly obvious in the *fakhr* and *hijā*’ of pre-combat exchanges, but is also present in the greetings in *Baybars* where the speaker is usually entering the king’s presence and combines his greeting with enough *madīḥ* to assure a friendly reception. Similar is the use of poetry as a means of persuasion, to mount a winning argument, when difficult decisions need to be taken. This use was examined in *Banī Hilāl*, in the discussions between Hilāl and the tribal elders on the delicate issue of misbehaviour by Hilāl’s son, Mundhir, where there is a clear difference between the *finesse* of poetry and the bluntness of prose<sup>643</sup>. Another example is Dārim’s effort to persuade the tribe to expel Jundabah: ‘when they were assembled, he informed them of what he wanted to do. He indicated his wishes by reciting these lines...’<sup>644</sup> Poetry is the language of persuasion and diplomacy. Thus it is also the medium to be used for prayers and requests, as evidenced by the frequency of imperatives and optatives in the poetry of *Sīrat Baybars*. Another reason for using poetry for prayers is the importance and gravity of communications with God. Similar qualities make it the medium for statements of major significance, such as those concerning the past and future of mankind as a whole: examples are the *malḥamah kubrā* in *Zīr Sālim*<sup>645</sup> and the prophetic poems in *Sīrat Sayf*<sup>646</sup>.

There are parallels between the role of poetry in the *siyar* and the concept of the ‘refrain’ in the geophilosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (as expounded in *A*

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<sup>642</sup> Reynolds (1997) p.278

<sup>643</sup> see pp.74-76 above

<sup>644</sup> see p.104 above

<sup>645</sup> see p.49 above

<sup>646</sup> see p.222 above

*Thousand Plateaus*<sup>647</sup>). The refrain (which is introduced as the song of a child or a bird) exercises a ‘territorialising’ function, which creates a home and order and provides a ‘centre in the heart of chaos’<sup>648</sup>, whatever its particular purpose may be: ‘amorous, professional, provincial, or social, liturgical, cosmic’<sup>649</sup>. Thus poetry in the *siyar*, in its uses discussed above, may be seen also as a means of creating order in the face of chaos. Indeed, the concept of order is embodied in the Arabic word for poetry, *nazm*, derived from the root *n - z - m* and the verb *nazama* whose primary meanings are to ‘string pearls’ and hence to ‘order’ or ‘arrange’<sup>650</sup>

This concept of ‘order’ is embodied also in the form and structure of the poetry. It has been seen that the main feature of the verse, and a prime source of its effectiveness, is its use of the 2-hemistich line to achieve syntactic and semantic parallelism. The keynotes of the poetry are simplicity and harmony. The parallelism which dominates the form of the poetry is the very essence of poetic art. In his study of the power of grammatic parallelism, Roman Jakobson quotes Gerard Manley Hopkins: ‘The artificial part of poetry, perhaps we shall be right to say all artifice, reduces itself to the principle of parallelism’<sup>651</sup>. The harmony within and between lines, which is the effect of parallelism, is enhanced by the frequent use of a ‘ring’ structure for the form of the individual poems as a whole. Raymond Farrin has recently demonstrated how a ring structure was used to provide unity and coherence in a wide range of classical Arabic poetry<sup>652</sup>. The structures, which he identifies, tend to be on a large scale as appropriate for poems of some length; what is impressive in the *siyar* is how the structure may also be found in a complex form in poems of much more modest proportions. It has been suggested that the popularity of the ring structure in oral poetry is due to ‘mnemonic necessity’, as an aid to memory. Mary Douglas acknowledges this possibility, in considering the reasons for writers using a ring structure, but she points out that this does not explain its use by literate writers and she emphasizes the structure’s ‘exegetical function’: the way that ‘it controls meaning, it restricts what is said, and in so

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<sup>647</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1987)

<sup>648</sup> *ibid* p.343

<sup>649</sup> *ibid* p.344

<sup>650</sup> Wehr 1994) p.1147

<sup>651</sup> Jakobson (1987) p.82

<sup>652</sup> Farrin (2011)

doing it expands meanings along channels it has dug'<sup>653</sup>. A significant feature of the structure, in addition to parallelism, is what Mary Douglas has called 'closure'. She explains: 'The method is good for laying emphasis. As a kind of syntax, the ring form brings ambiguity under control and reduces confusion.'<sup>654</sup> Again the stress is on 'order'.

It has been seen that the ring structures in the *siyar* comply with the conventional features of such structures: a link between the beginning and end of the poem, a 'central space', a division into two halves and a more or less completely chiasmic structure of the lines. It is possible also to distinguish another feature, which is often present and may be regarded as a particular feature of the ring structure in the *siyar*. That is the existence of an antithetical relationship between the two halves of the poem. This antithetical relationship can be observed in the poems analysed in the above chapters: an example is poem 64 in *Dhāt al-Himmah*<sup>655</sup>, where Jundabah's loss of power in the first half of the poem is opposed to his son's future success in the second half. Similarly, in poem 59 in *Banī Hilāl* the happiness and success of the first half, culminating in Khadrā's marriage to Rizq and her giving birth to a male child, is opposed to her divorce and dismissal in the second half (the antithesis is further stressed by the misery of the first line and the joy of the last one). This opposition between the two halves is not a necessary feature of a conventional ring structure, but it has been identified in classical Arabic poetry in what Stefan Sperl has called 'the antithetical structure of the panegyric *qaṣīdah*' and the two halves correspond to what he terms 'strophe' and 'antistrophe'<sup>656</sup>.

Deleuze and Guattari also describe the 'refrain' as providing a 'placard' to mark out the singer's territory: 'It is a question of keeping at a distance the forces of chaos knocking at the door. *Mannerism*: the ethos is both abode and manner, homeland and style.'<sup>657</sup> This captures another use of poetry in the *siyar*: the expression of identity. This is particularly explicit in the opening statements of the poems in *Zīr*

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<sup>653</sup> Douglas (2007) p.13

<sup>654</sup> *ibid* p.38

<sup>655</sup> see p.87 above

<sup>656</sup> Sperl (1989) p.25

<sup>657</sup> *ibid* p.352

*Sālim* and *Banī Hilāl* and the pre-combat exchanges, but can be seen as a basic element of all the poetry (a point which will be developed further below). An exchange of pre-fight *fakhr* can be seen as an example of what De Leuze and Guattari call the ‘oscillational constant’ which occurs between ‘rhythms’ when ‘two animals of the same species and sex confront each other’<sup>658</sup>. Deleuze and Guattari make an interesting distinction between ‘rhythm’ and ‘meter’, of which only the former is ‘communicating’: ‘Meter is dogmatic, but rhythm is critical; it ties together critical moments, or ties itself together in passing from one milieu to another’<sup>659</sup>. The reference here to ‘meter’ is not to be read as a reference to poetic ‘metre’; indeed, in the *siyar* it is often the metre of the poems which ‘ties together’ communications between people, as in the prefight exchanges where antagonists use the same rhyme and metre. But Deleuze and Guattari are making a distinction between two types of utterance which is very similar to the distinction which Bakhtin makes between ‘authoritative’ and ‘internally persuasive’ statements: the former is wholly ‘someone else’s’ ‘magisterial’ word, which has only one meaning and cannot be artistically represented because of its ‘inertia, its semantic finiteness and calcification’, while the latter is a discourse which uses shared words and thoughts and is ‘half ours and half someone else’s’<sup>660</sup>. This distinction has been applied in previous chapters to define the difference between prose and verse in the *siyar*: it is the verse which is ‘dialogic’ in contrast to the ‘monologic’ prose.

What is common to all the reasons for using poetry, as discussed above, is the fact that poetry has been considered essential. Nothing else will do. This is very clearly expressed in the exchange between Jundabah and Qattālah in *Dhāt al-Himmah*, when Qattālah asks Jundabah whether he would like her to tell her story in prose or verse and he replies: ‘I want to hear from you only poetry’<sup>661</sup>. A significant reaction to poetry is the one recorded in *Ḥamzah*, where both of the hero’s first two poems, in which he expresses his ideals as he leads his men into battle, cause the listener to ‘recognise’ (عرف) that ‘he would accomplish amazing deeds’ and ‘would reach the

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<sup>658</sup> ibid p.353

<sup>659</sup> ibid p.346

<sup>660</sup> Bakhtin (1981) pp.344-345

<sup>661</sup> see p.106 above

pinnacle of glory'<sup>662</sup>. Poetry imparts knowledge and truth: a view which was implicit in Jundabah's request for poetry. Poetry also enhances the status of the speaker, as indicated by Jundabah's earlier request to Qattālah to reply to him in verse in order to show that she is one of the 'people of poetry' (أهل النظام)<sup>663</sup> (also translatable, significantly as 'the people of order'). And poetry is powerful; it achieves results. Poetry is chosen because it can achieve results, and its success is constantly evidenced in the *siyar*, whether it is the receipt of a message from 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt following Fīrūz Shāh's expression of longing for her<sup>664</sup> or the miraculous appearance of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb after Shāhīn's prayer in Medinah<sup>665</sup>.

Bernoussi Saltani refers to the *pouvoir magique* of poetry in *Sīrat 'Antarah'*<sup>666</sup> and 'magic' may be the best word to describe the power which poetry is shown to possess, and is believed to possess, in the *siyar*. It would be in accord with the way in which poetry was regarded in early Islam, as shown by Johann Christoph Bürgel in his study of 'the "licit magic" of the arts in medieval Islam', where he states that in Qur'ānic teaching 'poetry is condemned because of its unholy, uncanny, or, with our keyword, magic origin'<sup>667</sup>.

The common factor in all the uses of poetry discussed above is that poetry has a purpose. Poetry is chosen because it can achieve a particular result. The purposefulness of the poetry fits with Heidegger's concept of *unterwegssein* (being underway) as a fundamental quality of poetry. It is a concept adopted and developed by Paul Celan, who described a poem as 'a manifestation of language and thus essentially dialogue', compared it to a message launched in a bottle and added: 'Poems in this sense are underway (*unterwegs*): they are making towards something.'<sup>668</sup> Also fundamental to Heidegger's concept of poetry is the idea of poetry as 'conversation': 'We - human beings - are a conversation. Man's being is grounded in language; but this actually only occurs in conversation.'<sup>669</sup> And poetry

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<sup>662</sup> see p.282 above

<sup>663</sup> see p.102 above

<sup>664</sup> see p.250 above

<sup>665</sup> see p.301 above

<sup>666</sup> Saltani (1987) p.690

<sup>667</sup> Bürgel (1988) p.9

<sup>668</sup> In Celan's 'Bremen Speech' of January, 1958, as quoted and translated in Lyon (2006) pp.85-86

<sup>669</sup> Heidegger (2000) p.56

is the essence of conversation: ‘The foundation of human existence is conversation as the authentic occurrence of language. But the primary language is poetry as the foundation of being.’<sup>670</sup> The concept of poetry as ‘conversation’ is easily applicable to the *siyar*, where every poem is addressed to someone (whether present or, in the case of soliloquies, absent), ‘intends another, needs this other, needs an opposite....goes towards it, bespeaks it’<sup>671</sup>. As illustrated in Celan’s scribbled notes for his ‘Meridian Speech’<sup>672</sup> (in which he presented his developed views on the nature of poetry):

*In the poem:*

*1. Direction (wherefrom, whereto), language -> soliloquy -> conversation.*<sup>673</sup>

In his essay on *Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry*<sup>674</sup>, Heidegger seeks to define the essence of poetry through examining five verses by Hölderlin, which ‘will place before our eyes the true nature of poetry’<sup>675</sup>. As well as the central view of poetry as ‘conversation’, these verses provide a number of descriptions of poetry’s role, which have considerable resonance with the poetry of the *siyar*.

In the first verse, the composing of poems is described as ‘this most innocent of occupations’, which Heidegger interprets as referring to poetry being language rather than action and as being, in itself, harmless: ‘...it remains mere talk’. However this has to be understood in conjunction with the second verse, which describes language as ‘this most dangerous of goods’. The ‘innocence’ of poetry may come from its being ‘mere talk’, but the danger lies in language’s potential for good and evil. Heidegger describes it as ‘that primal event which disposes of the highest possibility of man’s being’, but that latent power brings danger as well as salvation. Poetry in the *siyar* shares this dual nature. It is not only used for the innocent expression of love (although this can carry danger also), but it is also the

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<sup>670</sup> *ibid* p.61

<sup>671</sup> Celan (1986) p.49

<sup>672</sup> Celan’s speech on the occasion of receiving the Georg Büchner Prize in Darmstadt, 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1960

<sup>673</sup> Celan (2011) p.104

<sup>674</sup> Heidegger (2000) pp.51-65

<sup>675</sup> *ibid* p.53

means by which challenges are issued and accepted for combat which will end in death. And it can be a powerful tool for evil in the wrong hands, as when it is used to deceive (as by the horse-thieves in *Dhāt al-Himmah*, by Dhāt al-Dawāhī tricking the Muslims in ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān*, or by Qamrīyah convincing Sayf of her maternal love in *Sīrat Sayf*). And its effect can be powerful enough to kill: like the poetry exchanged by ‘Azīzah and Daḥlāh’s daughter, which leads to ‘Azīzah’s death in ‘*Azīz’s Tale* in ‘*Umar al-Nu‘mān*.

The second verse also contains the statement that language ‘has been given to man ....so that he may bear witness to what he is....’. Heidegger expands this to explain that what man has to testify to is ‘his belonging to the earth’ and that ‘man’s being a witness to his belonging among beings as a whole occurs as history’. The link between poetry and history and poetry’s role as testimony are fundamental to Arabic poetry and its role as the *dhīwān* of the Arabs. It is equally true of the poetry in the *siyar*. This is particularly clear in the longer, narrative poems such as Yathrib’s in *Sīrat Sayf*<sup>676</sup>.

The third verse introduces the concept of conversation and states:

‘Much has man experienced  
Named many of the heavenly ones,  
Since we became a conversation...’

Poetry is therefore linked to ‘experience’ and ‘naming’. This is expanded to include ‘founding’ in the fourth of Holderlin’s verses:

‘But what remains is founded by the poets’.

And the fifth verse concludes:

‘Full of merit, yet poetically, man  
Dwells on this earth.’

These lines introduce concepts of time and space, which are highly relevant to the poetry of the *siyar*. Man and poetry are part of history; as Heidegger expresses it: ‘Man’s being a witness to his belonging among beings as a whole occurs as history.’<sup>677</sup> And the poet is aware of his spatial position: he ‘dwells on this earth’,

<sup>676</sup> see p.193 above

<sup>677</sup> Heidegger (2000) p.54

but his poetry names ‘the heavenly ones’. And it is his poetry which ‘founds’ ‘what remains’: that is, man’s existence on earth. Again as Heidegger expresses it: ‘Poetry is the founding of being in the word’.

If these thoughts are applied to the *siyar*, it can be seen that they fit exactly with the spirit and content of the works. The sense of history permeates the tales from start to finish, from the genealogical tables which start some of the *siyar*, to the conclusions which summarise events after the hero’s departure from the scene. The poetry makes events happen, it participates in them and it provides retrospective accounts of them. Equally pervasive in the *siyar* and their poetry is the presence of the ‘heavenly ones’. Not only are monotheism and Islam an essential part of the plots, which all feature religious wars and conversions, but individual characters are constantly aware of, and invoking, the influence of God or Fate on their lives, and this is expressed primarily in their poetry.

In the same speech as the above quotation about poems being ‘underway’, Celan defines his reasons for writing poetry: ‘in order to speak, to orient myself, to find out where I was, where I was going, to chart my reality’.<sup>678</sup> In other words, Celan’s aim is to answer the question posed in the title to Hans-Georg Gadamer’s major essay on Celan: ‘Who am I and Who are you?’<sup>679</sup> The concerns of poetry are ‘identity’ and ‘being’. As Heidegger commented in his essay on ‘*Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry*’: ‘The foundation of human existence is conversation as the authentic occurrence of language. But the primary language is poetry as the foundation of being.’<sup>680</sup> Heidegger likes to refer to poetry as the ‘house of being’. In discussing the role of language and the nature of being’ in his essay ‘*Building Dwelling Thinking*’, Heidegger shows how the German language links the words meaning to build (*bauen*), to dwell (*buan* – old high German) and to be (*ich bin*).<sup>681</sup> A similar etymological link can be made in Arabic between the meanings of *bayt* as both a ‘dwelling’ and ‘a line of verse’ and the verb from which it derives, *bāta*,

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<sup>678</sup> quoted in Gadamer (1997) p.15

<sup>679</sup> Gadamer (1997) p.67

<sup>680</sup> Heidegger (2000) p.61

<sup>681</sup> Heidegger (2001) pp. 144-145

meaning ‘to be, become’<sup>682</sup>. Mahmoud Darwīsh has expressed the same thought in different words: ‘I believe that language is identity, not in a nationalist or patriotic sense, but rather: human identity. We can only discover existence by detecting language...It is poetry which revives the language, which pushes it forward, and which acquaints man with his existence by means of it.’<sup>683</sup>

The poetry in the *siyar* is playing this role of affirming identity and existence. Just as the title ‘*sīrah*’ means an account of someone’s life and existence, so the poetry in the *sīrah* is central to establishing the identity and existence of the main characters whose lives are being described. This is inherent, as we have seen, in the introductory formulas which open the poems in *Zīr Sālīm* and *Banī Hilāl* by answering the (unstated) question: ‘Who am I?’ But it is inherent also in the way the poems in all the *siyar* contain the themes which dominate the lives of the main characters: ‘Antarah’s obsession to overcome his colour and origins, Sayf’s missions to promote monotheism and to found Egypt, Fīrūz Shāh’s love for ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt, Baybars’ ambition to found an ideal Muslim state, and so on.

The treatment of identity is relevant to considering the special place of the *siyar* and their poetry in the history of Arabic literature. Not only do the *siyar* represent an early experiment in creating fiction, but through the poetry - as the medium for speech - they represent also an early form of dramatic art. The fictional framework provides a means for the poetry to escape from what Malcolm Lyons has called the ‘dominance of the first person’ in classical Arabic poetry, which Lyons attributes to the lack of ‘development of narrative-based literary forms, including dramatised narrative and so of drama itself’.<sup>684</sup> The *siyar* could therefore be seen as filling the gap which Lyons has identified, by providing a narrative base and allowing the poet’s identity to be concealed behind the masks of the different characters into whose mouths the poems are placed. Lyons also points out that, in the development of classical Arabic poetry, the ‘generalised first-person’ of pre-Islamic poetry did

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<sup>682</sup> Wehr (1994) p.102

<sup>683</sup> Darwish (2004) p.10

<sup>684</sup> Lyons (1999) p. v

not develop into 'individual creative identity' until the Abbasid period and that this change coincided with poetry becoming designed for an elite group, indeed that poetry constituted a 'comprehension test' which must be passed by all those wanting to identify themselves with that group.<sup>685</sup> The poetry of the *siyar* serves to fill the 'comprehension gap', by providing a poetry designed for the ordinary people: a voice to replace the one lost with the coming of Islam and the weakening of the tribal way of life which had provided the context for pre-Islamic poetry, and at the same time a voice which speaks in an accessible linguistic register. Through its use of masks, its use of more everyday language and its relative freedom from conventional restraints, it can also be seen as providing a link with modern Arabic poetry.

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<sup>685</sup> *ibid* p.164

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## Volume 2

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## Appendix 1: Placement of poems in *Sīrat al-Zīr Sālim* (pp.3-48)

Power in the Arab world is divided between the Yemenites, under King Tubba‘ of Yemen, and the Qaysites under two brothers, Rabī‘ah and Murrah, who are the leaders of the tribes of Bakr and Taghlib. Rabī‘ah has five sons, the eldest being Kulayb and Sālim (whose nickname is al-Zīr).

**Poem 1:** Murrah proposes to Rabī‘ah that his daughter Jaḥīlah should marry Rabī‘ah’s son Kulayb and his son Hamām should marry Rabī‘ah’s daughter Ḍibā‘.

(p.6, 6 lines)

**Poem 2:** Rabī‘ah agrees.

(p.6, 7 lines)

The wedding of Hamām and Ḍibā‘ takes place and two sons are born.

In contrast to the settled family life of the Qaysites, in Yemen the focus is on warfare and the Yemeni leader, Tubba‘, is a hard-drinking promiscuous libertine. When Tubba‘ asks his vizier one day whether any kings are mightier or wealthier than him, he is furious being told that the Qaysite leaders are and he swears to conquer them.

**Poem 3:** Tubba‘ tells of his plan to attack Rabī‘ah and asks his vizier to mobilise an army.

(p.8, 10 lines)

The Yemenite army is mobilised and assembled.

**Poem 4:** Tubba‘ addresses the army, promising them victory, before their departure.

(p.9, 8 lines)

The Yemenis advance into Qaysite territory and win Damascus after the Governor changes sides. Rabī‘ah calls his brothers and leaders together after hearing of the Governor’s treachery.

**Poem 5:** Rabī‘ah consults his brother and leaders about whether to flee or fight.

(p.11, 10 lines)

The Qaysites decide to surrender and all the leaders except Rabī‘ah pay homage to Tubba‘. Rabī‘ah is executed by hanging. Murrah then begs for mercy for the Qaysites.

**Poem 6:** Murrah begs Tubba‘ for mercy.

(p.14, 8 lines)

**Poem 7:** Tubba‘ pardons Murrah but warns the Qaysites to stay away from Damascus.

(p.15, 5 lines)

Rabī‘ah’s sons (including al-Zīr) are furious. Tubba‘ hears about the beauty of Jaḫīlah (Murrah’s daughter) and sends for her just as she is about to marry Kulayb.

**Poem 8:** Tubba‘ sends for Jaḫīlah and warns Murrah against refusing.

(p.16, 11 lines)

Murrah agrees very reluctantly and consults his nephew Kulayb, who in turn consults his friend ‘Umrān. The latter suggests a trick to get the better of Tubba‘ and his elaborate defences (which will involve armed men being hidden in Jaḫīlah’s wedding-chests and Kulayb gaining entry to Tubba‘ disguised as Jaḫīlah’s jester).

**Poem 9:** ‘Umrān explains his plan to Kulayb.

(p.18, 19 lines)

Murrah escorts Jafilah to Tubba'. The latter consults his fortune-teller, who warns him of the plot (including the men hidden in the chests).

**Poem 10:** the fortune-teller warns Tubba'.

(p.20, 9 lines)

When the chests are investigated, at first no-one is found because they contain two layers. One old lady geomancer casts the sands and sees the trick, but she sees also that Tubba' is going to be killed by the Qaysites, so she remains silent and goes off to negotiate a reward for helping the Qaysites. Then she returns to Tubba' and warns him that his geomancers are at fault (they have eaten too many onions and ostrich eggs), before distracting him by describing Jafilah's beauty.

**Poem 11:** the old woman describes Jafilah's beauty.

(p.22, 23 lines)

Tubba' meets Jafilah, is overwhelmed by her beauty and sends men to fetch her chests.

**Poem 12:** Tubba' addresses friendly words to Murrah.

(p.23, 6 lines)

Jafilah and companions have a drunken carouse with Tubba' before sending for her jester (Kulayb in disguise).

**Poem 13:** At Tubba's request, Jafilah sings of her love for him.

(p.25, 5 lines)

The plan works and Tubba' is overpowered. His plea for mercy is refused.

**Poem 14:** Tubba's 'great epic' in which he warns Kulayb of the future of the world, including the final apocalypse (and renews his plea for mercy).

(p.27, 75 lines)

Kulayb refuses Tubba's plea, but asks him how Rabī'ah died.

**Poem 15:** Kulayb refuses Tubba's plea.

(p.30, 8 lines)

**Poem 16:** Tubba's final words, in which he tells how and why he killed Rabī'ah.

(p.30, 15 lines)

Kulayb kills Tubba', displays his head in Damascus and pardons the people of Damascus. He marries Jaḥīlah and agrees to build her a splendid palace. Tubba's cousin arrives with an army from Yemen. After days of fighting, the Qaysites triumph thanks to Kulayb's valour. The palace is built and Kulayb and Jaḥīlah have seven daughters. Al\_Zīr becomes renowned for his valour and beauty as well as for the tribal virtues of generosity, poetry and hard-drinking. Kulayb warns him to take life more seriously. Murrah's children decide to kill al-Zīr, after being warned by a fortune-teller that al-Zīr will kill them all after Kulayb's death.

**Poem 17:** Sulṭān, one of Murrah's sons, advises his brothers to consult Jaḥīlah before taking any action.

(p.36, 9 lines)

**Poem 18:** Jaḥīlah's advice to Murrah's sons to avoid a public confrontation with al-Zīr and to arrange for Kulayb to kill him.

(p.37, 5 lines)

Kulayb finds Jaḥīlah in distressed state with torn clothes and asks what has happened.

**Poem 19:** Jaḥīlah explains that al-Zīr has assaulted her and demands vengeance.

(p.37, 12 lines)

Kulayb merely banishes al-Zīr to tend the flocks. Jaḥīlah is furious, makes more accusations against al-Zīr and reproaches Kulayb for inaction.

**Poem 20:** Jafilah reproaches Kulayb for inaction.

(p.39, 10 lines)

Jafilah hatches a plot for Kulayb to kill al-Zīr when they are out hunting, but the plan goes wrong when al-Zīr saves Kulayb's life. Jafilah asks Kulayb why al-Zīr is not dead.

**Poem 21:** Kulayb praises al-Zīr to Jafilah and explains why he has not killed him.

(p.40, 11 lines)

Jafilah suggests another way of killing al-Zīr without anyone's knowledge, by trapping him in a well.

**Poem 22:** Jafilah urges Kulayb to carry out her plan. (p.40, 10 lines)

But the plan goes wrong again thanks to al-Zīr's prowess.

**Poem 23:** Kulayb again praises al-Zīr and explains to Jafilah why he failed to carry out the plan.

(p.41, 9 lines)

Jafilah pretends to be ill and asks Kulayb to send al-Zīr to fetch a cure of lion's milk.

**Poem 24:** Jafilah reminds Kulayb of his importance and tells him about the cure for her illness.

(p.42, 8 lines)

Al-Zīr succeeds in the mission and returns with the milk.

**Poem 25:** al-Zīr tells Kulayb and Jafilah how he succeeded.

(p.44, 18 lines)

Jafīlah is furious and outlines another plan for Kulayb to have al-Zīr killed by sending him to a well guarded by lions.

**Poem 26:** Jafīlah outlines her new plan to Kulayb.

(p.45, 4 lines)

Kulayb sends al-Zīr on the mission, but al-Zīr overcomes the lion and returns to camp with it.

**poem 27:** a soliloquy of *fakhr* by al-Zīr as he returns in triumph from the well.

(p.46, 8 lines)

Jafīlah is furious and Kulayb asks al-Zīr what happened.

**Poem 28:** al-Zīr tells Kulayb and Jafīlah how he succeeded.

(p.47, 8 lines)

**Poem 29:** Kulayb congratulates al-Zīr.

(p.47, 6 lines)

## Appendix 2: the text of poem 16

قال الملك تبع حسان	ظلمني دهري دون الناس	1
يا ابن ربيعة يا مخدوم	أنت أمير شديد البأس	2
طويل الباع بيوم نزاع	عفيف شجاع ثقيل الراس	3
تسألني عن قتل أبيك	فكل بناية لها أساس	4
فلما جيت لأرض الشام	أتى للقانا كل الناس	5
أتاني كل أكابر قيس	وكل أمير أيدي باس	6
إلا أبوك فقد خالف	ولم يفعل كباقي الناس	7
فراح الغيظ بوسط القلب	أمرت بشنقه للحراس	8
وهذا بأمر الله مكتوب	فوق جبينه بأعلى الراس	9
وأنا بقيت بهذا اليوم	وحيد فريد بلا ايناس	10
أريد العفو عما جنيت	بحيات عمك مع جساس	11
إني كنت زعيم القوم	وحكمي نافذ بين الناس	12
فلما أتاني وعد الله	بطل العظم وظني خاس	13
دهنتي الجليلة بالحيلة	وغابت عني كل الناس	14
وهذا أمر الله محتوم	وأمره نافذ فوق الناس	15

## Appendix 3: Text of poem 14

لهيب النار تشعل في فوادي	يقول التبع الملك اليماني	
ويا حامي النسا يوم الطراد	أمير كليب يا فارس ربيعة	
لتعرف حال أخبار العباد	أريد اليوم أن أعلمك شيئاً	
له التوراة أعطت للرشاد	فموسى كان في الدنيا نبياً	
يبشر بالزبور أهل الفساد	وداود النبي قد جاء بعده	5
بإنجيل الخلاص لكي ينادي	وعيسى ابن مريم جاء أيضاً	
لأن الله اختاره يفادي	نبي لم يكن في الناس مثله	
ومسقوم شفاه من الودساد	فكم ميت بكلمته أقامه	
بأنك قاتلي دون العبادي	وعندي قد تبين بالملاحم	
وتفنن بين قيس في البلاد	وبعده شاعر تنزل عليكم	10
وعبدي يذبحك بين الجماد	وأنت برمح جساس ستطعن	
لمن بعدك لتشتيت الأعادي	وتكتب في دمائك على البلاطة	
فيصلي الحرب في كل البلاد	ويأتي الزير أبو ليلي المهلهل	
بضرب السيف في يوم الجلاذ	ويقهز كل جبار عنيد	
وتحظى بالمسرة والمراد	وتأخذ الجليلة لك قرينة	15
يسمى الجرو قهار الأعادي	ويظهر لك غلام بعد موتك	
وأما الزير تقتله الأعاذي	يقتل على يده جساس خاله	
وتصحبه السعادة في العباد	وسيف ذو يزن يعدك سيظهر	
وبعد ذلك يطوي في الوهاد	ويبقى ملكه سبعون عاماً	
شديد البأس مرفوع العماد	ويظهر له ولد يدعى بدمر	20
يجيب الماء من أقصى البلاد	فيملك في بلاد الشام بعده	
يهبن الضد في يوم الطراد	وبعده يظهر المدعو بعنتر	
يقيم الدين ما بين العباد	وبعده يظهر الهادي محمد	
كرام الناس سادات البلاد	وأصحابه معه عشرة كوامل	
وظلحة والزبير ابن الجياد	أبو بكر وسعد مع سعيد	25
وعامر مع حسين أهل الرشاد	وعثمان مع عمر وعلي	
على الأحكام بعده بالعباد	يموت الهاشمي ويصير خليفة	
وبعده عمراً يقتل بالطراد	أبو بكر يموت بلسعة حية	
يتيمماً انتشى بين الولادي	علي بالسيف يرديه ابن ملجم	
على وجه الثرى بين العباد	ولا يعرف له قبر محقق	30
ويحكمها حسين بالبوادي	وتختلف الصحابة على الحكم	

وأيامهم معاوية ابن وهاد	وبعد بنو أمية سوف تحكم	
سنين كثيرة بين العباد	ومن بعده بنو العباس تحكم	
يثيروا الفواحش والعناد	وبعد الخوارج سوف تظهر	
ويملوا الأرض طراً بالفساد	يقيموا الشر في كل الأراضي	35
فيقصد جيشاً غرب البلاد	وتظهر في بلاد السرو عصابة	
يزيدوا حرب حمير مع أياد	هلال وعامر من آل قيس	
بعده دياب قهار الأعادي	حسن أميرهم فخر البرايا	
شديد البأس في يوم الطراد	وأبو زيد ابن عمه ليث أروع	
ويسبون العدا أهل العناد	يطوفون البلاد فيملكوها	40
بأرماع وأسيف حداد	ويمحون العجم من كل طاغ	
وبدريس الخزاعي والأعادي	وقبرص والجزائر يملكوها	
وتترك جثته فوق الجماد	شبيب التبعي بالشام يقتل	
بسيف ذياب قهار الأعادي	وسركيس بن نازب سوف يقتل	
ستخرب دورها بين البلاد	كذا فرمند في مصر العديّة	45
خبيث الأصل من قوم شداد	وبعد يظهر الأشطان ظالم	
يقيمون الدين من بعد الفساد	بنو أيوب تظهر بعد منه	
بأرض الشرق ويحكم بالعباد	ويظهر ابن عثمان المساعد	
لأن جيوشهم مثل الجراد	ملوك الأرض تخشى من لقاهم	
وتسعة بعدهم دون ازدياد	عداد ملوكهم عشرة وعشرة	50
وجنكيز خان من الأعادي	ويظهر تمرلنك من الأعاجم	
يثير الحرب في كل البلاد	ويظهر بعده ملكاً قوياً	
له اسمين من طاهر وبادي	طويل الجسم مغضوب عليه	
ويجري الدم في كل البوادي	يقيم السيف في الأقطار عمداً	
ف عشر سنين يظلم بالعباد	ويظهر فارساً يدعى قطيعة	55
فتتبعه الوري أهل الفساد	ويظهر بعده الدجال حقا	
ويفعل معجزات في البلاد	بطرف الأرض من شرق وغرب	
ويسطع نوره في كل وادي	ويظهر ضده المهدي سريعاً	
فيقتله ويملك في العباد	ومعه عيسى سمي ابن مريم	
فتفعل معجزات في البلاد	وبعد داية تظهر سريعاً	60
فتشكو الناس من هول النكاد	ونار من عدن تظهر وتسطع	
وتزداد الخلائق في الفساد	وبعد الشمس تظهر من مغيب	
تحيط رجالهم كل البلاد	وبأجوج وماجوج جميعاً	
ولا سيحون والدجلة المداد	فلا نهر الفرات لهم يجري	
وجوع وقتل في كل العباد	وتغشى الأرض موتاً يا كليباً	65

\*

ونيران تعم الأرض طراً  
 وبعده يغلق باب المراحم  
 فلا يصعد ولا يأتي جواب  
 ونيران ستظهر من جهنم  
 يموت الخلق منه ليس يبقى  
 وبعده يظهر الديان حقاً  
 فعندي الجفر قد أخبر مؤكد  
 واسمع يا أمير كليب مني  
 وما علمت عن حالي وضعفي  
 واعلم يا أمير أني عتيفك

70

على أعلى الجبال وكل وادي  
 وباب الشر يفتح بارتصاد  
 فذاك الوقت يحترق العباد  
 وينفخ ريح من أقصى البلاد  
 سوى الرحمن خلاق العباد  
 إله العرش ديان العباد  
 بما أخبرتكم دون ازدياد  
 حقائق قصتي وافهم مرادي  
 أجرني يا ملك واطلق قيادي  
 مدى عمري إلى يوم المعاد

75

#### Appendix 4: Placement of poems in *Banī Hilāl* (pages 3-55)

##### Part 1 - Prologue

When Prince Hilāl refuses to let his son, Mundhir, marry a girl (from a tribe he regards as inferior), Mundhir becomes an outlaw plundering neighbouring tribes. One of them, with Naṣṣār as a spokesman, goes to complain to Hilāl.

**poem 1:** Naṣṣār complains to Hilāl about Mundhir's actions.

(p.6, 6 lines)

**poem 2:** Hilāl writes to his son asking him to restore what he has taken and to return home at once.

(p.6, 12 lines)

**poem 3:** Mundhir's reply, a defiant refusal.

(p.7, 6 lines)

Hilāl asks Naṣṣār to deal with Mundhir, who is defeated and has to flee. His people persuade him to seek a pardon from Hilāl.

**poem 4:** Hilāl's written reply to Mundhir, refusing to pardon him and threatening to kill him if he returns home.

(p.8, 7 lines)

**poem 5:** Mundhir writes to Hilāl again, begging for forgiveness.

(p.8, 4 lines)

Hilāl regrets his harshness and sends for Mundhir, but he cannot be found having already left with his men on a visit to King Muhadhhab (having heard of his reputation as a mighty ruler).

**poem 6:** Muhadhhab welcomes Mundhir and his men and offers his

daughter Hadhbā to be Mundhir's wife.

(p.9, 5 lines)

When Muhadhhab is getting old, he hands over the leadership to Mundhir.

**poem 7:** Muhadhhab addresses Mundhir (and his people) after handing on the leadership, advising him to govern justly.

(p.10, 4 lines)

Mundhir rules justly for some years but cannot produce a son. His minister suggests 'Adhbā, the daughter of King Ṣāliḥ of al-Sirū, as a second wife. Mundhir goes to visit Ṣāliḥ.

**poem 8:** Ṣāliḥ greets Mundhir warmly and offers to satisfy all his needs.

(p.10, 4 lines)

Ṣāliḥ agrees to give his daughter, 'Adhbā, to Mundhir and does not require a dowry.

**poem 9:** Ṣāliḥ's final advice to his daughter, when she is departing with Mundhir, to treat her husband with respect etc.

(p.11, 4 lines)

Mundhir takes to sleeping alternate nights with Hadhbā and 'Adhbā, still hoping for a son.

**poem 10:** Mundhir prays to God to grant him two healthy sons.

(p.11, 6 lines)

Both women produce sons - Hadhbā: Jābir and 'Adhbā: Jubair. When they grow up, Mundhir favours Jābir, who hates Jubair.

**poem 11:** 'Adhbā complains to Mundhir about his preference of Jābir and his treatment of Jubair .

(p.13, 5 lines)

Faced with Mundhir's indifference, 'Adhbā leaves with Jubair and eventually seeks refuge with Marzūq, a neighbouring ruler. Marzūq makes them welcome and Jubair grows up to be a mighty warrior with a large following. Visitors from Mundhir's land report back on Jubair's new status, which makes Jābir persuade Mundhir that it would be dangerous to let him become too powerful. Mundhir agrees to let Jābir deal with the matter.

**poem 12:** Jābir writes in Mundhir's name to tell Marzūq to throw Jubair out if he wants to avoid trouble.

(p.13, 4 lines)

Jubair takes the letter from the messenger before Marzūq has seen it.

**poem 13:** Jubair's reply to Mundhir, complaining that he has been harshly treated.

(p.14, 10 lines)

Jubair and his mother leave Marzūq's camp immediately, in order to spare him trouble, and go to seek refuge with Maflaḥ, who has succeeded Ṣāliḥ. Meanwhile Mundhir has agreed to Jābir's writing to all the local tribal chiefs to warn them against receiving Jubair.

**poem 14:** Jābir writes in Mundhir's name warning Maflaḥ against receiving Jubair, threatening dire consequences.

(p.15, 5 lines)

**poem 15:** Jubair reacts to Jābir's letter by reminding Maflaḥ that he has come as a guest and friend.

(p.16, 7 lines)

Maflaḥ is reluctant to abandon Jubair but feels that he cannot win against Mundhir's power.

**poem 16:** Jubair writes again to Mundhir, complaining of his injustice and vowing to sever all connection with him for ever.

(p.16, 15 lines)

Jubair and his mother leave Maflaḥ.

**poem 17:** ‘Adhbā’s parting words of reproach to Maflaḥ.

(p.17, 6 lines)

Maflaḥ is moved to offer to keep them but ‘Adhbā refuses to bring trouble on him. Mundhir weeps at the news and is accused of treating Jubair badly by his minister, which Jābir denies.

Jubair and his mother decide to seek refuge with al-Nu‘mān bin Ḥanzul, the ruler of the Najd, who is renowned for his generosity. On their way there they meet a troop of al-Nu‘mān’s men fleeing from a battle between al-Nu‘mān and al-Jalīlī, which is going badly for al-Nu‘mān. Jubair and his 300 men proceed at once to join in the battle on behalf of al-Nu‘mān and fight successfully, though without conclusion, all day. When the two sides rest that night, al-Jalīlī’s men persuade him to write to Jubair offering his daughter as a wife if he will change sides.

**poem 18:** al-Jalīlī’s letter to Jubair.

(p.19, 7 lines)

Meanwhile al-Nu‘mān has thanked Jubair and feasted him. When al-Jalīlī’s letter arrives, it falls into the hands of al-Nu‘mān, who is very worried by it and consults his daughter Ḥusnā.

**poem 19:** Ḥusnā advises her father to marry her to Jubair.

(p.19, 7 lines)

Ḥusnā admits that she has fallen in love with Jubair (because ‘he has helped to defeat al-Jalīlī’). Al-Nu‘mān makes Jubair king in his place and marries him to Ḥusnā. Jubair kills al-Jalīlī and his army is routed.

**poem 20:** after the battle, al-Nu‘mān sings Jubair’s praises.

(p.21, 7 lines)

Jubair prospers and acquires a reputation for generosity. One day, 3 poets arrive and are entertained.

**poem 21:** one of the poets, Falāḥ, composes a poem in praise of Jubair asking for gifts.

(p.22, 6 lines)

The poets leave with 300 camels and 300 horses. Later they visit Mundhir and Jābir.

**poem 22:** one of the poets, ‘Umār, composes a poem in praise of Mundhir and Jābir, asking for gifts.

(p.22, 6 lines)

They criticise the meanness of Jābir’s reward.

**poem 23:** the third of the poets, Farāj, tells Jābir about Jubair’s generosity.

(p.23, 7 lines)

Jābir tests Jubair’s hospitality by sending 30 poets to Jubair seeking gifts, promising to forgive and reward the 3 poets if Jubair is as generous as they say. The 30 poets are well entertained by Jubair.

**poem 24:** one of the 30 poets, Saḫīm, composes a poem in praise of Jubair, seeking gifts.

(p.23, 8 lines)

Jubair gives them 3,000 camels, 1,000 she-camels, 100 stallions, 100 mares, 2,000 cattle and 20,000 dirham. They return and report to Mundhir and Jābir, who forgives and rewards the 3 poets.

**poem 25:** Mundhir expresses his longing for Jubair.

(p.25, 4 lines)

Mundhir ignores Jābir's protest and departs with a troop to visit Jubair, who receives him warmly and with great pomp.

**poem 26:** Jubair welcomes his father and his followers and protests his love for Jābir.

(p.25, 4 lines)

Mundhir apologises for his treatment of Jubair and is reconciled with 'Adhbā. He returns home laden with gifts for himself and for Jābir, but the latter remains consumed with envy and swears to kill Jubair. Mundhir banishes him. When Mundhir's land becomes barren some years later, he goes to live with Maflaḥ in al-Sirū, where he dies.

## **Part 2 - The Story of al-Khaḍrā**

The second story starts with a brief genealogy listing the descendants of Jābir and Jubair through several generations, who are described as *mā kāna min salsalatu ijdādi Banī Hilāl*. The action starts when one of the current heads of the tribe, Ḥāzim, receives a plea for help from Qirḍāb, the emir of Mecca which is being attacked by al-Absha', king of the Byzantines.

The reason for the plea is explained in a flashback. Qirḍāb had a terrifying dream and sent for a geomancer to interpret it.

**poem 27:** Qirḍāb relates his dream (of wild beasts) to the geomancer.

(p.28, 5 lines,)

**poem 28:** the geomancer explains that Mecca is going to be attacked by a mighty army but will receive help from the Banī Hilāl.

(p.28, 6 lines,)

A slave is sent to reconnoitre and finds that al-Absha' has invaded Syria on his way to Mecca.

**poem 29:** the slave reports to Qirḍāb and advises him to send for the Banī Hilāl.

(p.29, 4 lines,)

**poem 30:** Qirḍāb's letter to the Banī Hilāl, full of compliments and seeking help.

(p.29, 9 lines,)

Ḥāzim is angry at the news and everyone agrees that he should send help to Qirḍāb, under the leadership of Prince Rizq.

**poem 31:** Ḥāzim finishes his letter to Qirḍāb, promising help, with these lines.

(p.30, 10 lines)

**poem 32:** Ḥāzim urges his men to prepare for war.

(p.30, 4 lines)

**poem 33:** Prince Rizq incites the troops.

(p.30, 4 lines)

They arrive at Mecca and are welcomed with a feast.

**poem 34:** Qirḍāb welcomes the reinforcements.

(p.31, 4 lines)

**poem 35:** Rizq replies with a promise to destroy al-Abshā' (with God's help).

(p.31, 3 lines)

The Banī Hilāl decide to attack at once, but al-Nu‘mān, one of al-Absha‘’s ministers, accosts them and tries to discourage them.

**poem 36:** al-Nu‘mān describes the strength of al-Absha‘’s army to Sirḥān (one of Ḥāzim’s sons) and his men.  
(p.31, 4 lines)

**poem 37:** Sirḥān’s defiant reply.  
(p.31, 4 lines)

A long battle follows, spread over several days, in which al-Absha‘’s men suffer great losses.

**poem 38:** Sirḥān addresses al-Absha‘’ before they fight.  
(p.33, 4 lines)

Sirḥān retires and al-Absha‘’ defeats all his challengers. When Qirḍāb offers to marry one of his daughters to whoever will kill al-Absha‘’, Rizq takes up the challenge.

**poem 39:** al-Absha‘’ addresses Rizq before they fight.  
(p.33, 7 lines)

**poem 40:** Rizq’s reply.  
(p.34, 6 lines)

Inspired by the thought of Qirḍāb’s daughter, Rizq kills al-Absha‘’, whose army is then routed.

**poem 41:** Qirḍāb thanks Rizq and asks him to choose one of his two daughters: Khadījah and Khaḍrā.  
(p.34, 6 lines)

**poem 42:** Rizq’s reply, choosing Khaḍrā and describing the delights of the

land of Filāt, where the Bani. Hilāl used to live.

(p.35, 9 lines)

Preparations are made for the marriage and Ḥāzīm is informed of the plans.

**poem 43:** Ḥāzīm writes to Rizq to wish him well.

(p.35, 7 lines)

There is great rejoicing and lavish preparations are made.

**poem 44:** girls dance and sing before the wedding.

(p. 36, 4 lines)

The wedding takes place and Rizq and Khaḍrā prepare to set off home laden with gifts.

**poem 45:** Khadijah says goodbye to her sister.

(p.36, 5 lines)

**poem 46:** Khaḍrā's mother, 'Aṭār, says goodbye to her with final words of advice.

(p.37, 5 lines)

**poem 47:** Khaḍrā says goodbye to her mother.

(p.37, 6 lines)

**poem 48:** Qirḍāb says goodbye to Rizq and warns him about Khaḍrā's black grandparents.

(p.37, 12 lines)

**poem 49:** Rizq's reply.

(p.38, 6 lines)

Khaḍrā gives birth to a girl, Shīḥā.

**poem 50:** Rizq prays to God for a son.

(p.38, 3 lines)

**poem 51:** On becoming pregnant again, Khaḍrā prays to God for a son.

(p.39, 3 lines)

Khaḍrā gives birth to a black boy, who is named Barakāt

**poem 52:** on seeing the black boy, Sirḥān warns Rizq that it is not his child.

(p.39, 3 lines)

**poem 53:** Rizq divorces Khaḍrā.

Khaḍrā is told that she will be sent home immediately, escorted by Qāyid.

**poem 54:** Rizq explains his actions to Khaḍrā.

(p.40, 8 lines)

**poem 55:** Khaḍrā reproaches Rizq.

(p.40, 10 lines)

**poem 56:** Khaḍrā says goodbye to her daughter Shīḥā.

(p.41, 8 lines)

Sirḥān protests to his father, Ḥāzīm, that he had only been in jest and had not intended it to end in that way.

**poem 57:** Fāṭimah urges Rizq to fetch Khaḍrā back (in vain).

(p.42, 6 lines)

Khadrā is afraid of the fate awaiting her from her family and persuades Qāyid to take her instead to the land of King Zaḥlān, where she is greeted by one of the king's sons, Jābir.

**poem 58:** Jābir welcomes Khadrā.

(p.42, 4 lines)

Khadrā is installed in her tent, but Zaḥlān is suspicious when he sees it because it is inscribed as the property of the Banī Duraidī, who are enemies of Zaḥlān's tribe.

**poem 59:** Khadrā tells her story to Zaḥlān.

(p.43, 12 lines)

**poem 60:** Zaḥlān welcomes Khadrā.

(p.43, 5 lines)

Barakāt is brought up with Zaḥlān's sons and calls Zaḥlān 'father'. One day his teacher beats him severely and is then worried about the consequences.

**poem 61:** The teacher apologises to Barakāt and tries to conciliate him by describing how much he can teach him.

(p.44, 5 lines)

Barakāt promises him a dīnār a day if he teaches him everything and he works night and day for five years. Meanwhile Abū 'l-Jūd has been extorting money from Zaḥlān with threats of force and Zaḥlān becomes very worried.

**poem 62:** Barakāt asks Zaḥlān what is troubling him.

(p.44, 6 lines)

Zaḥlān tells him and Barakāt tells him not to worry for he will deal with the matter.

**poem 63:** Barakāt's defiant written answer to Abū 'l-Jūd's request for money.

(p.45, 7 lines)

Abū 'l-Jūd sets off to punish Zaḥlān, but is opposed by Barakāt and his followers and a fierce battle takes place until nightfall. The next day Barakāt challenges Abū 'l-Jūd to single combat. Asked for his name. Barakāt says he is called Mas'ūd bin 'Umār.

**poem 64:** Abū 'l-Jūd and Barakāt exchange insults before they fight  
(their verses are divided by a line from the Narrator, line 5).  
(p.46, 7 lines)

Barakāt kills Abū 'l-Jūd and his men are routed. Zaḥlān is very grateful to Barakāt, puts him in command of the army and names him as his successor. Meanwhile the Banī Hilāl have decided they need to move to a new area, theirs having become barren. They decide on Zaḥlān's land, but are worried by the presence there of Barakāt whose fame as a warrior has spread widely. Rizq tells them not to worry, for he will deal with Barakāt (none of them are aware that Barakāt is Khaḍrā's son). The Banī Hilāl move on to Zaḥlān's land and take the harvest. Barakāt is away hunting, but Zaḥlān confronts the Banī Hilāl.

**poem 65:** Zaḥlān tells the Banī Hilāl to move away, or else...  
(p.47, 4 lines)

**poem 66:** Rizq replies, saying that they have come seeking relief from a drought.  
(p.48, 4 lines)

Rizq and Zaḥlān exchange blows and Zaḥlān is wounded and taken off to his tent. The two tribes fight until nightfall. Barakāt returns from hunting and in the morning he goes to fight. He is challenged by Ghānim, a guest of the Banī Hilāl.

**poem 67:** Ghānim and Barakāt exchange insults before they fight  
(divided by a hemistich from the Narrator, the 1<sup>st</sup> hemistich of line 4).  
(p.48, 7 lines)

Barakāt wounds Ghānim, who is taken off, and then kills challenger after challenger. Rizq returns from hunting in the evening and asks Sirḥān (whom Barakāt has wounded) what has happened.

**poem 68:** Sirḥān tells Rizq what has happened.

(p.49, 6 lines)

The next day Rizq goes to challenge Barakāt and they fight all day. When they stop in the evening, Rizq hides a weapon in his hand intending to kill Barakāt treacherously, but Shīḥā is watching and cries out to warn Barakāt. They continue their fight until Rizq is wounded and Shīḥā begs Barakāt not to kill him. Rizq returns to his camp, furious with Shīḥā, whom he accuses of being in love with Barakāt. Shīḥā denies that, saying that she did not want her father to behave in such an underhand manner. She also points out that Barakāt is dark-skinned while his brothers have white skins, and she laments that her own mother could not have been treated as fairly as Barakāt's.

**poem 69:** Shīḥā states her position to Sirḥān.

(p.50, 4 lines)

Ḥāzim has a suspicion that Barakāt may be Khaḍrā's son and sends someone to visit Mecca to make enquiries of her father. Qirḍāb denies all knowledge of Khaḍrā's whereabouts (he is unaware of what has happened between her and Rizq).

**poem 70:** Qirḍāb writes to Rizq asking him to send Khaḍrā to visit her family in Mecca.

(p.51, 5 lines)

Rizq guesses the truth after Qāyid admits that he took Khaḍrā to Zaḥlān rather than to Mecca. He tells Barakāt that he will not fight 'someone who does not know who his father is'. He tells him that Zaḥlān is not his father and advises him to ask his mother. Barakāt is shocked and falls dead at his mother's feet.

**poem 71:** Khaḍrā's lament for Barakāt, in which she recounts what happened at his birth.

(p.51, 17 lines)

Barakāt was not actually dead, but had only fainted, and he has heard his mother's account of what happened. He tears up his mother's marriage contract and swears vengeance on Rizq, before returning to the battle-field. He fells Rizq without killing him and hauls him off to seek Zaḥlān's decision on his fate. Rizq begs him not to humiliate his own father in front of Zaḥlān.

**poem 72:** Rizq pleads his case to Barakāt.

(p.53, 11 lines)

**poem 73:** Barakāt's reply.

(p.53, 7 lines)

Barakāt takes Rizq to his mother to seek her advice on his fate.

**poem 74:** Khaḍrā advises Barakāt to be merciful.

(p.54, 4 lines)

**poem 75:** Rizq makes his excuses to Khaḍrā.

(p.54, 6 lines)

Rizq acknowledges Barakāt as his son and Khaḍrā asks Barakāt to release him. Khaḍrā's advice to be merciful is reinforced by Zaḥlān when he goes on to consult him.

**poem 76:** Zaḥlān advises Barakāt to be merciful to his father.

(p.55, 8 lines)

Rizq is released and is very grateful. Zaḥlān says that he has not got long to live, makes Barakāt his heir and asks him to marry one of his three daughters.

**poem 77:** Zaḥlān's final words to his people and advice to Barakāt.

(p.55, 9 lines)

Barakāt is invested as king and marries Ghasan. The Banī Hilāl decide to call him Abū Zayd because he was too much for them (*zāda 'alayhim*). Zaḥlān dies. Ḥāzim and Sirḥān send Qāyid to felicitate Barakāt.

**poem 78:** Barakāt's luke-warm response to Banī Hilāl's felicitations.

(p.56, 7 lines)

Ḥāzim and Sirḥān decide to visit Abū Zayd (i.e. Barakāt) themselves. He welcomes and forgives them. Ghānim finally achieves the aim for which he originally visited the Banī Hilāl, to marry al-Qādī's daughter, and returns to Najd. Qirdāb dies after giving his permission for Khaḍrā to be reunited with Rizq, to which Abū Zayd also agrees. Ḥāzim dies after giving his heir, Sirḥān, a final piece of advice to marry only a girl of good birth. The story ends with the news that Sirḥān has been told by a poet of a fine land where the ruler has a beautiful daughter, Shamā (whose name is the title of the following story).

### Appendix 5: Text of poem 59

دھري ضناني يا أمير وھانني	1
أتانا الملك الابشع يھدم بلادنا	2
فأرسل أبي إلى ھلال وجابھم	3
وزوجني أبي لرزق وجابني	4
حبت له بنت مليحة زمانھا	5
وبعد سبعة أعوام جبت بعدها	6
ولكنه باللون يا أمير أسمر	7
أما الامير سرحان لما شافه	8
فقال رزق تكون خضرا طالقة	9
وقال يا قايد روح وديھا	10
فقلت يدروا بحالي ويقتلوني	11
فجيت لعندك استظل بظلك	12

وقلبي كواه الھم والاحزان  
 ويھدم معابدنا وسائر البلدان  
 وقد قتلوا الابشع بحد السنان  
 لعند أهله ھلال فھذا قد كان  
 سميتها شيحة بلا كتمان  
 ولد ذكر فھد من الصبيان  
 ھنوا به رزق سائر العربان  
 شبهه بالعبد من السودان  
 وأعطاني ذا البوش والرعيان  
 لاهلھا حقاً بلا كتمان  
 وابني رضيع يا فتى الزحلان  
 وقلبي بشوفتك غدا فرحان

**Appendix 6: Placement of poems in *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah* (pp. 1-114)**

Narrator introduces the Banī Kilāb and the Banī Saḥīm as the two leading Arab tribes, praising the former for their generosity and criticizing the latter for their greed. Jundabah inherits leadership of the Banī Kilāb from his father al-Ḥārith.

**Poem 1:** Narrator quotes Jundabah praising himself and the Banī Kilāb.

(p.6, 5 lines)

The story relates how al-Ḥārith, Jundabah's father, meets and marries al-Rabāb. She becomes pregnant and when the baby is due she has a strange dream which she recounts to al-Ḥārith. He consults a soothsayer, who interprets the dream: al-Rabāb will give birth to a great man, who will in turn produce an even mightier child. Al-Ḥārith takes the soothsayer to meet al-Rabāb.

**Poem 2:** al-Rabāb repeats her account of the dream.

(p.8, 8 lines)

**Poem 3:** the Soothsayer repeats his interpretation (in same rhyme and metre).

(p.9, 6 lines)

Al-Ḥārith dies, having also had a child with his cousin, Ḥusnā, who leaves the camp. The other tribes prepare to attack the Banī Kilāb and al-Rabāb is frightened by what may happen to her.

**Poem 4:** al-Rabāb laments al-Ḥārith and fears for the future, but determines to keep her unborn baby safe.

(p. 10, 8 lines)

Al-Rabāb leaves secretly with one of her slaves, Sallām. When they halt for the night, he wants sex with her which she refuses.

**Poem 5:** al-Rabāb pleads with Sallām when he threatens to rape her.

(p. 12, 16 lines)

**Poem 6:** Sallām's reply (in same rhyme and metre): 'I cannot help myself'.

(p. 12, 12 lines)

Sallām is frustrated by al-Rabab's giving birth to a boy. He kills her and leaves. She is found by the local king, Dārim, with her son in her arms (sheltered from the sun by a locust - *jundub*). He asks advice from his vizier, who thinks she has been abandoned by her tribe because of her adultery. Dārim rejects this view angrily.

**Poem 7:** Dārim wonders about al-Rabāb's identity and thinks her features prove her goodness.

(p.16, 11 lines)

The vizier agrees and suggests that the child has been sent by God to replace Dārim's own dead son.

**Poem 8:** The Minister replies to Dārim (in same rhyme and metre) suggesting that he should adopt the child.

(p.16, 7 lines)

Dārim takes Jundabah to his wife Ḥusnā, who at first agrees to look after him but, after listening to an evil old woman, says that she won't look after 'the son of a whore'.

**Poem 9:** Dārim replies to Ḥusnā's objections.

(p.18, 7 lines)

Ḥusnā agrees to look after Jundabah (after a bribe). Jundabah grows up to be the outstanding warrior amongst his peers.

One day, Dārim is captured by an amazonian warrior, al-Shamtā and his sons set off to rescue him.

**Poem 10:** Dārim's eldest son addresses al-Shamtā with *fakhr* before they fight.

(p.20, 5 lines)

**Poem 11:** al-Shamtā replies in kind (in same rhyme and metre).

(p.20 5 lines)

Al-Shamtā defeats and imprisons all Dārim's sons. No-one else is willing to go to their rescue (Jundabah is away looking after the tribe's herds).

**Poem 12:** Ḥusnā laments her sons' capture.

(p.21, 8 lines)

Jundabah returns and is reproached by Ḥusna for staying away so long.

**Poem 13:** Jundabah replies (in same rhyme and metre) with a promise to rescue his father and brothers.

(p.22, 4 lines)

Jundabah reaches al-Shamtā's camp. She likes the look of him and is friendly, but is rejected by Jundabah. She attacks him.

**Poem 14:** al-Shamtā's words, a mixture of pity and *fakhr*, as she attacks Jundabah.

(p.22, 6 lines)

**Poem 15:** Jundabah's response of *fakhr* (in same rhyme and metre).

(p.23, 6 lines)

Jundabah kills al-Shamtā and appeals to her followers to join him, to which they agree.

**Poem 16:** Jundabah addresses al-Shamtā's followers.

(p.24, 10 lines)

Jundabah shares al-Shamtā's wealth amongst her followers and frees Dārim and his sons. They return home, where Jundabah is acclaimed as a hero. Dārim becomes jealous and accuses Jundabah of arrogance. He summons his sons and elders for a conference.

**Poem 17:** Dārim tells the elders (with Jundabah listening) that he has rebuked Jundabah and asked him to leave.

(p.25, 9 lines)

**Poem 18:** Jundabah's dignified and resigned reply (in same rhyme and metre).

(p.26, 8 lines)

Jundabah leaves in friendly fashion, but Dārim discovers that Jundabah is a Kilābī, against whom he has sworn blood vengeance, and sends his sons to trick him into returning. They overtake Jundabah and tell him that Dārim regrets his action. Jundabah sees through their treachery.

**Poem 19:** Narrator quotes proverb about lies being visible.

(p.27, 1 line)

They fight and Jundabah kills Dārim and two of his sons but spares the rest after an appeal by Ḥusnā. He sets off with al-Shamtā's men, but loses confidence in their loyalty and kills them all. He travels on alone and comes across a pavilion guarded by a young knight, who attacks Jundabah without any preliminary greeting.

**Poem 20:** Jundabah reproaches and warns the knight.

(p.29, 7 lines)

Jundabah defeats the knight, who is then revealed to be a lovely young woman.

**Poem 21:** Narrator quotes description of a lovely woman raising her veil.

(p.30, 6 lines)

Jundabah is immediately infatuated with the woman (Qattālah) and asks her to tell him her story - in poetry rather than prose.

**Poem 22:** Qattālah tells her story.

(p.31, 22 lines)

Qattālah and her followers welcome Jundabah and hold a feast. A guest, a black slave, tells a story about how he tried to rape and then killed a pregnant lady. Jundabah realises it is Sallām who killed his mother, so he kills him. The others want to kill Jundabah in turn, but Qattālah persuades them to wait till morning. In the night Jundabah and Qattālah make love and then set off together until they come to a beautiful valley full of prosperous looking tents and people.

**Poem 23:** Narrator quotes description of camp.

(p.34, 9 lines)

Qattālah asks Jundabah why he killed Sallām.

**Poem 24:** Jundabah tells his life story.

(p.35, 26 lines)

**Poem 25:** Qattālah (in same rhyme and metre) agrees that Jundabah acted properly.

(p.36, 6 lines)

Jundabah and Qattālah help the camp to defeat a troop of raiders, having realised that the camp is Kilābī. Afterwards the men of the camp ask Jundabah who he is.

**Poem 26:** Jundabah tells his story (briefly)

(p.38, 11 lines)

The tribe decide to make Jundabah their ruler in place of Jābir, who says he will fight Jundabah for the role.

**Poem 27:** Jundabah warns Jābir before they fight.

(p.40, 3 lines)

Jundabah is impressed by Jābir's magnificent mare. They fight, and the other men join in until there is a pause in the fighting.

**Poem 28:** Jābir insults Jundabah and tells him to go away.

(p.41, 11 lines)

**Poem 29:** Jundabah's defiant reply (in same rhyme and metre).

(p.41, 9 lines)

Jundabah kills Jābir and takes his horse (Muznah). He settles down at the camp as their leader. One day, out hunting, he comes across a troop of men sent by Jābir's brother to seek vengeance against Jundabah. He defeats them and rescues their captives, who turn out to be tax-gatherers for the Caliph in Damascus. Jundabah takes the tax money to Damascus himself. The Caliph is very grateful but his son, Hishām, becomes infatuated with Qattālah. When Jundabah leaves Damascus, Hishām ambushes him and seizes Qattālah. Jundabah is distraught and wants to attack the Caliph, but is dissuaded by the elders.

**Poem 30:** Jundabah laments his trip to Damascus and the loss of Qattālah and wants revenge.

(p.48, 16 lines)

Jundabah returns home and is comforted by a new wife, Ḥusnā (meanwhile Hishām has killed Qattālah after she refuses his advances). Jundabah grows in importance as chief of all the Banī Kilāb. The fame of his horse, Muznah, spreads.

**Poem 31:** Narrator quotes Amīr bin Ya‘qūb’s description of a horse.

(p.50, 4 lines)

News of Muznah reaches Ghatrīf, the head of the Banī Ṭay, who offers to give his daughter, Salmā and great riches to anyone who brings him the horse. Jafāl (an ugly man) sets off to try his luck.

**Poem 32:** Jafāl recites as he sets off to capture Muznah.

(p.51, 4 lines)

Salmā finds Jafāl repulsive and is very unhappy at her father’s behaviour.

**Poem 33:** Salmā bewails her lot.

(p.52, 3 lines)

Jafāl reaches the camp of the Banī Kilāb and pretends to be an ascetic monk.

**Poem 34:** Jafāl recites piously as he enters the camp.

(p.53, 7 lines)

Jafāl fools everyone by his humility and fasting, including Jundabah. After winning everyone’s confidence, one night he steals the key and seizes Muznah after killing his guards. When he returns to Jundabah’s tent to kill him too, he is disturbed and then finds that Muznah has been taken by someone else. The thief is Fātik, a black slave who has responded to an offer by a Prince Ṣāliḥ to give his daughter Su‘dā to anyone who brings him Muznah.

**Poem 35:** Fātik sings to himself about his longing for Su‘dā.

(p.57, 11 lines)

The Narrator relates how Fātik entered the Kilābī camp dressed as a woman. In the evening, when he went to try to capture Muznah, he arrived just as Jafāl had left her to go and kill

Jundabah. Fātik leaves with Muznah, followed by Jafāl and then by Jundabah and his men. Fātik kills Jafāl and is captured (and spared) by Jundabah and then escapes. When Ghatrīf hears about Jafāl's failure, he agrees to send one of his henchmen, 'Awf, to offer Salmā to Jundabah in return for Muznah. 'Awf arrives at the Banī Kilāb and is welcomed by Jundabah. After feasting, he says that Ghatrīf has chosen Jundabah as a suitor for his lovely daughter.

**Poem 36:** 'Awf quotes poem about Salmā's beauty

(p.62, 3 lines)

**Poem 37:** Jundabah asks what he wants as a dowry.

(p.63, 4 lines)

'Awf says that Ghatrīf is obsessed with a desire to own Muznah.

**Poem 38:** 'Awf states proposal to swap Salmā for Muznah.

(p.63, 5 lines)

Jundabah refuses angrily to part with Muznah.

**Poem 39:** Jundabah describes how much he values Muznah.

(p.64, 7 lines)

'Awf warns Jundabah that Ghatrīf will take Muznah by force if necessary.

**Poem 40:** 'Awf appeals to Jundabah's responsibility as a ruler to make the right decision.

(p.64, 5 lines)

Jundabah refuses and 'Awf returns to tell Ghatrīf, who then kills him.

**Poem 41:** Ghatrīf's words of blame as he kills 'Awf.

(p.65, 2 lines)

Another slave, Maymūn, offers to go and capture Muznah in return for Salmā.

**Poem 42:** Maymūn, as he travels, reflects on Salmā and the task ahead.

(p.66, 13 lines)

Jundabah and his men set off to pre-empt Ghatrīf's expected attack. On their way they meet Maymūn, who greets them effusively.

**Poem 43:** Maymūn quotes poetry in praise of Jundabah and his men.

(p.67, 3 lines)

**Poem 44:** Maymūn praises the Banī Kilāb.

(p.68, 4 lines)

**Poem 45:** Maymūn quotes a proverb in support of his praise.

(p.68, 1 line)

Maymūn continues to pour out praise of Jundabah and the Banī Kilāb.

**Poem 46:** Maymūn praises Jundabah with ludicrous exaggeration.

(p.68, 22 lines)

The Banī Kilāb are all impressed, apart from Jundabah who has Maymūn thrashed. Maymūn appeals to Jundabah's men for help.

**Poem 47:** Maymūn talks gnostic nonsense.

(p.70, 8 lines)

**Poem 48:** Maymūn protests his good intentions and his sorrow at being misunderstood.

(p.70, 11 lines)

His listeners appeal to Jundabah on his behalf.

**Poem 49:** Jundabah's men quote a proverb to Jundabah.

(p.71, 1 line)

Jundabah continues to distrust Maymūn and chains him to Muznah. Maymūn fears for his life and decides he has to act at once so, after everyone has gone to sleep, he frees

himself by cutting off his foot and rides off on Muznah. Jundabah awakes, finds Maymūn and Muznah gone and sets off to find them, but returns without success.

**Poem 50:** Jundabah reflects on his mistake in not trusting his own judgement.

(p.74, 3 lines)

Prince 'Awf, one of Jundabah's advisers who had reproached him for his treatment of Maymūn, regrets his misjudgement and sets off to find Muznah. He catches up with Maymūn, who is still riding Muznah but is near death from loss of blood from his amputated foot. Maymūn pretends that he has been acting with good intentions and seeks reward for saving Muznah.

**Poem 51:** Maymūn pleads his case with lies.

(p.76, 17 lines)

'Awf is taken in and offers to help Maymūn, who kills him and rides on towards the Banī Ṭay.

**Poem 52:** Maymūn reflects (honestly) on what he has done and his current predicament.

(p.78, 8 lines)

When Maymūn reaches the Banī Ṭay, he and Muznah are welcomed by Ghatrīf.

**Poem 53:** Maymūn reflects on his approaching death.

(p.78, 6 lines)

Ghatrīf makes Salmā go, reluctantly, to honour his promise to Maymūn.

**Poem 54:** Maymūn's final words, lying in Salmā's arms.

(p.79, 2 lines)

Maymūn dies and Ghatrīf entrusts Muznah to two of his men who steal her to obtain a reward for her from Jundabah. The men fall out and kill each other and Muznah seeks the Banī Kilāb's pastures. Jundabah has a dream, in which he is told that he will meet his brother and recover Muznah. The next day he meets a stranger in the desert, who turns out to be his father's son (by Ḥusnā), and Muznah is found grazing. Meanwhile another (ugly) man, Jamrah, has agreed with Ghatrīf to seek Muznah in return for Salmā.

**Poem 55:** Narrator quotes poetry to describe Jamrah's baseness.

(p.83, 5 lines)

Salmā laments her new fate bitterly.

**Poem 56:** Salmā laments her fate.

(p.83, 10 lines)

Jamrah and his son arrive at the camp of the Banī Kilāb and he pretends to be a blind old astrologer/magician by babbling mumbo-jumbo. He convinces everyone that he is genuine and Jundabah asks him to cast a spell to protect Muznah. That night he kills his guards and he and his son escape with Muznah.

**Poem 57:** Jamrah exults at the success of his trickery.

(p.87, 10 lines)

Jamrah and his son are captured by a band from the Banī Asad. The reason for that is explained by the Narrator as being due to the fame of a mare and stallion owned by al-Laith,

which were coveted by other Bedouin. One of them, Rafa' bin Hasan promises his daughter, Ḥusna' to whoever brings him the horses, and the challenge is taken up by Shuwāsh, who arrives (accompanied by a horse-thief) at al-Laith's camp disguised as a poet.

**Poem 58:** Shuwāsh praises al-Laith and his generosity.

(p.88, 10 lines)

That night, Shuwāsh and companion kill their guards and escape with the horses, but when they stop to rest they are both killed by a lion. In the morning al-Laith sets off to follow Shuwāsh and meets Jamrah and his son with their two horses. He realises that Muznah is a different animal, but he accuses Jamrah of being a horse-thief and locks him up.

**Poem 59:** the lament of a love-sick slave overheard by Jamrah in his cell.

(p.90, 7 lines)

A slave frees Jamrah in return for his help in writing a love-letter. Jamrah and his son escape with Muznah and stallion, but the son is eaten by a lion when he stops to relieve himself.

**Poem 60:** Jamrah reflects on what has happened.

(p.91, 13 lines)

Al-Laith's men follow the horses' tracks and find the body of Jamrah's son, followed by those of Shuwāsh and his companion, together with the two horses. Meanwhile Jamrah reaches the Banī Ṭay's camp with Muznah and is welcomed by Ghatrīf. He honours his promise by sending (a very reluctant) Salmā to Jamrah, but the latter dies before he can embrace her.

**Poem 61:** Jamrah's dying words to Salmā.

(p.93, 7 lines)

Meanwhile Jundabah learns that Muznah is with Ghatrīf and sets off with an army to recapture her. The Banī Ṭay come to meet them and a battle ensues.

**Poem 62:** Jundabah addresses Ghatrīf before they fight.

(p.95, 5 lines)

**Poem 63:** Ghatrīf's reply (in same rhyme and metre).

(p.95, 4 lines)

Jundabah is so badly wounded in the battle that he loses a leg and his authority and is replaced as tribal leader by his brother, 'Aṭāf. Jundabah is sick and shunned by everyone.

**Poem 64:** Jundabah reflects on his fall from power.

(p.96, 9 lines)

Jundabah dies, leaving his wife poor and pregnant. She seeks help from 'Aṭāf's wife.

**Poem 65:** Jundabah's wife, seeking help from 'Aṭāf's wife, reflects on life's transitoriness.

(p.98, 4 lines)

'Aṭāf's wife helps her. They both give birth: 'Aṭāf's wife has a daughter: Laylā, and Jundabah's a son: Ṣaḥṣaḥ. They grow up to be the finest girl and boy in the tribe.

**Poem 66:** The Narrator quotes Ibn al-Tharyā to describe Laylā's beauty.

(p.98, 3 lines)

**Poem 67:** The Narrator quotes a poet to describe Laylā.

(p.99, 1 line)

**Poem 68:** The Narrator quotes a poet to describe Laylā out walking.

(p.99, 1 line)

Ṣaḥṣaḥ falls in love with Laylā.

**Poem 69:** Ṣaḥṣaḥ declares his love (rather explicitly) to Laylā.

(p.100, 4 lines)

Laylā reproaches Şaḥṣaḥ and tells her mother. When ‘Aṭāf hears, he threatens to banish Şaḥṣaḥ from the tribe.

**Poem 70:** Şaḥṣaḥ laments in his tent.

(p.100, 2 lines)

When Şaḥṣaḥ tells his mother, she reproaches him for his indiscretion and for jeopardising their welfare as dependents.

**Poem 71:** Şaḥṣaḥ’s reaction to his mother’s reproaches.

(p.101, 2 lines)

Şaḥṣaḥ and his mother continue to argue about the need to be cautious and humble.

**Poem 72:** Şaḥṣaḥ warns his mother that he cannot help his passion.

(p.102, 10 lines)

Laylā tells Şaḥṣaḥ’s mother that she loves him but he must be patient.

**Poem 73:** Laylā asks his mother to repeat these lines of love and advice to Şaḥṣaḥ.

(p.103, 4 lines)

Şaḥṣaḥ’s passion increases.

**Poem 74:** Şaḥṣaḥ describes his passion to his mother.

(p.103, 8 lines)

Şaḥṣaḥ reaches the age of 18 and feels his position to be hopeless. He wonders whether to stay with the Banī Kilāb or to seek his fortune elsewhere.

**Poem 75:** Worn out by waiting for Laylā, Şaḥṣaḥ reflects on his plan to leave to seek his fortune.

(p.104, 10 lines)

Şaḥṣaḥ leaves and everybody is very sad. After wandering for days, Şaḥṣaḥ comes across a pleasant plain with a brook.

**Poem 76:** The Narrator quotes a poet to describe the idyllic scene.

(p.105, 3 lines)

**Poem 77:** Şaḥṣaḥ reflects on having left his tribe and his beloved.

(p.106, 1 line)

Şaḥṣaḥ prays and seeks God's guidance.

**Poem 78:** Şaḥṣaḥ addresses God.

(p.107, 2 lines)

As Şaḥṣaḥ prostrates himself, a wounded horseman rides up and seeks his help. Şaḥṣaḥ admires his magnificent horse. The man says that he is horse-thief who has stolen the horse, al-Lāhiq from the Banī Murrah. Jundabah tells his own story. The thief asks for his help in reaching his own people, but that evening he dies. Şaḥṣaḥ returns to the Banī Kilāb with the horse and is warmly greeted. 'Aṭāf showers him with gifts in return for the horse.

**Poem 79:** Şaḥṣaḥ, sleepless, reflects on his love for Laylā.

(p.110, 5 lines)

Laylā visits Şaḥṣaḥ's tent in the night.

**Poem 80:** Şaḥṣaḥ expresses his passion on Laylā's coming to his tent.

(p.110, 2 lines)

Laylā leaves after a chaste night.

**Poem 81:** Şaḥṣaḥ reflects on their meeting.

(p.111, 2 lines)

‘Aṭāf finds out about their meeting but is dissuaded by his wife from taking any immediate action. Şaḥṣaḥ tells his mother that he is going to go on raids to make his fortune before asking for Laylā’s hand. Laylā sends him a message that she will pay him a visit that night, but finds him asleep. They talk all night. Şaḥṣaḥ sends Laylā a message begging her to come again in the night. Again she finds him asleep.

**Poem 82:** Şaḥṣaḥ justifies his being asleep to Laylā.

(p.112, 2 lines)

They talk all night.

**Poem 83:** Şaḥṣaḥ reflects on their night together after Laylā has left in the morning.

(p.113, 3 lines)

Şaḥṣaḥ asks Laylā to come again. She comes (he is awake) and warns him that ‘Aṭāf has found out and threatened to kill her. Şaḥṣaḥ tells her he is leaving and they pass a night of pleasure. They part in the morning and Şaḥṣaḥ departs.

**Poem 84:** after parting from Laylā and his mother, Şaḥṣaḥ expresses his confidence in the future and his faith in God.

(p.114, 7 lines)

## Appendix 7: Text of poem 64

وها انا قد بقيت كما تراني	تولت نعمتي ومضى زماني	1
وأسبقهم الى نيل الاماني	فيوم الغز كنت أعز قومي	2
الى ذل يجدد بالهوان	ومذ فارقت مزنة عاد عزمي	3
وبان تجلدي وهي جناني	عدمت ركوبها فعدمت صبري	4
رفيعات العوامد والمباني	ترى قبل الممات أرى قبابي	5
يصول على الفوارس بالطعان	ويرزقني الاله فتى كريما	6
بضرب السيف مع طعن السنان	ويأخذ من عدانا التار قهرا	7
ويقهر من يعاند في الزمان	ويأخذ مزنة من تحت خصمي	8
فيا مولاي جد لي بالاماني	انا المغبون في هزلي وجدي	9

## Appendix 8: Placement of Poems in *Sīrat Antarah* (pp.1- 224)

The narrator starts by praising God and stating that he is going to speak of a time before the coming of Islam. He talks of famous tribal wars of the past, including the war of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā between the tribes of ‘Abs and Fazāra (described as being ‘the best of them’). He refers to the sinful condition of the Arabs pre-Islam and tells us that ‘Antarah was sent by God to prepare the way for the prophet Muhammad. He tells the story of Nimrod and Abraham and of Abraham and Ishmael, followed by the building of the Ka‘ba.

At the death of Nizār, one of Ishmael’s descendants, his four sons disagree about how to divide their father’s possessions and set off to submit the dispute to the highly-reputed judgement of King Uf‘a. On their way they come across a beautiful valley full of birds and flowers.

**poem 1:** Narrator quotes a description of a beautiful scene.

(p.78, 6 lines)

The four sons divide the inheritance and separate to found tribal groups in different parts of northern Arabia. A period of tribal strife follows, including the war of Basūs. When it ends, the most powerful Arab king is Jadhīma ibn Rawāha of the Banī ‘Abs. When he is killed by al-Rabbāb, Queen of the Banī Nabhān, he is succeeded by his son Zuhair.

Zuhair hears about the beauty and inaccessibility of Timāḍur and longs to possess her.

**poem 2:** Narrator uses quotation to describe someone being in love without having actually seen the beloved.

(p. 96, 2 lines)

Zuhair cultivates friendship with Timāḍur’s father, but keeps his passion a secret.

**poem 3:** Zuhair recites this quotation when he is alone, thinking about his hidden passion for Timāḍur.

(p.96, 5 lines)

Zuhair stages a fake kidnap of Timāḍur, so that he can rescue her. He wins her father's gratitude and is married to Timāḍur without having to pay a dowry. Under the influence of wine, he confesses his trick to Timāḍur. In revenge, she pretends that she is not actually Timāḍur, who is her (much more beautiful) sister. Zuhair visits the harem disguised as a perfume-seller, in order to check the truth of the matter.

**poem 4:** Zuhair talks to himself as he prepares to enter the harem.

(p.101, 3 lines)

Zuhair is caught and realizes he has been duped. He agrees to pay a dowry. He settles down with Timāḍur and they have ten sons (like lions) and one beautiful daughter. Zuhair and the Banī 'Abs become feared by all the Arabs. Impoverished by entertaining too many guests, they seek to repair their resources through raids. One of the most intrepid warriors is Shaddād, whose horse Jirwah is renowned.

**poem 5:** this is part of what Shaddād used to say about his horse, Jirwah.

(p.104, 6 lines)

Shaddād and companions raid the Banī Jadīlah. Shaddād becomes infatuated with Zabībah, who is one of the black slave women guarding the captured herd.

**poem 6:** Narrator quotes a description of a beautiful woman.

(p.108, 5 lines)

Shaddād and Zabībah make love and she gives birth to a (very sturdy) black boy: 'Antarah (who is not acknowledged as a son by Shaddād).

**poem 7:** Narrator quotes a description of a sturdy child.

(p.110, 3 lines)

'Antarah grows up. Strong and a bully, he is unpopular with his fellows and is sent off to tend a flock on his own. When a fierce wolf attacks the flock, 'Antarah kills him.

**poem 8:** ‘Antarah’s first poem, *fakhr* after killing the wolf.

(p.115, 6 lines)

‘Antarah and his half-brother Shaibūb (Zabībah’s elder son) play tricks on the other herdsmen and are very unpopular. ‘Antarah kills a slave belonging to Shās, one of Zuhair’s sons, who is mistreating and humiliating an old woman. All the other slaves attack ‘Antarah, but he is beating them when one of Zuhair’s other sons, Prince Mālik, appears.

**poem 9:** Quotation by Narrator after describing how Prince Mālik has been impressed by watching ‘Antarah fight all the other slaves.

(p.124, 4 lines)

Prince Mālik stops the fight and reproaches the slaves. He cannot believe the story of how ‘Antarah killed Shās’s slave, who was much older and more experienced than him.

**poem 10:** ‘Antarah tells Prince Mālik how he defeated the other slaves.

(p.124, 3 lines)

Prince Mālik offers ‘Antarah his protection, but Shās swears revenge. Zuhair intervenes when the brothers are about to fight each other. ‘Antarah explains why he killed Shās’s slave.

**poem 11:** ‘Antarah breaks into verse after explaining to Zuhair what had happened.

(p.126, 10 lines)

Zuhair agrees that ‘Antarah can belong to Shaddād ‘until I ask you for him’. ‘Antarah is now completely devoted to both Zuhair and Prince Mālik. Afterwards, his cousin ‘Ablah (daughter of Mālik ibn Qurād), who is the most beautiful of all the girls, is among the people wanting to hear from ‘Antarah what had happened. She approves his actions. ‘Antarah falls in love with ‘Ablah and her long black hair.

**poem 12:** ‘Antarah is soliloquizing after seeing ‘Ablah’s long black hair.

(p.129, 10 lines)

**poem 13:** ‘Antarah soliloquizes about his love for ‘Ablah.

(p.130, 12 lines)

Another slave, Dājir, envies ‘Antarah and falsely accuses him to Shaddād of mistreating the horses and camels. Samīah, Shaddād’s wife, joins in the accusation because she resents ‘Antarah’s delivering the daily milk to ‘Ablah before her. Shaddād whips ‘Antarah, but Zabībah tells him the identity of his accusers and guesses that his attentions to ‘Ablah are at the root of the problem.

**poem 14:** ‘Antarah soliloquizes in the desert after learning from his mother why Shaddād had whipped him.

(p.133, 7 lines)

‘Antarah kills Dājir and is saved from the consequences by Prince Mālīk (who tricks Dājir’s owner into giving him Dājir before he knows he has been killed).

**poem 15:** ‘Antarah thanks Prince Mālīk after being saved by him.

(p.135, 4 lines)

Shaddād is furious with ‘Antarah and worried about the consequences of what he might do in the future. He consults his brother Mālīk ibn Qurād (‘Ablah’s father) and another brother about what to do. They all agree to kill ‘Antarah and they follow him when he leads his sheep to the pasture. ‘Antarah goes a long way off in order to compose poetry and think of ‘Ablah.

**poem 16:** ‘Antarah soliloquizes about ‘Ablah.

(p.136, 36 lines)

‘Antarah has just settled down in an attractive valley, when a lion appears.

**poem 17:** Narrator uses a quotation to describe the lion.

(p.138, 3 lines)

‘Antarah attacks the lion, hurling abuse at it.

**poem 18:** ‘Antarah addresses the lion as he goes to fight it.

(p.139, 3 lines)

‘Antarah kills the lion, dismembers it and eats it, to the amazement of his watching assassins, who decide not to carry out their plan. Zuhair sends for the men to join in a raid against the Banī Tamīm. Shaddād leaves ‘Antarah in charge of the camp (with the women and animals) and promises him a horse as a reward. ‘Antarah is happy to remain with ‘Ablah. The women decide to have a spring-time picnic.

**poem 19:** Narrator quotes description of idyllic picnic scene.

(p.142, 12 lines)

**poem 20:** After a feast (including wine) some of the slave-girls take off their veils, play tambourines and sing these lines.

(p.143, 4 lines)

‘Ablah and the other girls have taken off all their clothes and are dancing, when they are seized in a surprise attack by the Banī Qaḥṭān. ‘Antarah rescues ‘Ablah and kills 40 raiders.

**poem 21:** ‘Antarah recites as he fights.

(p.143, 22 lines)

The raiders flee.

**poem 22:** ‘Antarah exults after the raiders have fled.

(p.145, 4 lines)

The women (including Samīah) are very grateful, but they decide not to tell their menfolk about the incident. When the men return, Shaddād notices that ‘Antarah is riding a strange

horse (one he captured from the raiders) and does not believe his story about how he found it roaming. Shaddād starts to whip ‘Antarah, until Samīah intervenes and tells him the truth.

**poem 23:** Samīah describes ‘Antarah’s heroism to Shaddād (in greater detail).

(p.147, 9 lines)

Shaddād is very impressed by ‘Antarah’s deeds and his remaining silent. ‘Antarah swoons. When he recovers, ‘poetry boiled up in his mind’.

**poem 24:** ‘Antarah to Shaddād after recovering from a swoon.

(p.148, 8 lines)

A feast is held in ‘Antarah’s honour, where he is praised as poet and warrior.

**poem 25:** At the feast, ‘Antarah is overcome by emotion and cannot resist speaking of his love for ‘Ablah.

(p.150, 2 lines)

**poem 26:** ‘Antarah responds to Prince Mālik’s request, at the feast, to recite some of his poetry to Zuhair.

(p.150, 18 lines)

Everyone goes off to a party in the desert with one of Zuhair’s brothers.

**poem 27:** Narrator uses a quotation to describe a party scene.

(p.152, 2 lines)

They all sing and dance.

**poem 28:** the girls sing in chorus about wine and love.

(p.152, 5 lines)

Prince Mālik sends for ‘Antarah to join the party and quarrels with Shās, who resents ‘Antarah’s good fortune. A troop of Banī Qaḥṭān launch a surprise attack on the drunken party, but are repelled by ‘Antarah and Shaibūb.

**poem 29:** ‘Antarah exults as he routs the Bani Qaḥṭān.

(p.154, 12 lines)

**poem 30:** ‘Antarah recites as he fights.

(p.156, 6 lines)

Zuhair witnesses the fighting and gives a feast in honour of ‘Antarah where he praises ‘his eloquence and courage’. Shaddād is now reconciled to ‘Antarah and Shaibūb has become an inseparable companion. The pair become successful raiders and excite the jealousy of Shās and his brothers. ‘Ablah’s parents laugh at ‘Antarah’s poetry and his love for their daughter, but her mother is finally impressed by his sincerity and asks him to recite a poem about his love.

**poem 31:** ‘Antarah responds to ‘Ablah’s mother’s request for a poem about his love.

(p.158, 16 lines)

Shās and brothers agree to commission a troop of slaves to kill ‘Antarah. They all go off to a feast with the Banī Ghaṭfān, while ‘Antarah escorts the ladies more slowly.

**poem 32:** ‘Antarah is compelled by passion to recite as they travel to the feast.

(p.160, 6 lines)

They rest for the night. In the morning, a band of 100 armed horsemen appears.

**poem 33:** The leader of the band speaks of his desire for revenge .

(p.161, 3 lines )

In a flashback, it is explained how the band consists of both the slaves commissioned by Shās and his brothers and a group whose leader was killed by ‘Antarah in a previous attack. When the raiders attack, ‘Antarah tells ‘Ablah’s mother that he will save them all if she agrees to his marrying ‘Ablah. She agrees and ‘Antarah and Shaibūb rout the enemy and kill their leaders.

**poem 34:** ‘Antarah reassures the weeping women.

(p.165, 11 lines)

Half of the attackers have been waiting and watching. Their leader, Ghālib, claims ‘Antarah as his personal target and leads them into battle.

**poem 35:** Ghālib speaks as he goes to attack ‘Antarah.

(p.166, 4 lines)

**poem 36:** ‘Antarah responds (in same rhyme and metre).

(p.167, 9 lines)

‘Antarah kills Ghālib and his fellow-slaves disappear. ‘Antarah escorts the women to join the party, where they praise his exploits and he joins the feast.

**poem 37:** at the feast ‘Antarah speaks of wine and love.

(p.169, 4 lines)

In the absence of Shās and his brothers at the party, Zuhair has lost his way when going to attack the Bani Qaḥṭān and, in his absence, al-Mutaghatriṣ of the Banī Fīnān raids the camp and seizes all the women. Shaddād arrives and asks ‘Antarah to help him in attacking al-Mutaghatriṣ (the first time ‘Antarah has been invited to join the knights in battle).

**poem 38:** ‘Antarah recites as he goes in to fight.

(p.171, 12 lines)

The armies fight. Shaibūb saves ‘Antarah’s life when a fellow-slave tries to kill him. ‘Antarah kills al-Mutaghatriis and overhears Shaddād being urged to acknowledge him as his son.

**poem 39:** ‘Antarah boasts following the victory.

(p.176, 12 lines)

‘Antarah discusses his paternity with his mother and asks why Shaddād will not acknowledge him. She tells him that Shaddād fears criticism from other Arabs and loss of status. ‘Antarah swears to leave if he is not acknowledged and blames ‘Ablah’s mother for not keeping her word. His mother tells him to be patient. Zuhair arrives and gives a feast in ‘Antarah’s honour. When ‘Antarah gets drunk and tells Shaddād that he wants to be acknowledged as his son, Shaddād is furious and is about to kill him when Samīah intervenes. ‘Antarah goes to seek sympathy from Prince Mālik, explaining that his love for ‘Ablah was the reason for his behaving badly to Shaddād.

**poem 40:** ‘Antarah is in tears after explaining his predicament to Prince Mālik.

(p.184, 10 lines )

Prince Mālik criticizes his impetuosity but undertakes to speak to Shaddād on his behalf. ‘Antarah goes off into the desert.

**poem 41:** alone in the desert, ‘Antarah soliloquizes about his predicament as someone whom the tribe appreciates only in times of trouble.

(p.185, 13 lines)

Everyone is troubled by ‘Antarah’s absence. Shās wants to find and kill him. Zuhair reproaches Mālik and says he would have found a girl for ‘Antarah to marry. Meanwhile ‘Antarah and Shaibūb come across 40 armed horsemen, who turn out to be from the Banī ‘Abs. They join them in attacking a prosperous camp of the Banī Qaḥṭān, whose leader, al-Hārith, has a magnificent horse: al-Abjar (lengthily described).

**poem 42:** Narrator quotes a description of Na‘āmah, the dam of al-Hārith’s

horse.

(p.191, 2 lines)

‘Antarah is so taken with the horse that he even forgets about ‘Ablah and pursues al-Hārith. He offers to buy the horse, but al-Hārith refuses.

**poem 43:** al-Hārith addresses ‘Antarah after politely refusing his request to buy the horse.

(p.193, 6 lines)

Al-Hārith finally agrees to swop the horse for all the booty, women etc. captured by the band of Banī ‘Abs. The rest of the band are furious when they find their booty has gone and ‘Antarah rides off on al-Abjar.

**poem 44:** ‘Antarah reflects on his fate after riding off on his own.

(p.196, 12 lines )

The Banī ‘Abs are afraid to attack ‘Antarah (‘whose testicles hang almost to his knees’) and say they were ‘only joking’, which ‘Antarah pretends to believe. Al-Abjar is described at length.

**poem 45:** Narrator quotes a description of a horse.

(p.199, 6 lines)

**poem 46:** Narrator quotes another description.

(p.199, 5 lines)

‘Antarah and the Banī ‘Abs now distrust each other. When they come across a troop accompanying a luxurious howdah, the Banī ‘Abs attack, but ‘Antarah holds back. The howdah’s occupant is a beautiful woman, Amīmah, travelling to join her husband in San‘ā. After an initial repulse, the Banī ‘Abs attack again but ‘Antarah refuses to join in unless they agree to give him half the spoils. In the end, he has to intervene to save the day and the Banī ‘Abs finally come to appreciate him.

**poem 47:** ‘Antarah recites as he returns, bloody but victorious, from the battle.

(p.205, 11 lines)

When Amīmah’s husband, Nāqid, hears about her capture, he gathers 6,000 men to attack the Banī ‘Abs. They are afraid to fight until ‘Antarah encourages them with a stirring speech.

**poem 48:** ‘Antarah encourages his companions before battle.

(p.208, 6 lines)

There is ferocious fighting.

**poem 49:** Narrator uses a quotation to describe the fighting valour of the Banī ‘Abs.

(p.208, 6 lines)

‘Antarah kills Nāqid. The enemy all attack ‘Antarah.

**poem 50:** ‘Antarah recites as he is hard pressed and near death.

(p.210, 8 lines)

Prince Mālik appears with an army, having been asked by Zuhair to find ‘Antarah, and the enemy are routed.

**poem 51:** after the battle ‘Antarah is overcome by emotion.

(p.212, 20 lines)

‘Antarah returns to a hero’s welcome and makes his peace with Shaddād.

**poem 52:** ‘Antarah apologises to Shaddād by quoting a poet on the subject of arrogance.

(p.214, 2 lines)

At the victory feast, Zuhair heaps honours on ‘Antarah to the fury of his sons.

**poem 53:** ‘Antarah soliloquizes after leaving the feast and going in search of ‘Ablah.

(p.216, 15 lines)

‘Ablah reproaches ‘Antarah for keeping her up so late. He gives her a necklace. Hearing that Shaddād and Mālīk have gone off on a raid, he decides to follow in case they need help and takes a very fond farewell of ‘Abla and her mother. Shaibūb warns him not to waste his time with ‘these people’ and that Mālīk ibn Qurād, ‘Ablah’s father, and his son ‘Umru are still determined to kill him. On his way to join Shaddād, ‘Antarah meets a bloodied warrior who tells him that Shaddād has been defeated and captured by Qays bin Ḍubayān. Qays sees ‘Antarah approaching and comes to meet him.

**poem 54:** Qays addresses ‘Antarah before they fight.

(p.220, 8 lines )

Qays learns ‘Antarah’s identity and says that he would not have fought him if he had known he was a slave.

**poem 55:** ‘Antarah replies to Qays (in same rhyme and metre).

(p.221, 8 lines)

### Appendix 9: Text of poem 41

وأطلب امنا من صروف النوايب	اعاتب دهرأ لا يلين بعاتب	1
واعلم حقا أنه وعد كاذب	وتوعدني الايام وعدأ مزخرفأ	2
وعونا لدھري عند حكم التجارب	خدمت اناسأ واتخذت اقاربا	3
وعند لقا الابطال يا بن الاطايب	ينادونني في السلم يا ابن زبيبة	4
ولا روعت أسد الشرى بالثعالب	ولو لا الهوى ما ذل مثلي لمثلکم	5
تجهل بها الابطال من كل جانب	ستذکرني قومي اذا الخيل اقبلت	6
تذکرهم فعلي ووقع المضارب	إذا ما نسوني فالقواضب والقنا	7
كما أنه مدن لكل المصائب	فيا ليت ان الدهر يدني احبتي	8
يرى فيض جفني بالدموع السواكب	ويأتي خيال منك يا عيلة زائراً	9
واعلم اعدائي بتلك الجوانب	سارحل حتى تستريح عوادلتي	10
وكفي قصير عن مثل الكواكب	انك في افق السماء محله	11
فلا غرو من اني انال مطالبني	وإن قدر الله العظيم بلطفه	12
على بغيتي قهرا بحد القواضب	واكمد كل الحاسدين واحتوي	13

Appendix 10: final 23 lines of 'Antarah's *mu'allaqah* in the *sīrah*

فقد رأيت الدم يجري في الفلا	والخيل تزلق بالجمامج والدم
او عاتقا من ازرعية مزوقا	مما ينسجه ملوك الاعجم
ينباع عن زفر غصون حرة	ريانه مثل الفتوق المكرم
ولقد أبيت على الطوى واطله	حتى أنال به كريم المنعم
زيدا تراه بالقداح إذا اشتهى	هناك رايات التجار ملوم
يا عبلة لو ابصرتني لرأيتني	في الحرب بالهزير الضيغم
فلقد ذكرك والرماح نواهل	مني وبيض الهند تقطر بالدم
فوددت لثما للسيوف كأنها	لمعت كبارق ثغرك المتبسم
لحسبني ليئم على عبل الثرى	نهر تراه كالسحاب المقتم
فالخيل تقتمح الغبار عوايس	ويلي مناسجها سرايل من دم
هلا سألتني الخيل يا ابنة مالك	إن كنت جاهلة بما لا تعلم
قومت فيه صعدة هندية	سمرا يقدمها سنان اللهزم
وتركت غربان الفلاة تنوشه	يحجلن فوق بنانه والمعصم
لا تحسبني قتال عبس بالفنا	وقتالهم بالسيف حتم المرنم
فأنا الذي شردت أساد الفلا	وقهرت ابطال الزمان بلهدم
فأنا الذي سعدي علا فوق السها	حتى بدا بالقرب نحو الانجم
فأنا الذي أدعى بعنطرة الوغا	من نسل شداد الشجاع الضيغم
أمي زبيبة ليس انكر اسمها	وأنا ابن فلاق الجمامج والفم
والمستعان بخالقي رب السما	رب عظيم رازق متنعم
غانى جميع عباده من فضله	مع جمع وحش الطيور الحوم

يحييهم ويميتهم بإرادة  
وأسأله أن يعفو ويغفر ذلتي  
وسيلتي ينبيه وحببية  
جل الإله الواحد المتعظم  
وكذا دنوبي إن ربي اعلم  
وباله وبصحبه والاكرم

### Appendix 11: Placement of poems in the *Tale of ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*

‘Umar al-Nu‘mān rules over half the world from Baghdad. His first and only son Sharkān, who spends his time away fighting as a renowned warrior, is happy to hear that his father’s second child (by a concubine given to him by the king of Caesarea) has turned out to be a girl, Nuzhat al-Zamān. Sharkān goes off to defend the kingdom’s borders, unaware that there were in fact twins and Nuzhat has a brother, Ḍaw’ al-Makān.

After Ḍaw’ al-Makān has grown up to be a mighty warrior, a plea for help comes from Afrīdun, the king of the Byzantines in Constantinople, who is planning to wage a war against the King of Caesarea who has stolen three precious gems on their way to Afrīdun. ‘Umar sends Ḍaw’ with an army, accompanied by the vizier Dandan. When they pitch camp one night, Sharkān wanders off, falls asleep and wakes to hear women’s voices in the distance. When he follows them, he finds himself in a beautiful woodland setting.

**poem 1:** Narrator quotes a poet to describe the scene.

(p.166, 2 lines)

He sees an old lady surrounded by 10 beautiful virgins.

**poem 2:** Narrator quotes a poet to describe beautiful girls.

(p.166, 6 lines)

There is one girl whose beauty is exceptional.

**poem 3:** Narrator quotes a poet to describe a beautiful girl.

(p.166, 3 lines)

This girl, Abrīzah, wrestles and defeats an older (and ugly) woman, Dhāt al-Dawāhī. Then she notices Ḍaw’ and challenges him. She defeats him three times (he is overcome by her beauty) and invites him to eat at a nearby monastery.

**poem 4:** Sharkān recites a proverb when he hears Abrīzah (unaware of his

identity) say that she would like to fight the evil Sharkān.

(p.169, 1 line)

**poem 5:** As he follows Abrīzah, Sharkān admires her swaying buttocks.

(p.169, 3 lines)

**poem 6:** alone in the monastery, Sharkān regrets his weakness in falling for Abrīzah's charms.

(p.170, 3 lines)

**poem 7:** when Abrīzah enters with her maids, Sharkān describes her beauty.

(p.170, 3 lines)

Abrīzah works out that her visitor is Sharkān, but the law of hospitality prevents her from harming him.

**poem 8:** a slave-girl sings for Sharkān and Abrīzah.

(p.171, 4 lines)

**poem 9:** Abrīzah sings to Sharkān a song about lovers parting.

(p.171, 3 lines)

**poem 10:** Sharkān quotes some love poetry at Abrīzah's request.

(p.172, 3 lines)

**poem 11:** Abrīzah follows with another quotation by Kuthaiyir about 'Azzah.

(p.172, 2 lines)

**poem 12:** Sharkān, at Abrīzah's request, quotes a line of love poetry by Jamīl.

(p.172, 1 line)

**poem 13:** Sharkān is struck with wonder at the works of art in the monastery.  
(p.173, 3 lines)

**poem 14:** Sharkān quotes a poet in accepting Abrīzah's invitation to play chess.  
(p.172, 4 lines)

After beating him 5 times, she asks him whether he can win at anything.

**poem 15:** Abrīzah sings to Sharkān accompanying herself on a zither.  
(p.172, 2 lines)

**poem 16:** Abrīzah follows that by singing to the accompaniment of a lute.  
(p.172, 2 lines)

Byzantine troops turn up at the monastery, having been alerted to Sharkān's presence by Dhāt al-Dawāhī (it turns out that King Afrīdun's appeal to 'Umar al-Nu'mān was a hoax to lure his army into a trap), but Abrīzah defends Sharkān as her guest and the Byzantines are defeated.

**poem 17:** *fakhr* by Sharkān when congratulated by Abrīzah on killing so many Byzantine soldiers.  
(p.175, 3 lines)

Abrīzah reveals to Sharkān that she is the daughter of Hardūb, the King of Caeserea, and a granddaughter of Dhāt al-Dawāhī. She decides to accompany Sharkān back to Baghdad, with the three gems which have come to be in her possession. One of the gems is given to each of Sharkān, Daw' al-Makān and Nuzhat al-Zamān.

**poem 18:** Sharkān recites lines about lovers' parting, after leaving Abrīzah to rejoin the Muslim army.

(p.177, 2 lines)

After battles with the Byzantines, in which Abrīzah joins in disguise with her amazonian followers on the Muslim side, Sharkān goes off to be Governor of Damascus. ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān has fallen in love with Abrīzah and, when she repels his advances, he drugs and rapes her.

**poem 19:** Abrīzah quotes a poet to describe her feeling lonely and home-sick after her rape.

(p.183, 1 line)

Pregnant, Abrīzah decides to leave Baghdad. After she has given birth to a son in the desert, the slave accompanying her (Ghabbān) attempts to have sex with her.

**poem 20:** Abrīzah repels Ghabbān’s advances.

(p.184, 7 lines)

**poem 21:** Ghabbān insists that he will have his way.

(p.185, 4 lines)

Ghabbān kills Abrīzah and she is found, with her infant son in her arms, by her father King Hardūb.

Ḍaw’ al-Makān and his sister Nuzhat al-Zamān disobey their father’s order not to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca. On their way home they visit Jerusalem, where Ḍaw’ falls ill and their money runs out. Nuzhat goes off to find a menial job to support them and fails to return. Ḍaw’, desperate and ill, is rescued by a stoker, who nurses him back to health and accompanies him to Damascus.

**poem 22:** Ḍaw’ al-Makān tells the stoker that he is sick with love.

(p.190, 4 lines)

**poem 23:** Ḍaw’ recites lines about lovers parting after hearing that a

caravan is about to depart for Baghdad.

(p.190, 3 lines)

**poem 24:** Daw' continues on the same theme.

(p.191, 3 lines)

**poem 25:** Daw' continues, reflecting on the brevity and vanity of life.

(p.191, 3 lines)

He and the stoker decide to join the caravan.

In the meantime, Nuzhat had gone off very unhappily to look for work.

**poem 26:** Nuzhat soliloquizes about love and parting after leaving Daw ' to seek work.

(p.191, 8 lines)

She is kidnapped by a brutal Bedouin.

**poem 27:** Nuzhat laments her fate after being beaten by the Bedouin and thinking of her brother.

(p.193, 6 lines)

The Bedouin decides to sell her as a slave at the market in Damascus.

**poem 28:** Nuzhat is overcome by emotion when questioned by a merchant in the market and recites a lament for a departed lover.

(p.195, 7 lines)

**poem 29:** Nuzhat prays to God for mercy after being struck by the Bedouin in the market.

(p.196, 2 lines)

She is bought by the merchant, who is struck by her talents as well as her beauty.

**poem 30:** Nuzhat writes these lines, on the separation of lovers, as part of a letter for the merchant to take to Baghdad to her family (the merchant wanting a passport for commercial reasons).

(p.197, 5 lines)

**poem 31:** Nuzhat continues her letter, expressing her grief.

(p.197, 3 lines)

**poem 32:** Nuzhat continues on the theme of separated lovers.

(p.197, 2 lines)

The merchant decides to give her to the Governor, Sharkān, in return for commercial favours. Nuzhat is asked to display her learning to the Governor and his court.

**poem 33:** Nuzhat quotes a poet to support her lecture to the court on princely qualities.

(p.201, 1 line)

**poem 34:** Nuzhat quotes another poet on the same subject.

(p.201, 2 lines)

**poem 35:** Nuzhat quotes a poet on the subject of piety.

(p.203, 2 lines)

Sharkān is captivated and marries Nuzhat without realising that she is his sister. When he writes to give the news to ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān, ‘Umar tells him about the disappearance of Daw’ and Nuzhat.

**poem 36:** in a letter to Sharkān, ‘Umar talks of how he thinks constantly of the absent pair (without mentioning them by name).

(p.207, 2 lines)

Nuzhat gives birth to a girl, Quḍiya fa Kāna, and Sharkān realises she must be his sister when he sees her gem. She is hastily married off to the Chamberlain and travels with him to Baghdad in the same caravan that Ḍaw' and the stoker have joined.

**poem 37:** As Ḍaw' travels to Baghdad, he weeps at the thought of Nuzhat and recites these lines about love and parting.

(p.209, 4 lines)

**poem 38:** Nuzhat overhears Ḍaw' reciting this lover's lament (including a reference to 'time's delight' i.e. *nuzhat al-zamān*).

(p.209, 13 lines)

**poem 39:** another outpouring of grief by Ḍaw' on the journey.

(p.211, 4 lines)

**poem 40:** Ḍaw' continues in the same vein.

(p.211, 2 lines)

**poem 41:** Ḍaw' laments again.

(p.212, 7 lines)

Nuzhat is intrigued by the solitary singer, who reflects her own mood, and has him brought to her (she remains hidden).

**poem 42:** at Nuzhat's request, Ḍaw' quotes a poem on the subject of being parted from one's family and native land.

(p.213, 4 lines)

**poem 43:** Ḍaw' quotes another poem on the same subject.

(p.213, 5 lines)

**poem 44:** Ḍaw' quotes another poem on the same subject.

(p.213, 4 lines)

When Nuzhat finally has a look at Ḍaw', she recognises him and they are (tearfully) reunited.

**poem 45:** Nuzhat speaks of her unexpected happiness.

(p.214, 3 lines)

**poem 46:** Ḍaw's reply about weeping for excess of joy.

(p.214, 4 lines)

The stoker is very worried after Ḍaw' has been taken off and when a eunuch comes to escort him to Baghdad.

**poem 47:** the stoker recites a line on fear and God.

(p.215, 1 line)

The caravan is met by Dandan, who explains that 'Umar has been poisoned in an elaborate plot by Dhāt al-Dawāhī, who had sent a troupe of specially trained slave-girls to Baghdad to gain access to 'Umar's court by demonstrating their exceptional learning.

**poem 48:** a quotation by one of the slave-girls to illustrate a lecture to the court on the subject of virtue.

(p.219, 2 lines)

**poem 49:** one of the slave-girls quotes from Qays on the same subject.

(p.220, 3 lines)

**poem 50:** one of the girls quotes Abd bin Jubair quoting Fuḍālah bin 'Ubaid about the two crimes that cannot be forgiven.

(p.221, 2 lines)

**poem 51:** the girl goes on to quote another poet.

(p.221, 2 lines)

**poem 52:** Dhāt al-Dawāhī (disguised as an old woman) quotes al-Shāfi'ī to the court on the subject of abstinence.

(p.225, 2 lines)

Eventually Dhāt al-Dawāhī tricked 'Umar into taking poison and he died. On his arrival in Baghdad, Ḍaw' is proclaimed king. He sends for Sharkān (who declines his offer to take over the kingship) and they raise an army to fight the Byzantines to avenge 'Umar's death. This leads Afrīdun to raise Christian reinforcements from all over Europe. The Muslims are victorious in battle, although heavily outnumbered.

**poem 53:** Sharkān addresses Lūqā, 'the champion of the lands of Rūm', before they fight.

(p.232, 3 lines)

**poem 54:** Narrator quotes a poet to describe one of the Muslim champions (who turns out to be Ḍaw' in disguise).

(p.234, 2 lines)

**poem 55:** Narrator goes on to quote another poet on same subject.

(p.234, 2 lines)

Dhāt al-Dawāhī plots to defeat the Muslims by trickery.

**poem 56:** Narrator quotes a poet about ugly, smelly women, to describe Dhāt al-Dawāhī.

(p.235, 2 lines)

Dhāt al-Dawāhī concocts a plot to lure Sharkān to a monastery.

**poem 57:** Dhāt al-Dawāhī recites the poem she wants her conspirators to

claim they overheard being recited by an anchorite in the monastery, about his being kept a prisoner there.

(p.237, 5 lines)

In the meantime Dandan is encouraging the Muslims to renew the battle.

**poem 58:** Dandan quotes a poet to Sharkān and Ḍaw' about the pleasure of killing the foe.

(p.237, 2 lines)

**poem 59:** Dandan (or Narrator) quotes another poet about the pleasures of war.

(p.237, 2 lines)

The Muslims advance on Constantinople through beautiful scenery.

**poem 60:** Narrator quotes a poet's description of a beautiful verdant scene.

(p.238, 3 lines)

**poem 61:** Narrator continues by quoting another poet on same subject.

(p.238, 2 lines)

Sharkān and Ḍaw' fall for Dhāt al-Dawāhī's trick and are persuaded by a 'merchant' to go to a monastery where vast treasure is hoarded and a Muslim anchorite is being kept captive.

**poem 62:** the anchorite (Dhāt al-Dawāhī in disguise) recites religious mumbo-jumbo to Sharkān and Ḍaw'.

(p.239, 3 lines)

Sharkān and Ḍaw' and their few men are ambushed by 10,000 Byzantines, but manage to take shelter in a cave and eventually to escape when the enemy are too drunk to stop them. They return to the army on its way to Constantinople, accompanied by the ascetic whom they still do not realise to be Dhāt al-Dawāhī.

**poem 63:** Ḍaw' encourages the Muslim forces, by boasting about how he escaped from danger (including a reference to the 'pious ascetic').

(p.248, 12 lines)

**poem 64:** Narrator quotes a poem about a false ascetic.

(p.250, 1 line)

Fierce fighting takes place in front of Constantinople.

**poem 65:** Narrator quotes a description of 'Antarah's horse, Abjar, to describe King Hardūb coming out to fight Ḍaw.

(p.254, 4 lines)

After Ḍaw' kills Hardūb, Dhāt al-Dawāhī 's son, she takes revenge by killing Sharkān.

**poem 66:** Dandan quotes a poet about the inevitability of fate, to console Ḍaw' after Sharkān's death.

(p.257, 2 lines)

**poem 67:** Ḍaw' recites over his brother's grave, about praise restoring life, when people have gathered there to recite the Qur'ān.

(p.258, 6 lines)

**poem 68:** Dandan quotes a poet, about a hero's deeds, over Sharkān's grave.

(p.258, 6 lines)

**poem 69:** One of Sharkān's friends laments over Sharkān's grave.

(p.258, 6 lines)

In his sadness, Ḍaw' asks Dandan to distract him with stories of kings and lovers, which leads to:

\* \* \* \* \*

### **The Tale of ‘Azīz and ‘Azīzah and King Sulaimān**

King Sulaiman asks his vizier to find him a wife so that she can bear a son for him. The vizier’s choice falls on the daughter of King Zahr Shāh.

**poem 70:** The vizier quotes from a poet to describe the beauty of King Zahr Shāh’s daughter.

(p.260, 5 lines)

**poem 71:** The verses recited by the vizier in praise of King Zahr Shāh when he arrives at his court to plead Sulaimān’s case.

(p.261, 9 lines)

Sulaimān and Zahr Shāh’s daughter marry and produce a son, Tāj al-Mulūk.

**poem 72:** Narrator, in describing Tāj al-Mulūk, quotes a poet describing how a child should be brought up to be a warrior.

(p.263, 4 lines)

**poem 73:** Narrator quotes a poet to describe Tāj al-Mulūk’s charms.

(p.263, 5 lines)

**poem 74:** Narrator quotes a poet to describe Tāj al-Mulūk’s charms at age 18.

(p.264, 2 lines)

**poem 75:** Narrator continues by quoting another poet.

(p.264, 2 lines)

**poem 76:** Narrator continues by quoting a third poet.

(p.264, 3 lines)

**poem 77:** Narrator continues by quoting a fourth poet.

(p.264, 3 lines)

One day when Tāj al-Mulūk is out hunting, he meets a group of merchants and asks to see their wares. He notices that one of them, a young man, is weeping.

**poem 78:** the weeping young merchant speaks of lovers parting.

(p.265, 3 lines)

**poem 79:** after fainting, the young merchant recovers and continues on the same theme.

(p.265, 5 lines)

He agrees, very reluctantly, to let Tāj al-Mulūk inspect his wares.

**poem 80:** the merchant speaks of love as, weeping, he opens his goods for inspection.

(p.266, 3 lines)

**poem 81:** after opening his goods, the merchant speaks of the agony of love and parting.

(p.266, 5 lines)

A scrap of paper falls out of his bundle and Tāj al-Mulūk asks to look at it.

**poem 82:** weeping, the merchant speaks of the pain of separation.

(p.266, 8 lines)

The merchant, ‘Azīz, agrees to tell his story to Tāj al-Mulūk.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Azīz's Tale**

On the day of his wedding to his cousin, 'Azīzah, who is an old childhood friend, 'Azīz goes out for a stroll. Being hot, he stops for a rest and sees a beautiful girl sitting in a window. She drops a handkerchief to him before disappearing leaving him in a blissful reverie until nightfall. He finds a note inside the handkerchief.

**poem 83:** the lines written on the note inside the handkerchief.  
(p.268, 3 lines)

**poem 84:** the lines written on the border of the handkerchief.  
(p.268, 2 lines)

**poem 85:** the lines written on the opposite border.  
(p.268, 2 lines)

He returns home, having missed his wedding, and finds 'Azīzah weeping.

**poem 86:** 'Azīzah speaks of the torture of love, after hearing the story of 'Azīz's adventure.  
(p.269, 15 lines)

'Azīz returns each day to see the girl in the window.

**poem 87:** 'Azīzah speaks of the agony of love, when greeting 'Azīz on his return from another visit to the girl in the window.  
(p.270, 9 lines)

**poem 88:** ‘Azīzah greets ‘Azīz again with lines on a similar theme.

(p.271, 3 lines)

**poem 89:** ‘Azīzah greets ‘Azīz again with lines on the sadness of lovers’

parting.

(p.272, 6 lines)

‘Aziz has still not actually met or spoken to the girl in the window, despite receiving hand signals from her.

**poem 90:** ‘Azīzah encourages ‘Azīz by speaking of the virtue of patience.

(p.272, 2 lines)

Finally ‘Azīz receives an invitation to an assignation with the girl in her house.

**poem 91:** ‘Azīzah tells ‘Azīz to recite this line to the girl after he has had

his way with her.

(p.273, 1 line)

‘Azīz eats too much of the food set out for him and falls asleep before the girl arrives for their assignation.

**poem 92:** ‘Azīzah is weeping and reciting these lines when ‘Azīz

returns.

(p.274, 5 lines)

On the next night, food and sleep again prove too much for ‘Azīz.

**poem 93:** ‘Azīzah greets ‘Azīz on his return again.

(p.275, 3 lines)

Finally, ‘Azīz manages to stay awake long enough.

**poem 94:** ‘Azīz quotes a poet to describe the beauty of the girl approaching him surrounded by 10 lovely slave-girls .

(p.277, 4 lines)

**poem 95:** ‘Azīz quotes a poet to describe his night of love.

(277, 2 lines)

Afterwards, ‘Azīz forgets to recite the line provided by ‘Azīzah. The girl gives him a piece of cloth embroidered with a picture of a gazelle.

**poem 96:** ‘Azīzah advises caution after hearing the story of ‘Azīzah’s night and seeing the cloth.

(p.278, 2 lines)

On the following night ‘Azīz remembers to repeat ‘Azīzah’s line after making love with the girl.

**poem 97:** a repetition of poem 91, the line provided by ‘Azīzah.

(p.278, 1 line)

**poem 98:** the girl’s response to the line.

(p.278, 1 line)

**poem 99:** ‘Azīzah’s cryptic reaction to the girl’s line.

(p.278, 1 line)

**poem 100:** the girl’s response to ‘Azīz’s line after their next session of love-making.

(p.278, 1 line)

**poem 101:** ‘Azīzah’s reaction to the girl’s new response, including the statement ‘now I die’.

(p.278, 1 line)

When ‘Azīz repeats his line after making love the following night, the girl weeps and says that she knows ‘Azīzah is dead. ‘Azīz returns home to find ‘Azīzah lying dead behind the door.

The girl tells ‘Azīz that he is too naive to understand women and their wiles and only his cousin’s unselfish behaviour has saved him from the evil which she (the girl) intended. She fears for him in future without ‘Azīzah’s protection.

**poem 102:** the lines carved by the girl on ‘Azīzah’s tombstone,  
concerning the sorrows of love.  
(p.280, 5 lines)

A year later, on one of his daily visits to the girl, he is accosted by a weeping old woman.

**poem 103:** the old woman recites words of greeting.  
(p.281, 2 lines)

‘Azīz is lured into the old woman’s home to meet her daughter.

**poem 104:** ‘Azīz quotes a poet to describe the daughter.  
(p.282, 2 lines)

‘Azīz is locked in with the girl and told he must marry her or die. She tells him how he has only been saved from the daughter of Delilah the wily (the name of the girl he has been visiting for the last year, which is revealed for the first time) through the lines which ‘Azīzah gave him to repeat. ‘Azīz marries the girl and is locked in the house with her for a whole year.

**poem 105:** ‘Azīz quotes a poet to describe the pleasure of making love with  
the old woman’s daughter.  
(284, 2 lines)

At the end of the year, ‘Azīz is free to visit the daughter of Delilah again. She is furious at his absence and to learn that he is now married. She has him seized and castrated.

‘Azīzah returns home to his mother, who hands him the piece of cloth, embroidered with a picture of a gazelle, which ‘Azīzah had asked her to keep for him.

**poem 106:** verses about love embroidered on the cloth.

(p.286, 4 lines)

‘Azīzah has left ‘Azīz a note asking him to keep the cloth to remind him of her, but advising him to stay away from the lady who embroidered the cloth, Princess Duniyā from the Islands of Kāfūr.

**poem 107:** ‘Azīz weeps as he looks at the cloth.

(p.287, 2 lines)

\* \* \* \* \*

**( resumption of the Tale of Princess Duniyā and Tāj al-Mulūk)**

When ‘Azīz finishes recounting his tale to Tāj al-Mulūk, the latter is obsessed with the thought of Princess Duniyā and wants to marry her. His father cannot dissuade him, so eventually he sends off his vizier, accompanied by ‘Azīz, to solicit Princess Duniyā’s hand.

**poem 108:** Tāj al-Mulūk is alone, weeping and soliloquizing about his love.

(p.289, 4 lines)

The vizier is rebuffed, on the grounds that Duniyā has no love for men and no desire for marriage. On his return, the vizier dissuades Tāj al-Mulūk’s father from going to war on his

son's behalf, but persuades him to allow his son to go with himself and 'Azīz, disguised as merchants, to try to make personal contact with Dunyā.

**poem 109:** 'Aziz laments before setting off for the Islands of Kāfūr.

(p.290, 2 lines)

When they arrive at their destination, they decide to pose as wealthy merchants and to set up a business in the silk bazaar where they will be able to meet people. To achieve this, they seek out the market superintendent, who 'prefers the love of boys to girls' and is very pleased to meet Tāj al-Mulūk and 'Azīz. The next day he meets them in the baths.

**poem 110:** Narrator quotes a poet to describe the fine appearance of Tāj al-Mulūk and the others in the baths.

(p.292, 2 lines)

**poem 111:** the market superintendent is overcome with lust by the sight of Tāj al-Mulūk's and the others' buttocks.

(p.292, 2 lines)

**poem 112:** the superintendent greets them.

(p.292, 2 lines)

**poem 113:** Tāj al-Mulūk quotes a poet in answer to a request from the lustful superintendent for verses about baths.

(p.293, 2 lines)

**poem 114:** 'Azīz also quotes on the same subject.

(p.293, 2 lines)

**poem 115:** the superintendent follows with lines on the same subject.

(p.293, 3 lines)

**poem 116:** the superintendent continues.

(p.293, 2 lines)

Through his dealings in the market, Tāj al-Mulūk gets to know an old woman with access to Princess Dunyā.

**poem 117:** Tāj al-Mulūk sends a message of love to Dunyā via the old woman.

(p.295, 4 lines)

**poem 118:** additional final lines of Tāj's letter.

(p.295, 2 lines)

**poem 119:** Princess Dunyā's discouraging response.

(p.296, 6 lines)

**poem 120:** Tāj al-Mulūk's next letter to Dunyā, pointing out that death is no threat.

(p.296, 4 lines)

**poem 121:** Dunyā's discouraging reply to the second message.

(p.297, 4 lines)

**poem 122:** Tāj al-Mulūk's third message to Dunyā, threatening to die.

(p.297, 2 lines)

**poem 123:** Dunyā's still discouraging reply.

(p.297, 6 lines)

**poem 124:** 'Azīz's draft of a message for Tāj to send to Dunyā.

(p.298, 7 lines)

When the old woman delivers this message, Dunyā is furious and has her thrashed. When the old woman reports this to Tāj, he asks her what has caused Dunyā to hate men so. The

explanation is that Dunyā once had a dream about a pair of pigeons, in which the female pigeon, having rescued her male partner from a hunter's net, is herself abandoned by him when she is similarly trapped, thus leaving Dunyā convinced that 'all males are like this; there is no good in them, and no men are of any good to women'. Tāj al-Mulūk says that he wants to have one opportunity to see Dunyā in the flesh and the old woman promises to arrange this on one of Dunyā's monthly visits to a garden outside the palace.

To prepare for this opportunity, they inspect the garden and the vizier arranges for a painter to decorate the pavilion with a series of pictures which will depict the events of Dunyā's dream with an extra scene in which the male pigeon is seen being killed by a hawk as it attempts to return to free the female.

**poem 125:** 'Azīz recites some verses about the grief of love, in response to Tāj's request for something to cheer him up.  
(p.300, 3 lines)

**poem 126:** 'Azīz continues after shedding some tears.  
(p.300, 3 lines)

**poem 127:** 'Azīz continues: there is no cure for love.  
(p.300, 4 lines)

**poem 128:** the vizier tries to cheer Tāj up with a love poem.  
(p.300, 4 lines)

Finally the old woman tells Tāj al-Mulūk that she will be accompanying Dunyā on a walk in the garden that evening, and he should arrange to be there, wearing his finest clothes, so that Dunyā will have a chance to see him in person. The plan works: first Dunyā sees the paintings in the pavilion and accepts that she had misinterpreted her dream, then she catches sight of Tāj al-Mulūk and is overwhelmed by his beauty. She asks the old woman to arrange a meeting and the next day Tāj al-Mulūk is slipped into the women's quarters disguised as a slave-girl. When he and Dunyā finally meet, they make love for six months without leaving their room. Eventually the eunuch discovers Tāj al-Mulūk's presence and he is seized and

taken before the King, Duniyā's father, who commands the executioner to cut off his head. The sword is raised, but at that moment an alarm is raised and the king is told that a mighty host has arrived under the command of King Sulaimān who has sworn to devastate the country if his son is not alive and well. The vizier enters and recognizes Tāj al-Mulūk, who is released, and the King agrees to his marrying Duniyā.

‘Azīz returns home and visits his mother, whom he finds weeping over his tomb.

**poem 130:** ‘Azīz’s mother recites these lines over ‘Azīz’s tomb.

(p.306, 2 lines)

**poem 131:** ‘Azīz’s mother continues.

(p.306, 3 lines)

She is delighted to find that he is still alive and ‘Azīz sets up home with her.

\* \* \* \* \*

**(resumption of the Tale of ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān)**

After 4 years besieging Constantinople, the Muslims retire to replenish their forces. Ḍaw’ al-Makān’s wife produces a son, Kāna mā Kāna, who grows up closely with Nuzhat al-Zamān’s daughter, Quḍiya fa Kāna. Ḍaw’ fears his approaching death and appoints Kāna mā Kāna to be ruler in his place, urging him to pursue vengeance against Dhāt al-Dawāhī for ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān’s death.

**poem 131:** Daw’s final words when he feels he is dying, looking forward to his son’s future.

(p.310, 6 lines)

However, after Daw's death, Kāna mā Kāna is supplanted by the Chamberlain, Sāsān (Nuzhat's husband), and dismissed to live on the outskirts of Baghdad. His mother is forced by poverty to beg assistance from Nuzhat.

**poem 132:** Kāna mā Kāna's mother recites lines about life's misfortunes after begging help from Nuzhat.  
(p.310, 3 lines)

Kāna mā Kāna and Quḍiya fa Kāna have both grown up to be very beautiful.

**poem 133:** Narrator quotes a poet to describe Quḍiya's beauty.  
(p.311, 2 lines)

**poem 134:** Narrator quotes another poet on the same subject.  
(p.311, 2 lines)

**poem 135:** Narrator quotes a poet to describe Kāna mā Kāna's beauty.  
(p.311, 2 lines)

**poem 136:** Narrator quotes another poet on the same subject.  
(p.311, 2 lines)

Kāna mā Kāna falls deeply in love with Quḍiya and does not hide his feelings.

**poem 137:** Kāna mā Kāna earns Quḍiya's displeasure by addressing her publicly in explicit terms.  
(p.312, 2 lines)

Kāna mā Kāna is banned from seeing Quḍiya.

**poem 138:** Kāna mā Kāna soliloquizes about his separation from Quḍiya.  
(p.312, 2 lines)

**poem 139:** Kāna mā Kāna is unrepentant after being criticised by his mother for jeopardizing their livelihood by his pursuit of Quḍiya.  
(p.313, 6 lines)

Quḍiya admits to Kāna mā Kāna's mother that she has only avoided him in order not to arouse gossip.

**poem 140:** speaking to Kāna mā Kāna's mother, Quḍiya reproaches him for not keeping his feelings hidden, as she has.  
(p.313, 2lines)

**poem 141:** Kāna mā Kāna's reaction to being told what Quḍiya said by his mother.  
(p.313, 2lines)

Kāna mā Kāna decides to leave home and seek his fortune to avoid his current misery.

**poem 142:** Kāna mā Kāna soliloquizes after deciding to leave home, looking forward to a happy, successful return in the future.  
(p.313, 7 lines)

**poem 143:** Kāna mā Kāna's mother laments his absence.  
(p.314, 5 lines)

**poem 144:** alone in the desert, Kāna mā Kāna laments his absence from Baghdad.  
(p.315, 2 lines)

**poem 145:** Kāna mā Kāna awakes in the desert to hear a man singing these lines about love.  
(p.315, 5 lines)

**poem 146:** the unknown man continues.

(p.315, 8 lines)

The unknown singer turns out to be a Bedouin, Sabbāḥ, who decides to kidnap and ransom Kāna mā Kāna when he learns of his princely stock. They fight and Kāna mā Kāna wins easily but spares Sabbāḥ's life when he pleads the need to see his beloved again.

**poem 147:** Sabbāḥ's plea to Kāna mā Kāna to spare his life.

(p.317, 2 lines)

A wounded rider approaches them on a magnificent horse. He explains that he is a horse-thief who had stolen the renowned horse, Qātūlu, from Dhāt al-Dawāhī. He knows he is dying and gives the horse to Kāna mā Kāna.

**poem 148:** the dying words of the horse-thief to Kāna mā Kāna, repentant but defiant.

(p.319, 6 lines)

Meanwhile Dandan has raised a force to recover the kingdom from Sāsān and restore Kāna mā Kāna, who hurries back to Baghdad on the back of Qātūlu. Sāsān pretends to welcome Kāna mā Kāna, who arranges to meet Quḍiya that night. When she arrives, she finds him asleep, but they spend the night together.

**poem 149:** Quḍiya reproaches Kāna mā Kāna when she finds him asleep at their tryst.

(p.321, 3 lines)

**poem 150:** Kāna mā Kāna regrets Quḍiya's leaving in the morning.

(p.321, 3 lines)

Kāna mā Kāna decides to practise highway robbery in order to acquire some wealth. He picks a herd of camels as a target.

**poem 151:** Kāna mā Kāna recites *fakhr* as he rides to seize a herd of

camels.

(p.322, 4 lines)

He is interrupted and attacked by a troop of Turkish and Kurdish horsemen under Kahardash, a Persian robber-chief, whom Kāna mā Kāna kills.

**poem 152:** Narrator quotes a poet to describe the horse of one of Kahardash's warriors.

(p.323, 2 lines)

Quḍiya warns Kāna mā Kāna that Sāsān has decided to have him killed, but Kāna mā Kāna remains unworried.

**poem 153:** Kāna mā Kāna quotes a poet in response to Quḍiya's warning.

(p.325, 2 lines)

Kāna mā Kāna kills all the men sent to murder him while out hunting. Kāna mā Kāna makes his peace with Sāsān and forgives him for his actions, but Sāsān still plots to kill him.

**poem 154:** Nuzhat quotes a poet in support of her argument to Sāsān that he should marry Quḍiya to Kāna mā Kāna.

(p.326, 4 lines)

A further plot by Sāsān to kill Kāna mā Kāna is foiled, and the latter, his mother, Quḍiya and Nuzhat all go to join Dandan and his army. However they fall into the hands of Rumzan, the king of Rum, who is about to have them killed when his old nurse intervenes and reveals that they are all his close relatives. He is the son of Abrīzah and therefore also of 'Umar al-Nu'mān. The nurse was Abrīzah's maid who was accompanying her when she was killed by the slave, Ghadbān. The proof of what she says is that Kāna mā Kāna and Nuzhat are both wearing gems similar to the one which Ramzun is wearing: they are the three gems given to 'Umar by Abrīzah. Rumzan and Kāna mā Kāna proceed to Baghdad and decide to share ruling the kingdom as equals.

Their festivities are interrupted by the arrival of a merchant, whose caravan has been robbed by Bedouin and Kurds and all his men killed. It turns out that the merchant is the same one who bought Nuzhat from the Bedouin and gave her to Sharkān. The Bedouin are captured and brought to Baghdad, where they are questioned by the kings. One of them, whose name is Ḥammād, tells the story of his life as a kidnapper and it turns out that he was the man who kidnapped and mistreated Nuzhat. When she is about to kill him, he begs for a delay while he tells them a story of how he and a band of fellows once came across a tent in an oasis, occupied by a young man and a beautiful girl. They spend the night there and he is overcome by passion for the girl.

**poem 155:** Ḥammād the Bedouin quotes a poet to describe the girl's beauty.  
(p.334, 2 lines)

The Bedouin decide to fight the young man in single combat, the winner to have his sister (thus avoiding a breach of the Bedouin concept of honour).

**poem 156:** the girl addresses her brother as he prepares to defend her against the Bedouin.  
(p.335, 7 lines)

**poem 157:** her brother's reply of *fakhr* (in the same rhyme and metre).  
(p.335, 5 lines)

**poem 158:** the young man addresses the first challenger before they fight.  
(p.336, 3 lines)

**poem 159:** the young man addresses the second challenger.  
(p.336, 2 lines)

**poem 160:** the third challenger addresses the young man.  
(p.336, 2 lines)

**poem 161:** the young man's reply.

(p.336, 2 lines)

**poem 162:** the young man addresses the fourth challenger

(p.336, 2 lines)

The young man kills all his challengers except Ḥammād, the last one, who clings to his horse's belly and begs for mercy.

**poem 163:** the young man responds to his sister's congratulations.

(p.336, 5 lines)

**poem 164:** Ḥammād flatters the young man.

(p.337, 3 lines)

When the young man is asleep, Ḥammād kills him.

**poem 165:** the young man's sister laments his death.

(p.337, 5 lines)

The sister then kills herself and Ḥammād flees with whatever he can carry.

When he finishes his story, Ḥammād is struck dead by Nuzhat. It then turns out that one of the other Bedouin captives is Ghadbān, Abrīzah's murderer, so he too is killed.

The only unfinished business is Dhāt al-Dawāhī. She is tricked into coming to meet them and the story ends with her crucifixion on the gate of Baghdad.

Appendix 12: Poem 26

والشوق حرك ما عندي من الألم	جن الظلام وهاج الوجد بالسقم	1
والوجد صيرني في حالة العدم	ولوعة البين في الأحشاء قد سكنت	2
والدمع باح بحب أي مكتنم	والحزن أفلقني والشوق أحرقتني	3
حتى تزحزح ما عندي من الألم	وليس لي حيلة في الوصل أعرفها	4
ومن لظاها يظل الصب في نغم	فنار قلبي بالأشواق موقدة	5
إني صبرت على ما خط بالقلم	يا من يلوم على ما حل بي وكفى	6
يمين أهل الهوى مبرورة القسم	أقسمت بالحب ما لي سلوة أبدأ	7
واشهد بعلمك أنني فيك لم أنم	يا ليل بلغ رواة الحب عن خبري	8

### Appendix 13: Placement of poems in *Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan* (parts 1 and 2)

The story starts when Dhū Yazan, the king of Yemen, decides to wage war against Ba‘albak, a king in the East whose fabulous wealth and power has been described to him by his (wise) minister, Yathrib. On their march towards Ba‘albak, they pass by Mecca and Yathrib takes the opportunity to reveal to Dhū Yazan that he has converted to Islam and urges the king to do likewise. Dhū Yazan is convinced to do so only after he has failed three times to take down the Holy House in order to move it to his own land and has been afflicted with terrible diseases. Finally he professes his faith truly and obeys a voice in a dream which tells him to adorn the Holy House’s walls.

When the march is resumed, they come upon a beautiful scene.

**poem 1:** Narrator uses quotation to describe the scene.

(p.9, 2 lines)

Yathrib receives Dhū Yazan’s permission to build a city there and foretells that Muhammad will move there from Mecca in the future. Once the city (Yathrib) has been built, the army moves on towards Ba‘albak.

**poem 2:** Dhū Yazan expresses his new faith as he leads his army on after the building of Yathrib.

(p.10, 5 lines)

**poem 3:** Narrator uses quotation to describe Ba‘albak’s palace.

(p.12, 7 lines)

After feasting together, Dhū Yazan and Ba‘albak decide to wager their kingdoms on the result of a single combat between them. After two days of fierce fighting, Ba‘albak feels his strength waning and flees into the desert where he is killed by a lion.

**poem 4:** Narrator uses quotation to describe the lion which kills Ba‘albak.

(p.13, 4 lines)

After taking possession of Ba‘albak’s kingdom and wealth, Dhū Yazan takes the army on towards Ethiopia and the Sudan. On their march they come across a beautiful scene.

**poem 5:** Narrator uses quotation to describe the scene.

(p.14, 5 lines)

Dhū Yazan builds a new city there, al-Ḥamrā’, which will be the capital for his enlarged kingdom. When he prepares to move on towards the conquest of Ethiopia and the Sudan, Yathrib casts the sands in order to see whether Dhū Yazan is the king destined to fulfil Noah’s curse (i.e. that the black descendants of Sām would serve the descendants of Ḥām).

**poem 6:** Yathrib tells Dhū Yazan what he has learnt from casting the sands, including that it will not be him, but someone of his stock and bearing his name, who will fulfil Noah’s curse.

(p.15, 38 lines)

Meanwhile Sayf A‘rad, the king of Ethiopia and the Sudan, hears of Dhū Yazan’s threat and seeks advice from his minister, Bahr Qafqān al-Rīf, and his two demonic wizards, Saqardyūn and Saqardīs. They advise him against risking battle with the Arabs, in case they are the instrument for fulfilling Noah’s curse. Instead they devise a plot to send Dhū Yazan a present of a beautiful slave-girl, who will first seduce him and then kill him with poison.

**poem 7:** Narrator uses a quotation to describe the slave-girl when Dhū Yazan is struck by her beauty.

(p.19, 5 lines)

Bahr Qafqān is a secret convert to Islam and sends a messenger with a letter to warn Dhū Yazan of the plot.

**poem 8:** Bahr Qafqān includes these lines in his letter of warning to Dhū Yazan.

(p.20, 26 lines)

Dhū Yazan confronts the slave-girl, Qamrīyah, who hands over her fial of poison, and is overcome with passion for her. She becomes pregnant from him, but he dies (for reasons unknown) before the child's birth.

**poem 9:** lines written on Dhū Yazan's tomb.

(p.26, 11 lines)

Qamrīyah assumes the throne and gives birth to a son, whose cheek carries the green mole which is a sign of Tubba'ī royalty. When the leaders all greet him as the future king, she decides to kill him, in order to protect her own position, but is persuaded by the midwife instead to abandon him in the desert.

**poem 10:** Qamrīyah rejoices after abandoning her son in the desert.

(p.28, 6 lines)

There he is found by a hunter, who delivers him to King 'Afrāḥ, one of the major kings of Ethiopia and the Sudan, who is taken with his beauty. The wizard Saqardyūn arrives at that moment and warns 'Afrāḥ to kill the child, who may be the instrument for fulfilling Noah's curse. However, he is interrupted by the news that 'Afrāḥ's wife has given birth to a daughter, also bearing a mole on her cheek, and the sight of the two babies side by side convinces 'Afrāḥ to spare the boy and to raise him as a son, giving him the name Waḥsh al-Falā.

Shortly afterwards, the boy disappears for three years after being taken by one of the queens of the Jinn (whose husband, known as the White King, lives on the 'bitter mountain' near the source of the Nile) and being raised with her daughter, 'Aqīṣah. On his return, he grows up as a great horseman and warrior.

**poem 11:** An example of the poetry aroused by Waḥsh al-Falā's qualities.

(p.37, 5 lines)

**poem 12:** Narrator uses quotation to describe Waḥsh al-Falā's mole.  
(p.37, 2 lines)

Saqardyūn is horrified to hear of Waḥsh al-Falā's prowess and threatens to advise Sayf Ar'ad to destroy 'Afrāḥ if he does not send the boy away. So Waḥsh al-Falā is sent to complete his upbringing with one of 'Afrāḥ's knights, 'Aṭamṭam. He learns all the arts of war for the next few years until he enrages 'Aṭamṭam, by beating him at his special sport of piercing trees with his spear, and is expelled after being suspected of being an instrument of Noah's curse.

**poem 13:** Waḥsh al-Falā soliloquizes as he heads into the desert, weeping, after his row with 'Aṭamṭam.  
(p.41, 4 lines)

After two days he comes across a cave and finds a strange-looking man, 'Abd al-Lahab, to whom he relates his misfortune.

**poem 14:** Waḥsh al-Falā laments his troubles to the man in the cave.  
(p.41, 4 lines)

'Abd al-Lahab tells Waḥsh al-Falā that there is a treasure in the cave, including a whip with magic powers, which only a youth called Waḥsh al-Falā can retrieve. After Waḥsh has got the whip, 'Abd al-Lahab asks him to hand it over but Waḥsh does not trust him. He strikes 'Abd al-Lahab with the whip and his head falls off.

He travels on for two days and comes across two tents on mounds in front of a city, whose walls are lined with people weeping and in mourning. In one tent he finds a beautiful girl dressed in bridal clothes and weeping.

**poem 15:** Narrator uses quotation to describe the weeping bride.  
(p.43, 4 lines)

She (Shāmah) is lamenting that she is a king's daughter who is going to be forced to marry a Jinn.

**poem 16:** Shāmah laments her fate.

(p.44, 5 lines)

**poem 17:** Waḥsh al-Falā is overcome by Shāmah's beauty.

(p.44, 8 lines)

Shāmah explains that, following a plot by Saqardyūn to keep her and Waḥsh apart, the city have been told to leave her to be collected by a giant, known as the Snatcher, for marriage to an evil sorcerer ('Abd Nār), or the city will face utter destruction. When the giant arrives, Waḥsh uses his magic whip to cut off his arm and the giant flees. There is great celebration.

**poem 18:** Waḥsh soliloquizes about his love for Shāmah as he lies awake thinking of her (she overhears).

(p.49, 3lines)

Waḥsh and Shāmah declare their love to each other and he plucks up courage to seek her hand from King Afrāḥ, who agrees but is persuaded by Saqardyūn to demand an impossible dowry: the head of Sa'dūn, the feared chief of a band of robbers.

**poem 19:** Waḥsh soliloquizes about his love and the task ahead as he rides off on his mission to bring Sa'dūn's head.

(p.52, 2 lines)

He encounters a knight in armour and they fight until the knight reveals himself to be Shāmah, who wanted to test his ability. He refuses her offer to accompany and help him in his mission.

**poem 20:** Shāmah soliloquizes about her love for Waḥsh as she rides off after their fight.

(p.54, 2 lines)

On reaching Sa'dūn's castle, Waḥsh manages to enter but then falls into a pit full of daggers.

**poem 21:** Waḥsh soliloquizes as he faces death in the pit.

(p.54, 2 lines)

Waḥsh is rescued by Shāmāh, who had followed him, and they both seek out Sa'dūn.

**poem 22:** Waḥsh relates why he is there and expresses his determination to defeat Sa'dūn as he prepares to fight him.

(p.56, 10 lines)

They fight and wrestle until Waḥsh is victorious, but he spares Sa'dūn's life and they become friends.

**poem 23:** Waḥsh sings of his friendship with Sa'dūn as they all travel back to King Afrāḥ.

(p.61, 8 lines)

Saqardyūn imposes another requirement for a wedding gift: the Book of the Nile, whose whereabouts are unknown but which gives its possessor dominion over Ethiopia and the Sudan.

**poem 24:** Shāmāh's farewell to Waḥsh.

(p.64, 3 lines)

**poem 25:** Waḥsh's reply.

(p.64, 4 lines)

Waḥsh sets off on his mission.

**poem 26:** Waḥsh soliloquizes as he crosses the desert.

(p.65, 6 lines)

After 60 days' journey, Waḥsh meets a hermit, Shaykh Jiyād, and is told that he is the son of Dhū Yazan and that his true name is Sayf bin Dhī Yazan. The hermit converts him to Islam and advises him on how to proceed with his quest. Following his instructions, Sayf meets up with 'Āqilah, a sorceress at the court of King Qamrūn at Qaymar, where the Book of the Nile is venerated and closely guarded by wizards. She agrees to help Sayf in his quest, provided that he marries her daughter Ṭāmah (she and Sayf have fallen in love at first sight). 'Āqilah contrives to get Sayf into Qaymar and to trick Qaymar into killing a number of the wizards. On a day when the dome protecting the Book is opened for a ceremony, Sayf insists on accompanying 'Āqilah, disguised as a slave.

**poem 27:** 'Āqilah quotes a proverb to Sayf after warning him not to enter the dome containing the Book.

(p.84, 2 lines)

When the dome is opened, Sayf cannot resist entering and seizing the book and is attacked by Qamrūn's men.

**poem 28:** Sayf yells in defiance as he is attacked.

(p.86, 13 lines)

Sayf's resistance is finally overcome and the king orders for him to be thrown into a pit to die.

**poem 29:** Sayf laments his fate and appeals to God as he is led off.

(p.87, 11 lines)

**poem 30:** Sayf appeals to God to be rescued from the pit where he has been thrown.

(p.88, 10 lines)

He is rescued by ‘Āqīṣah, the daughter of the White King, whose mother suckled Sayf when he was taken away from ‘Afrāh for three years when he was a baby (they are Muslim jinn). Her father has been forced to agree to her marriage to ‘the Snatcher’ (the evil fire-worshipping jinn whose arm was cut off by Sayf when he tried to snatch ‘Āqilah as a bride for the evil sorcerer ‘Abd Nār). A holy Shaykh, ‘Abd al-Salām, has advised her that only Sayf can save her. Sayf kills the Snatcher, after first freeing 40 virgins imprisoned by him (arousing the enmity of one of them, Nahid, by refusing to marry her until he has first married Shāmah). ‘Āqīṣah takes Sayf to meet the dying Shaykh ‘Abd al-Salām.

**poem 31:** Sayf’s words over ‘Abd al-Salām’s grave.  
(p.95, 6 lines)

‘Āqīṣah offers to show Sayf the wonders of the seven realms.

**poem 32:** Narrator uses a quotation to describe the wonders of the valley of the first realm.  
(p.71, 8 lines)

On his way to the second realm, Sayf captures a cap which makes the wearer invisible.

**poem 33:** Narrator uses a quotation to describe the valley of the second realm.  
(p.98, 5 lines)

Sayf is captured and handed over to ‘Abd al-Nār.

**poem 34:** Sayf prays to God to rescue him.  
(p.101, 5 lines)

‘Abd al-Nār is converted to Islam through a dream and becomes Sayf’s helper. Sayf acquires a ring with magic powers. ‘Āqīṣah refuses to show Sayf any more of the realms and returns home. Sayf returns to ‘Āqilah and Ṭāmāh in Qaymar, but has to leave (with the Book but without the cap) after angering Ṭāmāh by refusing to marry her before he has married

Shāmah. He visits Shaykh Jiyād (the hermit who taught him about Islam) and finds him dying.

**poem 35:** Sayf's words over Shaykh Jiyād's grave.

(p.110, 3 lines)

Meanwhile Saqardyūn plots with Saqardīs to spoil Sayf's plans by persuading Sayf Ar'ad to send an army under Munāṭiḥ al-Bighāl to request Shāmah's hand in marriage from Afrāḥ - by force if necessary. Afrāḥ agrees, but Sa'dūn (who has remained with his men awaiting Sayf's return outside the city) kills Munāṭiḥ and is then attacked by the latter's army as well as by Afrāḥ, who fears Sayf Ar'ad's response.

**poem 36:** Sa'dūn's words as he leads his men into battle.

(p.116, 10 lines)

Sayf arrives just as Sa'dūn and his men are about to be overwhelmed and at the sight of him Afrāḥ makes him welcome and halts the fighting.

**poem 37:** Sayf answers Afrāḥ's request to tell him his adventures and how Waḥsh al-Falā has become Sayf bin Dhī Yazan.

(p.119, 86 lines)

Saqardyūn steals the Book of the Nile and sends it to Sayf 'Arad with a message to send an army to destroy Afrāḥ and Sayf. This coincides with Sayf 'Arad learning that Qamrīyah is ruling a kingdom without paying tribute, so his minister, Bahr Qafqān, advises him to ask Afrāḥ to take an army to destroy Qamrīyah (thus killing two birds with one stone).

**poem 38:** Bahr Qafqān, after warning Sayf 'Arad about Noah's curse and its possible fulfilment through Sayf, repeats the 'saying of the ancients'.

(p.165, 2 lines)

Afrāḥ accepts and sets out with Sayf and Sa'dūn, although the latter is suspicious of Sayf 'Arad's motives. They travel via Sayf 'Arad's court, where they are entertained lavishly.

**poem 39:** Narrator uses a quotation to describe Sayf's beauty as admired by Sayf 'Arad during the feast.  
(p.128, 4 lines)

When Sayf's army reaches Qamriyah's kingdom, she comes to his tent to suggest that they decide the dispute through single combat. He agrees and she strips down to her shirt.

**poem 40:** Narrator uses a quotation to describe the naked Qamriyah.  
(p.131, 8 lines)

When Sayf strips in his turn, Qamriyah sees his necklace (which she had put round his neck when she abandoned him in the desert) and realises he is her son. Sayf refuses to believe her story until she fetches four of his father's old Chamberlains who recognise him from his mole and his likeness to his father. Qamriyah pretends to be delighted by his return. He summarises the story of his past life, including his conversion to Islam, and accepts her story that she abandoned him in a fit of madness.

**poem 41:** Sayf recounts his adventures to Qamriyah.  
(p.133, 66 lines)

Qamriyah pretends to lament her past misdeeds and is forgiven by Sayf.

**poem 42:** Qamriyah protests her love for Sayf and her regrets for the past.  
(p.135, 15 lines)

She returns to her camp, ostensibly to inform her men and prepare things for Sayf's reception as the true king the next day. Her first action that night is to kill the four Chamberlains.

A flashback explains how Qamriyah first established her power by employing mercenaries and banishing all Dhū Yazan's soldiers. After failing to dissuade her, Yathrib left and

returned to his new city. His astrologers informed him of Sayf's survival and foretold Sayf's glorious future.

**poem 43:** Yathrib tells the story of Abraham and the early prophets as well as his own life and foretells the future of Sayf and Muhammad.  
(p.137, 151 lines)

## Appendix 14: the text of poem 6

1	أيا ملكا في هذه الأرض قد نما	ملوك الورى أرض وأنت لهم سما
2	وأنت كما البدر المنير الذي علا	عليهم وقد صاروا زمانك أنجما
3	ملكك جميع الأرض شرقاً ومغرباً	وربك قد أعطاك ملكاً معظما
4	علوت على أعلى الثريا بهمة	تعيد جلاميد الصخور إلى الحما
5	حميت من الأعداء أرضك كلها	وفي الجود كالبحر المحيط إذا ظما
6	وجللت بيت الله خزا مزركشا	يحير عين الناظرين مرقما
7	وساعدتني حتى بنيت مدينتي	يهاجر فيها سيد الأرض والسما
8	ويظهر دين الحق شرقا ومغربا	فيا فوز ذاك العصر من كان مسلما
9	نبي كريم سيد الرسل كلهم	به الأنبياء رب البرية ختما
10	على دينه من مات يحظى بجنة	يخلد فيها دائما متنعما
11	على ملة الإسلام ربي توفي	على دين طه الهاشمي مكرما
12	وإني قد أصبحت لا شك مسلما	فيا ربنا اغفر لي الذي قد تقدا
13	ومن يثرب سرنا إلى بعلبك ذي ال	جيوش فقتلنا وقد ضربنا مهازما
14	وجئنا مع الجيش العظيم بسرعة	نزلنا إلى روض وقد حزننا مغنما
15	غرسنا بها الأشجار طابت ثمارها	وصار لنا ظل ظليل مخيما
16	بنينا بها حمر الجيوش مدينة	وصار لنا دار ومأوى ومعلما
17	أراد ملك العصر ذو يزن بأن	يدوس جيوشاً للجيوش ويهجما
18	فقلت له صبيرا قليلا ولا تخف	عدوا ولا زلت على الناس قادما
19	لكي أنني أضرب لك الرمل عاجلا	وأكشف من كتب الملاحم ملحما
20	فإن مليكا يملك الأرض كلها	يكن حمريا تبعيا ومسلما

- 21 بدعوة نوح داعيا كل أسرة لأولاد سام تابعين وخداما
- 22 يقاتل أبطال الجيوش بعزمه وينقذهم من ظلمة الكفر والعمى
- 23 فقابلت بتخت الرمل بعد ملاحم فلم أره هذا الملئك المعظما
- 24 ولكنه من نسله يأتي عاجلا ومن اسمه يشتق إسم له سما
- 25 فبالله لا تبغ ولاتك تعتدي وقابل بمن يأتيك خصما مخصما
- 26 وإن كنت تبغي الشر فاتركه وانتح صوابا فإني أصح لك معلما
- 27 فأنت مهاب عند جمع ملوكهم ويهدوا إليك الخير والمال مقدما
- 28 فعش أمانا في لذة ومسرة إلى حين يقضي العمر الفرح فاغنا
- 29 فيأتيك مولود ويملك أرضهم ويبقى على جميع البرية حاكما
- 30 على يده لا شك انفاذ دعوة لنوح نبي الله حكما تقدما
- 31 وفي عصره تخريب بلدتكم ذه وأسوارها ترمى جميعاً وتهدما
- 32 وتعمر في أيامه مصر كلها ويجري بها النيل المبارك خادما
- 33 وإقليمها يبقى مدى الدهر عامرا ويسكنها عرب تصاحب أعجما
- 34 ومن بعدها تفتن الخلائق كلها ويبقى قضاء الله في الخلق حاكما
- 35 ولا بد من موت وبعث وموقف وجنات فردوس ونار جهنما
- 36 وهذا الذي قد بان في الرحل والكتب فألقينه شعرا كدر تنظما
- 37 فيا ربنا فاغفر لعبدك يثرب واشهد اللهم أنني صرت مسلما
- 38 وصل على جميع النبيين كلهم وخاتمهم طه الشفيح المعظما

### Appendix 15: Placement of poems in *Qiṣṣat Fīrūz Shāh* (book 1)

Dārāb accedes to the throne of Persia when he is 12. He was brought up as a monotheist and he rules successfully with guidance from two trusted advisers: Ṭītlūs, a Greek philosopher who knows how to cast the sands, and Fīlzūr, who is the leader of seven champions (*bahlawānīyah*). On their advice, at the age of 25 he marries Timurtāj, a princess from the land of the Berbers, on the same day that Fīlzūr marries a slave-girl. They both produce sons: Dārāb: Fīrūz Shāh and Fīlzūr: Farkhūzād. Ṭītlūs casts the sands and sees that Fīrūz Shāh will be famous and successful but that trouble will come from his falling in love with a girl.

The boys are brought up together uneventfully, until Timurtāj's father sends his minister with a present of a mare for his grandson. On his way to deliver the horse, he rescues a girl who has been abducted by a ghoulish man and has borne his son: Bihrūz. He hands them over to Fīlzūr for protection, saying that Bihrūz could turn out to be someone special. Fīrūz is trained in riding and war, outdoes his father in feats of strength (lifting two horses above his head) and is put under Ṭītlūs's tutorship.

One day, 3 years later, Fīrūz sees a beautiful girl in a dream and remains sick with love for her when he wakes up.

**poem 1:** Narrator uses quotation to describe Fīrūz's troubled state of mind after falling in love with a girl in his dream.  
(p.25, 2 lines)

Fīrūz sees the girl for a second time in a dream.

**poem 2:** Fīrūz addresses the girl when he sees her for the second time in a dream.  
(p.26, 2 lines)

He asks her for her name, but awakes before she can answer.

**poem 3:** Fīrūz weeps as he remembers the girl on waking from his second dream.

(p.26, 9 lines)

Fīrūz refuses to tell Ṭīṭlūs why he is disturbed. He sees the girl for a third time in a dream and she tells him that her name is ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt before he awakes.

**poem 4:** Reflecting on his third dream, and ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt’s beauty, Fīrūz weeps and expresses his sorrow at longing for a phantom beloved, who is far away and appears as an illusion.

(p.28, 5 lines)

**poem 5:** Fīrūz continues his reflection on a lover’s fate.

(p.28, 6 lines)

Ṭīṭlūs overhears Fīrūz, who finally explains the reason for his trouble but forbids him to tell his father. Ṭīṭlūs introduces Fīrūz to Shayāghūs, a painter of portraits, who tells a story of how he travelled to Tizza’ in the Yemen and was shown a lovely garden.

**poem 6:** Shayāghūs describes the garden.

(p.31, 5 lines)

In Shayāghūs’s story, a troop of soldiers and slave-girls appears in the garden, accompanying a beautiful girl.

**poem 7:** Shayāghūs describes the beautiful girl.

(p.31, 5 lines)

He finds out that the girl is ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt, daughter of Surūr, the king of Yemen.

Fīrūz accepts Shayāghūs’s offer to help him by painting Fīrūz’s portrait and taking it to Yemen to hang where ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt will see it and so fall in love with him. Shayāghūs

travels to Yemen and hangs a portrait of Fīrūz on a tree where ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt sees and takes it. She finds some writing underneath the portrait.

**poem 8:** the words written underneath the portrait.

(p.34, 2 lines)

She is very struck by the man in the portrait but disappointed not to find his name. Her only comfort is to recite poetry.

**poem 9:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt soliloquizes about her love for the man in the portrait.

(p.34, 4 lines)

The next day she finds another portrait.

**poem 10:** the words written under the second portrait.

(p.34, 1 line)

She tells her slave-girl, Sharīfah, that she is in love with the man in the portrait.

**poem 11:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt speaks of her love for the man in the portrait.

(p.35, 7 lines)

The next day she finds a third portrait.

**poem 12:** the words written under the third portrait.

(p.36, 2 lines)

She is furious that the painter has not given the name of the man in the portrait.

**poem 13:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt screams with pain as she soliloquizes about her love.

(p.36, 6 lines)

Shayāghūs has observed the success of his plan and decides to return home. Meanwhile Fīrūz has been unable to control his patience and decides to set off for Yemen without his father's knowledge, accompanied by Fakhrūzād. After an episode where Fīrūz helps two brothers to defeat their uncle, who has cheated them of their inheritance, he continues on his way to Yemen accompanied by one of the brothers, Qādir Shāh.

**poem 14:** Fīrūz is overwhelmed by longing of 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt when he is alone at night and speaks of the agony and delight of love.  
(p.45, 8 lines)

They beat off an attack by a troop of marauders, but Fakhrūzād is knocked unconscious and taken away by his horse until he falls off and is rescued by a goat-herd, who leaves him in Salīmīyah, the city of Shāh Salīm. There he has to sell all his possessions and finally finds employment with a greengrocer, where his pleasing appearance boosts sales. One day he wins a challenge from one of the king's champions to string a mighty bow. The king is impressed and makes him 'guardian of the country', while the king's daughter, Anūsh, falls in love with him and they promise each other secretly not to wed anyone else.

Meanwhile Fīrūz and Qādir Shāh try fruitlessly to find Farkhūzād and meet up with a caravan of merchants, led by al-Yān who is 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt's man of business, whom they offer to escort to Yemen. Fīrūz likes al-Yān and tells him the truth about the reasons for his trip. They save the caravan from an attack by pirates, but then their ship is drawn to a notorious island from which there is no escape unless someone beats a drum attached to a tree - the problem being that the man who does so will not himself be able to escape. Fīrūz volunteers to undertake this role, but asks the others to tell 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt about him.

**poem 15:** Fīrūz weeps after volunteering to sacrifice himself and thinking of 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt.  
(p.58, 3 lines)

Qādir Shāh insists on taking Fīrūz's place and the ship manages to escape, but without him. When they reach Yemen, they find villages deserted and learn that Surūr and his allies,

including Shāh Salīm (with Fakhruzād), have been attacked by a coalition led by Prince Rūz of Kandahar (whose suit for ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt had been refused). Fīrūz welcomes the chance to show his valour to his beloved. Things are going badly for Surūr, and Bīrūz, one of Rūz’s allies, has run out of princes to accept his challenges to single combat. Fīrūz steps into the breach and kills Bīrūz with a mighty blow of his sword (and is recognised by the watching Farkhūzād). In the general battle which follows, his deeds are described as ‘greater than those of Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan and ‘Antarah’.

Even in the thick of battle his thoughts turn to ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt, which leads him to recite poetry.

**poem 16:** Fīrūz quotes some lines to himself, which describe his feelings about love and death.

(p.67, 3 lines)

**poem 17:** Fīrūz thinks of ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt when resting after the day’s fighting.

(p.68, 7 lines)

Bīrūz’s brother, Maisarah, challenges all-comers. Fīrūz stays away for a day, at al-Yān’s suggestion to make his value obvious, and Maisarah kills one of Surūr’s sons, Ghadanfur. The next day, feeling guilty, Fīrūz rejoins the battle and fights and kills Maisarah.

**poem 18:** As he fights, Fīrūz speaks of love and war.

(p.73, 9 lines)

When Surūr wants to feast him after the battle, Fīrūz pretends to be al-Yān’s mamlūk, in order to avoid Surūr realising that he aspires to ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt. Out riding one day, Fīrūz meets a troop of black warriors led by Hūlank, the son of King Hūrank. On hearing that Hūlank is a suitor for ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt, he kills him. Farkhūzād is reunited with Fīrūz in the battle that follows and agrees to support Fīrūz’s pretence to Surūr (who luckily regarded Hūlank as an enemy who would have taken ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt by force).

Surūr is amazed by Fīrūz, who pretends to be destined to serve ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt, refuses all offers of riches and adds pearls of his own to the plunder to be distributed amongst Surūr’s men. When she hears about Fīrūz, ‘Ayn Al-Ḥayāt is convinced that he is the man in the picture. At night she and Sharīfah go to have a look at him, disguised as men. ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt is overcome by the sight of Fīrūz sleeping, but accepts Sharīfah’s advice to let him rest and to return the following night. On the way back, she finds a slave and a slave-girl making love; she kills the man and the girl escapes. Back in her room, she puts Fīrūz’s picture on a chair, drinks wine and admires it.

**poem 19:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt contemplates the picture of Fīrūz.

(p.84, 5 lines)

**poem 20:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt recites after kissing the picture, swooning and drinking a second glass of wine.

(p.85, 5 lines)

**poem 21:** She continues after drinking a third glass of wine.

(p.85, 3 lines)

The dead slave is found and a guard is posted on the roof. The next night ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt and Sharīfah, again disguised as men, visit Fīrūz. He is awoken and welcomes them in with some surprise, until ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt produces the picture and cannot resist declaring her love for him. Fīrūz is overcome by her beauty.

**poem 22:** Narrator uses quotation to describe Fīrūz’s emotions on seeing ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt.

(p.88, 4 lines)

**poem 23:** Fīrūz declares his love to ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt.

(p.89, 10 lines)

‘Ayn al-Hayāt is overwhelmed by joy and they swear undying love. On her way back at the end of the night, ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt meets four guards on the roof. She kills three and the other one escapes. Back in her quarters, she calls for wine.

**poem 24:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt expresses her happiness at her meeting with Fīrūz and speaks of the pleasure of drinking wine.  
(p.90, 6 lines)

The listening Sharīfah responds by reciting poetry which reminds ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt of Fīrūz.

The next day the king is furious at the further deaths and sets 10 soldiers to guard the roof that night. ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt ignores Sharīfah’s warnings not to visit Fīrūz again and insists on their going in disguise again. On the way back they run into the guards, who capture Sharīfah. ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt persuades the chief guard to release Sharīfah and to hide the truth from her father.

**poem 25:** Sharīfah sings a song (a quotation) to ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt, who is drinking wine and gazing at the picture of Fīrūz.  
(p.94, 7 lines)

The next night, when 30 guards have been posted on the roof, ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt is persuaded not to risk visiting Fīrūz, but she is overjoyed when he visits her. They drink wine together and make love.

**poem 26:** Narrator uses quotation to describe ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt’s pleasure.  
(p.98, 2 lines)

They spend the night together and in the morning Fīrūz tells ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt that he must now go home and ask his father to request her hand in marriage. He warns her that a refusal will lead to war and she promises her love and support. He leaves overcome by emotion at parting from her.

**poem 27:** Narrator uses quotation to describe Fīrūz’s feelings as he

leaves ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt.

(p.100, 1 line)

On his way back, Fīrūz is captured by the guards, together with Fakhruzād who goes to his aid. Surūr orders their execution, but at the last moment, Shāh Salīm intervenes and reveals their true identity (told to him via Sharīfah), pointing out the danger of reprisals from Ḍārāb. They are thrown into prison for the time being, but Hūrank and his army of blacks are threatening to destroy Surūr’s country in revenge for the death of his son, Hūlank, and Tayfūr persuades Surūr to buy peace by handing over Fīrūz and Fakhruzād.

‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt is distraught and suicidal at the news that Fīrūz has been handed over to Hūrank.

**poem 28:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt expresses the agony of separation.

(p.113, 6 lines)

The prisoners are taken home by Hūrank so that his wife can witness their execution, but when she meets them she refuses to believe that they were her son’s killers (since they are far too small to have overcome such a mighty warrior) and accepts Fīrūz’s plea of innocence. When Hūrank returns to destroy Yemen, he leaves the captives in prison, where they convert their gaoler, Ṣu‘lūk, to monotheism.

Meanwhile, in Persia, Ṭīṭlūs has finally confessed to Ḍārāb that Fīrūz has disappeared. Sent by Ḍārāb to find Fīrūz (‘or don’t come back’), Ṭīṭlūs runs into Shayāghūs, who tells him about ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt and Yemen and agrees to pretend to Ḍārāb that he met Fīrūz on his way to Yemen and has a message for him.

**poem 29:** Shayāghūs tells Ḍārāb that Fīrūz finished his message by reciting these two lines, in which he seeks his father’s forgiveness.

(p.133, 2 lines)

Ḍārāb is deeply affected by Fīrūz’s message.

After a dream of two birds coming from Persia, ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt goes to meet Ṭīṭlūs and Shayāghūs and tells them that Fīrūz Shah is Hūrānk’s captive. She then writes a letter to Ḍārāb, to be taken by Shayāghūs, while Bihrūz vows to rescue the prisoners. When Ḍārāb receives the letter, he send a threatening message to Surūr and gathers his army.

Meanwhile Fīrūz and Fakhruzād have been promised by their gaoler, Ṣu‘lūk, that he will free them once Hūrānk has left on his punitive expedition to Yemen, but time passes slowly for them.

**poem 30:** A quotation remembered by Fīrūz to express his emotions about love and imprisonment.

(p.102, 5 lines)

After a dream, Hūrānk decides to kill his captives and tension mounts as it remains unclear whether Ṣu‘lūk will stick to his word to help them. Finally he releases them in time for Fīrūz to kill Hūrānk. His army convert to Islam and Ṣu‘lūk is made king. Fīrūz finally prepares to depart with his army to return to Yemen.

**poem 31:** A quotation recited at night by Fīrūz to describe his worries about what has happened to ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt.

(p.163, 3 lines)

**poem 32:** Narrator uses quotation about love and separation to describe Fīrūz’s disturbed state of mind.

(p.163, 5 lines)

Before he can depart Fīrūz has to calm Ṣu‘lūk’s worries and to marry him to Salkūtā, Hūrānk’s daughter (whose ugliness astonishes Fīrūz).

**poem 33:** Narrator uses quotation to describe Ṣu‘lūk’s happiness on his wedding night.

(p.167, 6 lines)

Şu'lūk delays Fīrūz's departure again by asking him to remove the danger from Hūlank's nephews, Qatrān Shāh and Irān Shāh, the rulers of the White Isle.

**poem 34:** Fīrūz quotes poetry as the only way to seek solace in the agony of separation from 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt.

(p.170, 12 lines)

Fīrūz and army go to the White Isle and are on the point of victory when Qatrān Shāh sends for help from his mother Şafra', a notorious sorceress, who promptly flies in and paralyses Fīrūz before removing him to her own island and immobilising him with bonds (including locks of her own hair) and massive weights. The fighting continues and Farkhuzād kills Qatrān Shāh, but the battle remains in the balance.

Meanwhile Bihrūz is on his way to rescue Fīrūz from his supposed imprisonment by Hūlank. He gets a lift from a fishing boat but in a storm it runs aground on an island, which turns out to be Şafra's. Bihrūz is paralysed by Şafra', but she falls in love with his beauty and frees him in return for his agreement to marry her. He is appalled by her ugliness (described at great length) and pleads for time to rest before he can fulfill his side of the bargain.

**poem 35:** A quotation recalled by Şafra to describe the beauty of the island, which strikes her while feeding Bihrūz delicious fruits.

(p.185, 10 lines)

Şafra' gives Bihrūz three days 'off' and departs on a trip. He feeds the starving fishermen and then explores the palace, where he hears groans coming from the room where Fīrūz is imprisoned. He unlocks the door and finds Fīrūz imploring God to help him.

**poem 36:** Fīrūz implores God to take mercy on him.

(p.187, 5 lines)

Bihrūz cannot free Fīrūz, but he brings him up to date with events and reads out a letter to him from 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt.

**poem 37:** These lines are added to the bottom of ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt’s letter to Fīrūz.

(p.191, 5 lines)

**poem 38:** Further lines added to the letter, said to be describing the state of ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt’s love.

(p.191, 7 lines)

Bihrūz steals a magic antidote from Ṣafrā and frees Fīrūz, who kills Ṣafrā and frees Farkhuzād. Their return by ship to Yemen is fraught with adventure, including a further period of captivity for Fīrūz and Farkhuzād, from which they are again rescued by Bihrūz.

**poem 39:** As the ship comes in sight of land, Fīrūz thinks happily of ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt.

(p.215, 9 lines)

Meanwhile Ḍārāb’s army, under Ṭīṭlūs, has fought the Yemeni army and forced them to retreat to their city. Ḍārāb’s offer of a treaty, under which both armies would join together to rescue Fīrūz, is rejected by Surūr.

**poem 40:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt thinks of Fīrūz.

(p.272, 14 lines)

The Yemeni fortunes revive with the arrival of the gigantic Ṭūmār (seven cubits tall, riding on an elephant) who defeats a series of Persian champions in single combat. The final Persian champion, Fīlzūr, is rescued from execution by the arrival of Bihrūz, who has been sent forward by Fīrūz with a warning letter for Surūr.

**poem 41:** On reaching Yemen, Fīrūz thinks of ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt, whom he hopes to see shortly.

(p.298, 9 lines)

**poem 42:** Beside Fīrūz, Farkhuzād also thinks of his beloved.

(p.299, 11 lines)

Fīrūz rescues all the Persian champions imprisoned by Surūr.

**poem 43:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt is drinking wine and gazing at the pictures of Fīrūz after hearing that he is safe and has been successful.

(p.312, 7 lines)

**poem 44:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt continues to think of Fīrūz as she drinks more wine.

(p.312, 16 lines)

**poem 45:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt continues.

(p.313, 5 lines)

**poem 46:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt continues as the effects of wine and of the thought of Fīrūz increase in intensity.

(p.314, 11 lines)

After further fighting between the Persians and the Yemenis, Fīrūz finally receives Ḍarāb’s reluctant permission to fight Ṭūmār.

**poem 47:** Fīrūz recites as he goes in to fight Ṭūmār.

(p.341, 10 lines)

Fīrūz kills Ṭūmār and a general fight between the armies follows.

**poem 48:** Fīrūz thinks of ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt as he fights.

(p.348, 14 lines)

**poem 49:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt is drinking wine and gazing at the pictures of Fīrūz as she awaits the outcome of the battle.

(p.350, 15 lines)

**poem 50:** Sharīfah sings to ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt as she serves her more wine.  
(p.350, 5 lines)

The Yemenis retreat back inside the city walls. Fīrūz is totally preoccupied with his desire and concern for ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt and finds relief in reciting from his collection of poems.

**poem 51:** a quotation recited by Fīrūz to relieve his worry about ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt.  
(p.370, 9 lines)

**poem 52:** Fīrūz continues with another quotation.  
(p.370, 8 lines)

When the Persians have nearly completed their capture of the city, a truce is agreed (through the mediation of al-Yān, released by Surūr for that purpose) under which ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt will marry Fīrūz in 40 days time. But Surūr uses the truce treacherously to send for an army from Egypt. The Persians know nothing of Surūr’s treachery, but Fīrūz does not trust his supposed good fortune and worries constantly about ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt.

**poem 53:** Fīrūz recalls a poem as he thinks about ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt.  
(p.392, 20 lines)

Al-Yān comforts Fīrūz by reporting a conversation with ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt.

**poem 54:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt ends her conversation with al-Yān by reciting this poem (as part of what he will report to Fīrūz).  
(p.394, 5 lines)

**poem 55:** ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt continues with another poem.  
(p.394, 7 lines)

**poem 56:** Fīrūz asks al-Yān to repeat this poem to ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt.

(p.395, 20 lines)

**poem 57:** Fīrūz continues by praising ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt’s eloquence.

(p.395, 4 lines)

## Appendix 16: Text of poem 53

1	جلا وجهها الديجور لما تجلت	لتهدي نفوس في الهوى قد أضلت
2	لوحث وقد أرخت ذوائب شعرها	فخلت شعاع الشمس تحت الدجنة
3	وسلت جفونا كالسيوف ولم أر	لعمرى جفونا كالقواضب سلت
4	مهة تثنت اذ تفرد حسنها	أثنت عليها الورق لما تثنت
5	تبدت وقد هز الشباب قوامها	ألم تر ان الشمس بالغصن حلت
6	وماست بعطفي بأنه قد علاهما	هلال جبين لاح في ليل طرة
7	ايا سامح الله العيون وان تكن	احدت ظبي تلك اللحاظ لقتلتني
8	ولا واخذ الاصداع فيما تحملت	عقاربها بالفنك من لسع مهجتي
9	خليلي هل عاينتما او سمعتما	محبا براه الشوق قبل المحبة
10	مليكة حسن لذ في شرعة الهوى	خضوعي لديها وانكساري وذلتني
11	وسقمي وتسهيدي وشوقي وأدمعي	ووجدني وتغذيبي ونوحي وانتي
12	ولم يستطع قلبي امتناعا عن الهوى	ولم تستطع روحي سبيلا لسلوتي
13	سأصبر حتى تنقضي مدة الجفا	وما الصبر الا من حلالي وحبلتي
14	فما كل من نادى أجيب نداءه	ولا كل من نودي اجاب بسرعة
15	أيا راكبا تطوي عزائمه الفلا	بنجب اشتياق لم تقدر بأذمة
16	رويدا بطرف ناظر كل مهجة	ورفقا بقلب قابل كل صورة
17	فطورا أرى في كل مسرح ومربع	وطورا أرى في كل دوح وروضة
18	وطورا أرى في كل درس ومعبد	وطورا أرى في كل دير وبيعة
19	أدين بدين الحب في كل موضع	وأصبو لذات الحسن في كل جهة
20	وألثم ما بين اللثام وتغرها	وتم كؤس راحها فيه راحتي

## Appendix 17: Text of poem 34

والسمر دون قدود الخمر الغيد	البيض دون لحاظ الأعين السود
تجري الصبابة جري الماء في العود	والموت أحلى لصب قي مفاصله
أجفانها وكلت جفني بتسهيدي	من لي بعين عدت بالغنج ناعسة
كأن في كل خد نار أخدود	وماء وجه غدا بالنور متقدا
عني فأعطيتهم بالعشق تقليدي	أنا المحب الذي أهل الهوى نقلوا
ومن يشيد دين الحب تشييدي	من اين للعشق مثلي في تسرعه
يا ليلة الوصل من ذات اللمي عودي	لله ليلة أنس قلت إذ ذكرت
نحوي وحصني متون الضمر القود	امسي بها وعيون الغر شاخصة
دون قدري وجودي فوق موجودي	مكانتي فوق امكاني ومقدرتي من
جودا عن الشكل او شكرا عن الجود	وما زجاني امرؤ الا بذلت له
وفضل جودهم كالطوق في جيدي	لا أوحش الله من قوم مكارمهم
وهل سمعتم بشرك بعد توحيدني	ما عشت لا اتعاطي غير حبهم

### Appendix 18: Placement of poems in *Ḥamzah al-Bahlawān* (book 1)

Kusrā Anūshīrwān, the Persian king who rules the Arabs as well as Persia, and who is a fire-worshipper, has two ministers: Buzurjmīhr, a wise man who worships God, and Bakhtak. Kusrā has a dream, which Buzurjmīhr interprets as meaning that a hero is going to be born in the Arab Ḥijāz, who will help Kusrā to overthrow his enemies (Buzurjmīhr hides the fact that this hero will also overthrow Kusrā's empire, end Persian dominion over the Arabs and destroy their fire temples).

Buzurjmīhr is sent to Mecca to find this child and to provide for his welfare. He arrives just as the Governor, Ibrahīm, is about to become the father of a boy, Ḥamzah. 800 other boys are born in Mecca on the same day, as well as the son of a slave who beats his black wife into premature delivery of her child so as to qualify for a reward promised by Buzurjmīhr to all babies born on that day. This latter child, 'Umar, is under-sized but Buzurjmīhr realises that he is destined to be Ḥamzah's faithful companion.

By the age of ten, Ḥamzah is already exceptionally strong and he is trained to be a mighty warrior. He spends all his time in hunting, until one day he meets al-Khiḍr, who tells him of the destiny awaiting him as the deliverer of the Arabs and the upholder of Islam. After that he concentrates on training the 800 other boys to form a formidable troop.

After an encounter in which he defeats a group of Arabs and Persians gathering taxes for al-Nu'mān (the Arab king of Ḥīrah), on behalf of Kusrā, he decides, against his father's advice, to take his troop to attack first al-Nu'mān and then Kusrā. On their way he kills a lion and then has to fight Makhlūf, a knight who had befriended the lion. After defeating him and hearing that he is in love with al-Nu'mān's daughter, al-Qannāṣah, but has been thrown out by al-Nu'mān's men, he attaches him to his troop and promises to help him wed al-Qannāṣah.

Later he aids four Persian merchants, who have been robbed by Aṣfarān, a local chieftain. He defeats Aṣfarān and attaches him also to his troop. Aṣfarān reveals that he had been told about Ḥamzah by an old man, who had given him six amulets for Ḥamzah and his five future sons, which would protect them from treachery and evil.

**poem 1:** As Ḥamzah leads his troop towards Ḥīrah, he expresses his intentions and ideals.

(p.31, 10 lines)

At Ḥamza's approach to Ḥīrah, al-Qannāṣah insists on going out to oppose him with a troop of women and Ḥamzah lets Makhlūf fight her. When losing the fight, she overcomes Makhlūf by taking off her clothes to distract him, but Ḥamzah intervenes, takes her prisoner and forces her to marry Makhlūf, whom she kills during their wedding night. Ḥamzah pursues her to Ḥīrah, where he kills her and takes al-Nu'mān prisoner. He spares al-Nu'mān's life after al-Nu'mān promises to return to worshipping God.

When al-Nu'mān goes to report events to Kusrā, the latter, egged on by Bakhtak, wants to punish Ḥamzah and the Arabs for being troublesome, but Buzurjmīhr argues on behalf of Ḥamzah. The situation is resolved when Kusrā's empire is threatened with invasion by Khārtīn of Ḥiṣn Khaibar. Bakhtak's command of the Persian army proves ineffectual, Kusrā evacuates his court to Tehrān and Buzurjmīhr goes off to solicit help from Ḥamzah and the Arabs, persuading Ḥamzah to accept assistance from al-Nu'mān's forces.

**poem 2:** Ḥamzah thinks of the glorious future ahead of him as he leads his troops to rescue Kusrā and the Persians from Khārtīn.

(p.49, 9 lines)

Ḥamzah kills Khārtīn, whose army is routed, and insists that all the spoils should be kept for Kusrā. 'Umar is sent to Tehrān with the news, where he tries to negotiate a reward for himself. Ḥamzah follows him to Tehrān, where he is fêted and has a scuffle with Bakhtak. Kusrā's daughter, Mihrdukār, sees Ḥamzah, falls instantly in love with him and sends a letter to him declaring her love.

**poem 3:** Mihrdukār adds these lines of love to her letter ('as tears are falling').

(p.69, 3 lines)

**poem 4:** also added to the letter by Mihrdukār.

(p.69, 6 lines)

After Bakhtak has pointed out to Kusrā (in Persian) that they have never actually seen Ḥamzah fight, a match is arranged between Ḥamzah and a fierce lion. Ḥamzah (unarmed) kills it, to Mihrdukār's admiration.

**poem 5:** after reflecting that Ḥamzah is an ideal man, Mihrdukār soliloquizes about her love for him.

(p.77, 11 lines)

**poem 6:** Ḥamzah, alone, recites poetry which is 'called for' by his love for Mihrdukār.

(p.79, 17 lines)

After overcoming a dangerous horse and a wrestler sent to kill him, Ḥamzah (with 'Umar) pays a secret visit to Mihrdukār after receiving a message from her asking him to seek her hand from Kusrā. They express their love and drink wine together.

**poem 7:** Ḥamzah recites under the influence of Mihrdukār's beauty and his own love.

(p.90, 13 lines)

**poem 8:** Mihrdukār tells of her love for Ḥamzah, as they drink wine together.

(p.91, 7 lines)

**poem 9:** Mihrdukār continues.

(p.92, 5 lines)

Having agreed to grant Ḥamzah whatever he demands, Kusrā reluctantly agrees to his marrying Mihrdukār. However, a furious Bakhtak persuades him that it would be unwise to make an Arab so powerful, persuades him to tell Ḥamzah that he has to seek the approval of his two ministers (i.e. Buzurjmihir and Bakhtak) and manoeuvres for Ḥamzah to accept the

dangerous task of going to quell a rebellious prince, Ma‘qil of Ḥiṣn Tījān. Ḥamzah agrees not to marry Mihrdukār until he has defeated Ma‘qil, refuses to take an army and sets off alone with ‘Umar.

**poem 10:** Mihrdukār seeks solace in poetry to relieve her fears for Ḥamzah on his mission against Ma‘qil.  
(p.101, 7 lines)

Bakhtak treacherously sends a letter to Ma‘qil alerting him to Ḥamzah’s mission, but Ma‘qil is a Believer and hates Bakhtak’s deceit as well as his fire-worship and tells his men to let Ḥamzah reach him unharmed .

**poem 11:** on his way to confront Ma‘qil, Ḥamzah thinks of Mihrdukār and combines *fakhr* with an expression of his love.  
(p.103, 12 lines)

After refusing to be dissuaded from fighting, Ḥamzah’s combat with Ma‘qil goes on for 15 days.

**poem 12:** on the 15<sup>th</sup> night Ḥamzah weeps as he thinks of being parted for so long from Mihrdukār.  
(p.107, 12 lines)

On the 16<sup>th</sup> day Ḥamzah accidentally kills Ma‘qil’s horse and the latter surrenders, saying ‘Kill me or take me as a friend’. They agree to be friends and return together to Madā’in, much to the dismay of Kusrā and Bakhtak (‘one enemy has become two’).

**poem 13:** these lines are part of Mihrdukār’s joyful letter to Ḥamzah.  
(p.112, 12 lines)

**poem 14:** part of Ḥamzah’s reply (after he has compared Mihrdukār to the moon).  
(p.113, 9 lines)

**poem 15:** the conclusion of Ḥamzah's letter.

(p.114, 4 lines)

Kusrā is obliged to declare that the marriage between Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār should take place, but he agrees to a plan by Bakhtak to appeal to Ḥamzah's sense of honour to go on a mission to subdue Andahūq in Serendib (India) before the wedding.

**poem 16:** Mihrdukār stems her tears by reciting poetry, as Ḥamzah rides off to face Andahūq.

(p.120, 7 lines)

En route for Serendib, Ḥamzah visits a monastery to get a drink of water and finds that Al-Khiḍr had warned them to expect him and had left a present for him: a lance and a magnificent coat. 'Umar then tries his luck there and is again expected: his presents from al-Khiḍr include a sword, Ismā'īl's dagger, Ismā'īl's pouch (which can never be filled up), leggings (whose wearer will never feel tired) and a mirror with a jar of kohl (when the mirror is anointed with the kohl, the holder can name any place and receive a picture and directions to it and can also name any person and be transformed into his image). 'Umar promptly returns to the camp and pretends to be al-Nu'mān, before explaining his new gifts.

**poem 17:** On the journey, Ḥamzah thinks sadly of Mihrdukār but is determined to complete his mission successfully.

(p.126, 15 lines)

When they reach Serendib, Andahūq (a Believer) offers to join forces with Ḥamzah against Kusrā, but Ḥamzah insists on fulfilling his promise. They fight for 30 days until Andahūq surrenders. They return to Madā'in as friends, much to Kusrā's and Bakhtak's disappointment.

**poem 18:** Mihrdukār expresses her joy at hearing of Ḥamzah's safe return.

(p.132, 6 lines)

**poem 19:** Mihrdukār continues.

(p.132, 5 lines)

**poem 20:** Narrator uses quotation to describe Mihrdukār's beauty as seen by Ḥamzah on his way to deliver Andahūq to Kusrā.

(p.138, 6 lines)

**poem 21:** Narrator continues with another quotation.

(p.138, 4 lines)

**poem 22:** Included in love letter from Mihrdukār to Ḥamzah, as lines which she used to repeat to herself every night during his absence.

(p.140, 5 lines)

**poem 23:** Also included in Mihrdukār's letter.

(p.141, 10 lines)

**poem 24:** Quotation by Mihrdukār, in her letter, of lines which she repeats to herself when feeling wretched.

(p.141, 6 lines)

**poem 25:** lines at the end of Mihrdukār's letter.

(p.142, 20 lines)

**poem 26:** included in Ḥamzah's letter in reply to Mihrdukār.

(p.143, 4 lines)

**poem 27:** the conclusion to Ḥamzah's letter.

(p.143, 35 lines)

Bakhtak plots for Kusrā to postpone the wedding on grounds of expense ('I have to invite so many important people...'), so that Ḥamzah agrees to lead the Arabs to collect taxes due to Kusrā. Mihrdukār invites Ḥamzah to visit her before he departs.

**poem 28:** Narrator uses quotation on theme of *carpe diem* as comment on scene of Ḥamzah and Mihrdukār drinking wine together.

(p.154, 4 lines)

**poem 29:** Another quotation by Narrator re wine and love.

(p.154, 2 lines)

**poem 30:** As they drink wine together, Ḥamzah recites to Mihrdukār about a conversation between two lovers.

(p.155, 11 lines)

**poem 31:** After another glass of wine, Mihrdukār recites to Ḥamzah about love.

(p.155, 9 lines)

Ḥamzah sets off with an army of 100,000 Arabs and starts a series of successful visits to different countries. In Greece he falls in love at first sight with King Aṣṭūn's daughter, Zahrbān, and decides that his love for her is fated and cannot be resisted.

**poem 32:** At night Ḥamzah thinks of Zahrbān's beauty.

(p.165, 12 lines)

Zahrbān tells her mother that she has fallen in love with Ḥamzah.

**poem 33:** At night Zahrbān describes an ideal beloved as she thinks of Ḥamzah.

(p.166, 34 lines)

Ḥamzah marries Zahrbān before proceeding to Caesarea. Caesar has been alerted to his coming by Kusrā and plots to destroy Ḥamzah and his men, but his daughter, Miryam, falls in love with Ḥamzah at first sight (of him wearing a loin-cloth) and the plot fails. Caesar is killed, his men surrender and Ḥamzah marries Miryam.

**poem 34:** Narrator uses quotation to describe the wedding-night.  
(p.185, 5 lines)

Miryam bears a son, Rustam. Ḥamzah proceeds with his conquests: Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon (where he falls in love with Salwā, sister of Sidon's champion, al-Mu'tadi, and promises to marry her in Mada'in), Tyre and Acre.

**poem 35:** Ḥamzah thinks of Mihrdukār and how he has treated her and recites about the pain of love.  
(p.212, 18 lines)

**poem 36:** Mihrdukār weeps as she pines for the absent Ḥamzah.  
(p.213, 27 lines)

Ḥamzah and army move on to Cairo, where the kings Sukāmā and Warqā trick Ḥamzah and Ma'qil into entering the city as their guests and then imprison them. Sukāmā's daughter, Durrat al-Ṣadaf, falls in love at first sight with Ma'qil and offers to help them to escape.

**poem 37:** Salwā meanwhile is missing Ḥamzah and recites poetry to express her pain.  
(p.224, 14 lines)

Ghaitsham, the Governor of Damietta, arrives in Cairo with reinforcements for the Egyptians. Battle starts between the two sides and Ghaitsham, in single combats, defeats and imprisons a number of the Arab champions. 'Umar uses his magic ointment to disguise himself as a blind Egyptian beggar and gains admittance to Ghaitsham.

**poem 38:** 'Umar recites exaggerated *madīḥ* of Ghaitsham.  
(p.232, 7 lines)

Ghaitsham is killed and the Arabs force the Egyptians to retreat inside Cairo. Durrat al-Sadaf rescues Ḥamzah and Ma'qil. Naṣīr send warning to Ḥamzah that Kusrā has been

approached by the routed Egyptians and is assembling a huge army to attack the Arabs. Ḥamzah returns to Aleppo with his army, where he learns that Mihrdukār has been promised in marriage to the new leader of the Persian army, Zūbīn ‘the treacherous’. Ḥamzah is wounded with a poisoned sword in the battle which follows, but recovers and is joined by Mihrdukār, who has managed to escape from Madā’in. Ḥamzah proposes marriage and promises a magnificent wedding after the fighting has finished.

**poem 39:** Ḥamzah to Mihrdukār after proposing marriage.

(p.255, 12 lines)

**poem 40:** Mihrdukār recites a gnomic quotation in response.

(p.256, 2 lines)

**poem 41:** Mihrdukār expresses her happiness to Ḥamzah.

(p.256, 7 lines)

Appendix 19: Text of poem 6

بأبي الظباء الفاترات جفونا	الفاتكات سوالفا و عيوننا	1
المطلعات من الثغور كواكبا	المسبلات من الشعور دجوننا	2
الراشقات من اللواظ أسهما	المرسلات إلى القلوب متونا	3
سفروا وقد صبغ الحياء خدودهم	أرأيت ورداً خالط النسرينا	4
ونفرن غزلانا وتهن غوانيا	وسفرن أقماراً وملن غصونا	5
غيدا إذا هزوا المعاطف لا ترى	إلا صريعاً بينهن طعينا	6
سود النواظر ما كحلن بأتمد	والحسن حقا يغلب التحسينا	7
يالائما قد جار في تعنيفه	هلا رحمت متيما مفتونا	8
فأنا الذي اتخذ المحبة والهوى	شرفا لأرباب الغرام ودينا	9
ومريضة الأجفان ساحر لحظها	ينبيك عما في الفؤاد كميننا	10
في طرفها السفاح أصبح خدها	الهادي ترى نعمانه مأمونا	11
معشوقة الحركات حرك قدها	قلبا إليها كان قبل سكونا	12
وإذا انتنت خلّت الرماح معاطفا	وإذا رنت خلّت السيوف جفونا	13
شمس لطلعتها الهلال قد انحنى	أدبا فأصبح يشبه العرجونا	14
والورق غنت إذ تتنى قدها	طربا فأعرب لحنه التلحيننا	15
لا تسألن إذا قصدت قصورها	وأقصد بحيث ترى الجمال مصونا	16
وإذا أردت ترى هلال جبينها	فانظر الى حيث الصباح ميينا	17

## Appendix 20: Text of poem 17

يا قفر جهدك فاتسع بجهاتك	فمتين عزمي ناهبا فلواتك	1
مهما اتسعت فانني ذو همة	تبغي الوصول لمنتهى جنباتك	2
أرض الحجاز وطيب تربك إنني	متشوق لك فارسلي نسماتك	3
ريح الحجاز عن الأحبة فاخبري	فخواطري تهفو إلى خطرارك	4
وتحملي عنهم لذيذ حديثهم	وزكى طبيهم على صفحاتك	5
وتشرفي من أرض مكة دائماً	فترا بها مسك يعطر ذاتك	6
يا دار كسرى إن قلبي هائم	وحنينه أبداً إلى عرصاتك	7
لي بالمدائن غادة عجمية	ما ضى لواحظها بقلبي فاتك	8
هيفاء ناعمة الخدود جميلة	يا قلب باهي في جمال فتاتك	9
هي بنت سعدي والكمال لها أب	يا بدر فافخر فهي من أخواتك	10
راقت محاسنها ولأح جبينها	كم اشرفت يا قصر في طاقاتك	11
نظرت لنحوي نظرة فتكت بها	بحشاشتي أراه من نظراتك	12
يا بنت كسرى قد جبرت لكسر قل	بي عندما أحييني حسناتك	13
جار العداة علي يا أخت المها	لكنني سأبيدهم وحياتك	14
سأبيدهم طمعاً بأنهم إذا	هلكوا قطفت الورد من وجناتك	15

**Appendix 21: Placement of poems in *Sīrat Baybars* (parts 1 and 2)**

**(vol.1, part 1, pp.1-112)**

As a result of the treachery of one of the Caliph's ministers, Baghdad is conquered by the Persian army of King Mankatam, who imprisons the Caliph, Sha'bān al-Muqtadī, and crucifies the traitor.

**poem 1:** the Caliph uses a quotation to comment on the sight of the body of the crucified minister.

(p.12, 3 lines)

**poem 2:** the imprisoned Caliph appeals to God for help.

(p.12, 7 lines)

A band of Kurds, armed with wooden swords and led by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, rescues the Caliph and routs the Persians. A flashback relates how they had set off to find a new, more fertile homeland when they met someone who told them of the Caliph's plight.

**poem 3:** the Caliph reflects on how God has saved him.

(p.17, 17 lines)

The Caliph makes Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn his deputy. The Caliph's daughter, Fāṭimah (also known as Shajarat al-Durr) asks her father to give her Egypt, after being advised to do so by a beggar, to whom she had given a necklace and who turned out to be a saint. Her father agrees.

**poem 4:** Fāṭimah thanks God for the gift of Egypt.

(p.21, 4 lines)

Another army is sent by Mankatam but is defeated with the help of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his Kurds.

**poem 5:** the Caliph thanks God for victory.

Şalāḥ al-Dīn intercedes to spare the lives of Mankatam's two sons and declines the Caliph's offer to stand down in his favour. He asks for a new land for himself and his Kurds.

**poem 6:** Şalāḥ al-Dīn addresses the Caliph after making his request for a new homeland.  
(p.29, 7 lines)

The Caliph gives Şalāḥ al-Dīn al-Shām and Egypt.

**poem 7:** Şalāḥ al-Dīn praises the Caliph.  
(p.30, 5 lines)

On his way to Egypt Şalāḥ al-Dīn installs Hasan al-Aqwās and Sharaf al-Dīn as rulers of Aleppo and Damascus respectively. Once in Cairo, he has a new palace built.

**poem 8:** A messenger from Aleppo greets Şalāḥ al-Dīn on entering his presence.  
(p.33, 3 lines)

Şalāḥ al-Dīn is told that Sharaf al-Dīn has died. He sends his son al-'Ādil to take his place. He sends a report to the Caliph.

**poem 9:** a poem of greetings included in Şalāḥ al-Dīn's letter to the Caliph.  
(p.34, 5 lines)

Şalāḥ al-Dīn is informed by the Caliph's sons that their father has died.

**poem 10:** a poem ending the letter from the Caliph's sons requesting help.  
(p.36, 10 lines)

**poem 11:** Şalāḥ al-Dīn's lament for the Caliph.

(p.36, 8 lines)

3 years have passed, when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn hears of the death of his son, al- ‘Ādil.

**poem 12:** weeping, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn reflects on the news of his son’s death.

(p.38, 7 lines)

**poem 13:** a gnomic poem about fate which opens the letter informing Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn of his son’s death.

(p.38, 7 lines)

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn dies after appointing as his successor al-Kāmil, who reigns for 16 years. He is succeeded first by his son Najm al-Dīn and then by the latter’s son al-Ṣāliḥ, a pious ascetic who becomes renowned for his just rule. Shāhīn, a prince from Bursah, becomes his chief minister. When Fāṭimah unexpectedly claims Egypt, pursuant to her father’s gift, Shāhīn persuades al-Ṣāliḥ to accept the situation.

**poem 14:** Quotation used by Shāhīn to persuade al-Ṣāliḥ to avoid dissension.

(p.54, 3 lines)

**poem 15:** Shāhīn greets Fāṭimah on her arrival in Egypt.

(p.56, 10 lines)

Fāṭimah falls in love with al-Ṣāliḥ, but declines to marry him until she is persuaded to do so by a dream. After the marriage, Fāṭimah makes a pilgrimage to the Holy Cities accompanied by Shāhīn.

**poem 16:** Quotation by Narrator to describe the preparations for Fāṭimah’s journey.

(p.62, 9 lines)

**poem 17:** Quotation by Narrator to describe the delays in starting out.

(p.63, 1 line)

**poem 18:** Further quotation by Narrator to describe the position of a stranger in a foreign land.

(p.63, 2 lines)

**poem 19:** Fāṭimah prays to Muhammad on arriving in Medinah.

(p.63, 10 lines)

**poem 20:** Shāhīn prays to Muhammad in Medinah.

(p.64, 53 lines)

After Shāhīn's prayer, a stranger appears.

**poem 21:** the stranger's prayer to Muhammad and God.

(p.67, 22 lines)

The stranger turns out to be al-Ṣāliḥ, miraculously transported from Cairo, who vanishes when approached by Fāṭimah.

**poem 22:** Shāhīn expresses his emotion at al-Ṣāliḥ's appearance.

(p.68, 11 lines)

Fāṭimah's love for al-Ṣāliḥ increases as a result of this miracle, but she refuses to consummate their marriage until she has paid twelve pilgrimages to the Holy Cities.

**poem 23:** Quotation used by Narrator to describe Fāṭimah when the marriage is about to be consummated.

(p.70, 2 lines)

Aybak, the ruler of Mosul, hears that al-Ṣāliḥ is poor and feeble (for example, his Kurdish soldiers bear wooden swords) and sets out with an army to invade Egypt, but falls gravely ill when he reaches Aleppo where the gates are closed against him. The ruler of Aleppo sends the news and a request for guidance to al-Ṣāliḥ.

**poem 24:** the Shāwīsh of al-Şāliḥ's *dīwān* recites at the end of prayers.  
(p.71, 4 lines)

**poem 25:** the messenger from Aleppo addresses al-Şāliḥ.  
(p.72, 4 lines)

**poem 26:** the opening lines of the letter from the ruler of Aleppo.  
(p.72, 3 lines)

Al-Şāliḥ tells the ruler of Aleppo to open his gates to Aybak and let him proceed peacefully. Aybak enters Aleppo and is cured by Sheikh Şalāḥ al-Dīn, a learned man from Iraq.

A flashback relates how the seemingly pious Şalāḥ al-Dīn is in fact a Christian impostor, whose real name is 'Abd al-Şalīb (or Juwān), who is the son of the Princess of Portugal following her rape by the evil Aşfūt, who is a descendant of 'Uqbah (the villain of *Dhāt al-Himmah*).

**poem 27:** quotation used by the Narrator to describe the King of Portugal's daughter.  
(p.76, 8 lines)

Abd al-Şalīb grows up to be ugly, evil and violent. One day, with a party of 40 princes acting as pirates, including Burtuqush Sayf al-Rūm, he captures a ship full of Muslim pilgrims including Şalāḥ al-Dīn.

**poem 28:** Şalāḥ al-Dīn praises God while reciting the Qur'ān in his cell.  
(p.84, 31 lines)

After overhearing Şalāḥ al-Dīn, 'Abd al-Şalīb decides to take advantage of his learning. He studies the Qurān and the hadīth for four years with Şalāḥ al-Dīn, before killing him, taking his identity and moving to Aleppo with Burtuqush (now named Maşşūr).

Aybak proceeds to Egypt, taking ‘Şalāḥ al-Dīn’ and Maṣṣūr with him. After getting lost in the desert and nearly dying of thirst, Aybak recognizes al-Şāliḥ’s spiritual power and vows to serve him.

**poem 29:** the Shāwīsh of al-Şāliḥ’s court recites at the end of prayers.  
(p.91, 3 lines)

Aybak is welcomed by al-Şāliḥ after protesting his good intentions. Şalāḥ al-Dīn arrives and claims to have been praying in Jerusalem.

**poem 30:** al-Şāliḥ uses quotation to Shāhīn in describing God’s power.  
(p.94, 2 lines)

The court’s judge dies and Aybak suggests Şalāḥ al-Dīn as a replacement. Al-Şāliḥ agrees, on condition that Şalāḥ al-Dīn must always pray in front of him and not behind him.

**poem 31:** Şalāḥ al-Dīn greets al-Şāliḥ on entering the court.  
(p.96, 10 lines)

**poem 32:** the Shāwīsh of the court at the end of prayers.  
(p.99, 5 lines)

Al-Şāliḥ has a mysterious dream, in which he is rescued from hyenas by a pack of 75 lions.

**poem 33:** a plea for help to God by al-Şāliḥ in his dream.  
(p.99, 10 lines)

**poem 34:** a quotation used by al-Şāliḥ to describe the leading lion in his dream.  
(p.100, 9 lines)

The dream is interpreted by Shāhīn as the Muslims (the lions) defeating the unbelievers (the hyenas) and its lesson is that al-Şāliḥ should buy 75 mamlūks

(Shāhīn justifies the buying of slaves by referring to Noah's curse on Ham). Al-Ṣāliḥ is advised to send for a renowned slave trader, 'Alī.

'Alī has fallen on hard times and can no longer support his family.

**poem 35:** 'Alī bemoans his misfortune after being scolded by his wife.  
(p.104, 11 lines)

He borrows money from a friend, but gives it all away to a beggar.

**poem 36:** quotation used by Narrator to describe the beggar's amazement.  
(p.107, 1 line)

Shāhīn's men arrest 'Alī to take him to the minister.

**poem 37:** 'Alī reflects on fate as he is escorted to Shāhīn.  
(p.108, 13 lines)

Shāhīn takes 'Alī to meet al-Ṣāliḥ.

**poem 38:** the Shāwīsh of the court at the end of prayers.  
(p.112, 4 lines)

**poem 39:** 'Alī greets al-Ṣāliḥ on entering the court.  
(p.112, 2 lines)

Al-Ṣāliḥ commissions 'Alī to buy the 75 mamlūks, plus one special mamlūk whose name will be Maḥmūd, who will know the Qur'ān and who will have 'lion's hair' between his eyes.

**(vol.1, part 2, pp.2-96)**

‘Alī sets out on his mission and meets with no success until he arrives eventually at Bursā where, despite the governor’s discouragement, he finds 75 fine mamlūks.

**poem 40:** quotation used by Narrator to describe the beauty of the moon (comparable to beauty of the mamlūks seen by ‘Alī).  
(p.7, 10 lines)

**poem 41:** quotation by Narrator to describe one of the leading mamlūk’s lack of response to ‘Alī’s greeting.  
(p.7, 5 lines)

**poem 42:** ‘Alī addresses another leading mamlūk (Aydemar).  
(p.8, 8 lines)

The governor of Bursā, Mas‘ūd, is unwilling to sell the mamlūks to ‘Alī.

**poem 43:** the Shāwīsh of the court recites at the end of prayers.  
(p.11, 3 lines)

Mas‘ūd agrees to sell the mamlūks after being threatened by al-Şāliḥ in a dream. When the mamlūks visit the baths, they find a sick mamlūk lying there.

**poem 44:** quotation by Narrator at sight of the sick mamlūk (Maḥmūd) covered with filth on his sick-bed.  
(p.15, 8 lines)

Aydemar protects Maḥmūd from attacks by other mamlūks.

**poem 45:** Maḥmūd praises God to Aydemar despite his condition.  
(p.16, 14 lines)

**poem 46:** Aydemar is impressed by Maḥmūd’s eloquence and replies with same rhyme and metre.

(p.17, 10 lines)

‘Alī visits Maḥmūd in the baths and realises that he fits the description of al-Ṣāliḥ’s special requirement.

**poem 47:** Maḥmūd recites to himself when ‘Alī finds him in the baths.

(p.18, 10 lines)

**poem 48:** quotation by Narrator to describe Maḥmūd’s unsympathetic keeper.

(p.19, 2 lines)

‘Alī buys Maḥmūd and all the mamlūks leave for Damascus. They are captured by Ismailis, who demand a ransom, but al-Ṣāliḥ appears to them and tells them that Maḥmūd will be a king and they will share in his glory. They adopt Maḥmūd as a brother.

In Damascus, the ruler ‘Isā rejects Maḥmūd as worthless and Maḥmūd’s sickness gets worse.

**poem 49:** Maḥmūd recites to himself in despair.

(p.27, 13 lines)

**poem 50:** in response a weeping Aydemar tries to comfort Maḥmūd.

(p.28, 9 lines)

Maḥmūd is taken to a hospital run by Daḥrūj, a pederast.

**poem 51:** quotation by Narrator to describe Daḥrūj.

(p.28, 6 lines)

Maḥmūd kills a fellow patient, a Persian fire-worshipper, after a religious dispute. In a vision he sees a gathering of saints led by Aḥmad al-Badawī, who tell him that he will lead the Muslims to victory.

**poem 52:** Aḥmad al-Badawī addresses the gathering of saints, praising the Prophet.

(p.33, 11 lines)

Maḥmūd recovers from his sickness and lives a pious life, reciting the Qur'ān in the Ummayyad Mosque. He is adopted as a son by a tailor, whose son he teaches to read the Qur'ān. He kills a pederast who accosts them, a friend of 'Isā's, and is arrested and sentenced to immediate execution.

**poem 53:** Maḥmūd prays to God as he faces execution.

(p.41, 8 lines)

Maḥmūd is saved by the intervention of 'Alī, who was alerted by al-Ṣāliḥ in a dream. 'Alī prepares to take Maḥmūd to join the other mamlūks in Cairo, but is prevented by being unable to discharge a debt. His creditor claims Maḥmūd as security for the debt and 'Alī agrees after being instructed to do so by al-Ṣāliḥ in a dream. Maḥmūd is made to work for his master's unattractive son, Fakhr al-Dīn.

**poem 54:** quotation by Narrator to describe Fakhr al-Dīn.

(p.45, 7 lines)

Maḥmūd is encouraged by the naqīb to challenge his former master Mas'ūd, a professional wrestler.

**poem 55:** the naqīb urges Maḥmūd to put his trust in God.

(p.48, 12 lines)

**poem 56:** the naqīb continues.

(p.49, 9 lines)

**poem 57:** at Maḥmūd's request, the naqīb sings in praise of God.

(p.49, 11 lines)

During Maḥmūd's absence fighting Mas'ūd, Fakhr al-Dīn falls and hurts himself. He tells his mother that Maḥmūd threw him on the ground, so Maḥmūd runs away. He spends the night beside a grave, where he is joined by three other fugitives. He sees the heavens opening and all things on earth worshipping God. It is 'the night of power'. He asks to be made ruler of all the lands of Islam.

He returns to Damascus and is tied up by his master's wife, who threatens to punish him with a burning stick.

**poem 58:** Maḥmūd prays to God for help.

(p.54, 8 lines)

He is rescued by his master's sister, Fāṭimah, who discharges the debt due to her brother and adopts Maḥmūd as a son in place of her own dead son, Baybars, whose name Maḥmūd now takes.

Baybars succeeds in taming a fearsome horse belonging to Fāṭimah's father, which takes him to a cave where he finds a mace which has been kept for 'a youth called Maḥmūd'.

**poem 59:** quotation by Narrator to describe the horse.

(p.59, 6 lines)

Baybars meets a band of outlaws on his way back to Damascus and takes them into his service.

**poem 60:** Baybars recites happily as he leads his followers to Damascus.

(p.64, 15 lines)

Baybars and his men get involved in a dispute with a business partner of Fāṭimah, Sarjawīl, and 'Isā plots to destroy Baybars by shutting him out of Damascus and leaving him at the mercy of Sarjawīl's army.

**poem 61:** Baybars encourages his men in battle.

(p.76, 18 lines)

Although his men are all killed, Baybars̄ resists until he falls asleep and is drugged and captured.

**poem 62:** Baybars̄ prays to God for help from his prison.

(p.79, 16 lines)

He is rescued by ‘Āsif, the leader of the Ismailis, and returns to Damascus. The next day he sets out to recover his horse and, with the help of the Ismailis, kills Sarjawīl and routs his army.

**poem 63:** Baybars̄ prays to God in the middle of the battle.

(p.84, 12 lines)

‘Īsā now has Baybars̄ kidnapped and promises to kill him.

**poem 64:** Baybars̄ comforts himself by reciting poetry in ‘Īsā’s prison.

(p.90, 14 lines)

**poem 65:** Fāṭimah weeps as she grieves Baybars̄’ absence.

(p.91, 9 lines)

Fāṭimah sends for help to the Ismailis, who answer her appeal and rescue Baybars̄.

**poem 66:** Lines at the start of Fāṭimah’s letter to the Ismailis.

(p.92, 8 lines)

**poem 67:** Fāṭimah welcomes the Ismailis on their arrival in Damascus.

(p.96, 5 lines)

## Appendix 22: text of poem 45

هو القدير على كل الامور	سأحمد رب العرش وخالق الورى	1
واحده حقا برغم كل كفور	واشكر الهى على ما أصابنى	2
وانه للشاكرين شكور	واسأله العفو من فضله	3
واسأله الصير على المقدور	وقد رضيت منه بقسمتى	4
واخذل يا رب جاه كل عقور	فيا رب خذ بيد كل حبيب	5
ودبرنا يا مولاي فى كل الامور	واعطنا السلام منك فضلا	6
ومن سواك يرحم المكسور	فلقد وهى جسمى وانت عليم	7
واشفى ما بقلبى والصدور	هب لنا لطفا ودبر امرنا	8
واعطه فى الجنان خير قصور	واجبر بخاطرى من حر صغف جسمى	9
فانت المسامح وانت الغفور	وسامح يا رب من اساءنى	10
محمد المبعوث بكل الامور	وبعد ذا اصلي على خير الورى	11
ما هب ريح على جميع زهور	عليه صلاة مع سلاما دائما	12
وما تناكحت فى الوكور طيور	وما رتحت اطياف الفياقى	13
والتابعين لهم بطول الدهور	وكذا الان والاصحاب جمعا	14

## Appendix 23: Placement of poems in *Sīrat Baybars (Damas)* (parts 1-26)

### Volume 1

A dream by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, the Muslim king of Egypt, is interpreted as meaning that an exceptional knight will be found to lead the forces of Islām to victory over the unbelievers. Ṣāliḥ decides to buy some mamlūks to form the nucleus of an army and sends for the acknowledged expert in such purchases, ‘Alī Āghā, a merchant in Damascus who has fallen on bad times and is deeply in debt.

**poem 1:** Quotation used by his friends to comfort ‘Alī.

(p.22, 1 line)

**poem 2:** Quotation used by ‘Alī’s wife to express her doubts about his optimism.

(p.24, 1 line)

**poem 3:** Quotation used by ‘Alī Āghā to comfort his wife and to support his view that ‘hardship is always followed by consolation’.

(p.26, 2 lines)

**poem 4:** Quotation used by ‘Alī Āghā to warn his wife against trusting other people.

(p.28, 2 lines)

On behalf of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, the Governor of Damascus sends for ‘Alī, rescues him from his creditors and commissions him to find the mamlūks.

**poem 5:** Quotation used by the Governor’s messenger, to comment to ‘Alī on God’s ability to change someone’s condition.

(p.31, 1 line)

**poem 6:** Quotation used by the messenger’s wife to ‘Alī’s wife in

support of the view that he should trust in his changed fortune.

(p.33, 1 line)

**poem 7:** Quotation used by ‘Alī to reflect on his neighbours’ changed attitudes after his good fortune.

(p.34, 2 lines)

**poem 8:** Quotation used by ‘Alī to make the same point.

(p.36, 2 lines)

‘Alī travels to Cairo, trading in all the cities along the way.

**poem 9:** ‘Alī greets King al-Şāliḥ with praise on being summoned to his presence.

(p.38, 4 lines)

The king spells out his commission to ‘Alī: to buy 75 top class mamlūks plus an extra one who must be ‘as weak as him’. ‘Alī travels to Burşah to find the mamlūks.

**poem 10:** Quotation by Narrator to comment on villagers’ gratitude for ‘Alī’s generous gifts on his journey.

(p.42, 1 line)

When ‘Alī arrives in Burşah, he is told that there are no mamlūks for sale, because the merchants in Cairo, driven by envy of ‘Alī, have warned the merchants of Burşah not to deal with him.

**poem 11:** Quotation used by Narrator to comment on the Egyptian merchants’ scheme against ‘Alī.

(p.44, 1 line)

‘Alī discovers the plot and manages to buy the mamlūks, including a sick, emaciated one called Maḥmūd, and takes them to Damascus. Maḥmūd’s master mistreats him, until one

day he is seen by a lady, known as the Lady of al-Shām, who takes him into her service because he reminds her of her dead son, Baybars.

**poem 12:** Quotation used by Ahmed Bāshā (the Lady of al-Shām's brother) to Baybars' master before removing Baybars to his new home.  
(p.70, 1 line)

Baybars shows an astonishing degree of knowledge, particularly of the Qurān, and reveals how he was brought up as the son of a king. The Lady of al-Shām adopts him, gives him all her possessions and he takes the name of Baybars. Baybars thrives in his new home, where he learns the arts of fighting and is inducted into the *tawābiq* of the underworld, where he is made Āghā after getting the better of a notorious pederast (who becomes his supporter). He is recognised by the people of Damascus for his defence of the weak and for enforcing justice.

**poem 13:** Quotation used by Baybars in telling Ahmad Bāshā that he is wrong to say that he cannot enforce justice against a minister's (ʿIsā al-Nāṣir's) groom.  
(p.119, 1 line)

He is visited by one of the Ismailis (*fadāwī*, the Assassins) who becomes his blood brother. Baybars becomes involved in helping a community, where the Lady of al-Shām owns land, against marauders. ʿIsā al-Nāṣir sees an opportunity to get his revenge on him and tries in vain to stir up trouble for Baybars in Damascus.

**poem 14:** The headman's comments to the gathering of elders after hearing Muhammad the tailor's story of visiting Baybars.  
(p.144, 1 line)

ʿIsā al-Nāṣir then persuades King Sarajwīl, who also owns land in that community and had been an ally of Baybars in his efforts, to turn against him. Baybars defeats Sarajwīl and seizes his tents.

**poem 15:** Baybars addresses Sarajwīl in mid-battle after killing his son.  
(p.151, 5 lines)

ʿIsā al-Nāṣir lays false accusations against Baybars. The minister Najm al-Dīn arrives from Cairo to investigate them. The people of Damascus rally to Baybars' support and Najm al-Dīn sees through the plot.

**poem 16:** Quotation used by Najm al-Dīn in confronting ʿIsā al-Nāṣir.  
(p.170, 1 line)

Najm al-Dīn decides to take Baybars to Cairo to get him away from ʿIsā al-Nāṣir.

**poem 17:** Quotation used by the Lady of al-Shām in saying farewell to Baybars as he sets off for Cairo.  
(p.173, 1 line)

Baybars finds one of his Ismaili friends burying his son alive (at the insistence of the boy's mother, for tearing his clothes) and persuades him to spare his son's life.

**poem 18:** Quotation used by Baybars to comment to himself on the situation.  
(p.178, 1 line)

**poem 19:** Gnostic quotation used by the son, Ibrahīm, in thanking Baybars.  
(p.179, 2 lines)

In Cairo, Baybars gets to know Karīm al-Dīn and his father, the Qāḍī Yahya, who has fallen on hard times.

**poem 20:** Quotation used by Baybars to Najm al-Dīn in commenting on a sudden improvement in the Qāḍī Yahya's fortune.  
(p.190, 2 lines)

Baybars kills an Āghā who is molesting a young Muslim girl and is summoned to defend himself in front of King al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb.

**poem 21:** Baybars greets the King on entering his presence for the first time.

(p.193, 2 lines)

The King's chief judge, the Qādī, is actually a Christian, called Juwān, who has taken the identity of a dead Muslim. He sees Baybars as an enemy and plots continually to effect his downfall.

**poem 22:** The Narrator uses a quotation to describe the beauty of Juwān's daughter Mārīya.

(p.199, 4 lines)

Baybars acquires a groom, and his constant companion, 'Utmān, the most notorious young rogue in Cairo (whose mother has seen Baybars' great future in a vision). 'Utmān is always getting into trouble with the authorities.

**poem 23:** Gnomonic quotation used by the King when questioning 'Utmān about one of his escapades.

(p.252, 1 line)

**poem 24:** Baybars greets the King before making him a gift of his tent (captured originally from Sarajwīl).

(p.271, 3 lines)

**poem 25:** Baybars greets the King on entering his presence.

(p.274, 2 lines)

**poem 26:** Baybars greets the King on entering his presence.

(p.284, 2 lines)

**poem 27:** Gnomonic quotation recited by Baybars to himself on leaving the palace of Bādis (after deciding to take possession of it).

(p.309, 1 line)

**poem 28:** Gnomonic quotation used by Baybars to himself on leaving the King's presence after thwarting the Qāḍī's attempt to dispossess him.

(p.317, 1 line)

## Volume 2

**poem 29:** Quotation used by Baybars as a comment on a happy evening with the 'men of the mountain' (the Assassins).

(p.41, 1 line)

**poem 30:** Quotation used by 'Utmān in telling Baybars not to worry because God will look after him.

(p.48, 1 line)

**poem 31:** Quotation used by Baybars to 'Utmān when he is thinking of leaving the country.

(p.49, 2 lines)

**poem 32:** Baybars greets the King on entering his presence.

(p.53, 2 lines)

**poem 33:** Quotation used by Baybars' foster-brother to Baybars to describe a beautiful woman.

(p.82, 4 lines)

**poem 34:** Baybars' foster-brother continues to describe the woman.

(p.82, 2 lines)

**poem 35:** Baybars' foster-brother describes to Baybars how he was

affected by love.

(p.84, 7 lines)

**poem 36:** Baybars recites as he leads the mamlūks into battle.

(p.89, 11 lines)

**poem 37:** Quotation used by a woman to Baybars in discussing ‘Utmān.

(p.91, 2 lines)

**poem 38:** Jamr (leader of the Ismailis) is going in to fight the Christians.

(p.113, 10 lines)

The Qādī (alias the Christian Juwān) plots ceaselessly to destroy Baybars, who is always saved by King al-Şāliḥ’s wisdom and knowledge of the Qādī’s motives. One plot involves the Qādī sending a forged instruction to the elders of the region where Baybars is living ordering his execution.

**poem 39:** Baybars to ‘Utmān after telling him about the order for his own execution.

(p.125, 2 lines)

The King promotes Baybars regularly to increasingly important posts, including that of *salḥadar*, first of the left half and then of the whole of the army.

**poem 40:** Quotation used by Baybars to ‘Utmān to express his trust and friendship.

(p.128, 2 lines)

**poem 41:** Baybars greets the King and his court.

(p.129, 4 lines)

The King sends Baybars to rescue Aleppo from the Christian king of Anṭakīyah.

**poem 42:** Quotation used by Baybars to the King in expressing his devotion to him.  
(p.137, 3 lines)

Subsequent missions by Baybars and the Ismailis include defeating the Christian army threatening Jerusalem. Baybars then ventures (against 'Utmān's advice) into the 'land of Constantinople' in a quest for some buried weapons of extreme religious significance. They are attacked by a Christian army under Michael of Constantinople.

**poem 43:** Baybars encourages his troops before a battle against the Christians.  
(p.189, 6 lines)

Baybars is saved by 'Utmān's arrival with Ismaili troops.

**poem 44:** Badr al-Ghafir (leader of the Ismailis) going into battle.  
(p.211, 6 lines)

**poem 45:** Baybars going into battle.  
(p.212, 5 lines)

Baybars is victorious, King Michael is captured and ransomed and Baybars returns to Cairo.

**poem 46:** Baybars greets the King on entering his presence.  
(p.216, 10 lines)

**poem 47:** Ma'rūf (leader of the Ismailis) reads from a letter from King al-Şāliḥ, taken to him by Baybars ordering him to escort the (Christian) King of Genoa's daughter, Maryam, from Jerusalem to Cairo.  
(p.240, 1 line)

After initial hostility, Ma'rūf and Baybars become friends and Ma'rūf goes to Jerusalem to escort Maryam. They fall in love.

**poem 48:** Narrator uses a quotation to describe the mutual attraction between Ma'rūf and Maryam.

(p.248, 6 lines)

**poem 49:** Narrator uses a quotation to describe Maryam's reactions on the entry of Ma'rūf.

(p.249, 4 lines)

**poem 50:** Ma'rūf greets the King on entering his presence.

(p.257, 3 lines)

**poem 51:** Maryam responds to the King's greeting.

(p.258, 2 lines)

Maryam embraces Islām and agrees to marry Ma'rūf, to the horror of her family who arrange, with Juwān's help, to have her kidnapped. Maryam is pregnant.

**poem 52:** Ma'rūf's lament when he finds Maryam is not in the camp.

(p.273, 13 lines)

**poem 53:** Maryam's plea for help on being snatched.

(p.274, 7 lines)

Maryam is taken by ship to her family in Genoa, but the voyage is halted by a storm.

**poem 54:** Maryam laments as she is taken by boat to an island.

(p.277, 4 lines)

**poem 55:** Quotation used by Maryam's escort.

(p.279, 1 line)

**poem 56:** Maryam's lament which is overheard by Ma'rūf when he

is looking for her.

(p.282, 9 lines)

In single combat against Muhammad Āghā al-Daylamī, the leader of a troop of Persian Muslims, Baybars declines to take advantage of his opponent's sword's breaking and they become friends.

**poem 57:** Quotation from 'Antarah (addressing the Banu 'Abs) used by Muhammad Āghā to encourage his men before battle with Halūn's troops (as related to Baybars).

(p.296, 1 line)

**poem 58:** Muhammad Āghā greets the King.

(p.298, 4 lines)

Baybars is drugged and kidnapped by Juwān and sent to Genoa to be killed by Maryam's father, but is saved by Shīḥah Jamāl al-Dīn (a Dervish who is destined to be Baybars' main friend and supporter, supplanting 'Utmān).

**poem 59:** Quotation used by the King to warn Baybars against 'Isā al-Nāṣir.

(p.335, 1 line)

**poem 60:** Quotation used by Narrator to describe Aybak's supporters.

(p.337, 1 line)

### Volume 3

**poem 61:** Quotation by King to Baybars re transience of life.

(p.27, 2 lines)

**poem 62:** Quotation by King to Baybars (following prose quotation of

*ḥadīth*) describing his own death and burial.

(p.28, 44 lines)

The King asks Baybars to have his coffin built and then dies.

**poem 63:** Baybars' lament over the King's grave.

(p.31, 2 lines)

**poem 64:** Quotation by Narrator to describe the beauty of a mamlūk sitting outside the house of Shāh Zādih.

(p.36, 4 lines)

Al-Şālih's son, 'Isā (who is both a pederast and an alcoholic), is made king under the title of 'Isā al-Ghāzī. Baybars is accused by Aybak and friends of having poisoned al-Şālih but is saved by the latter's precaution of having asked his doctors to certify that he had died from natural causes. Baybars intercedes to prevent the new King from executing Aybak as a false witness.

**poem 65:** Quotation by Baybars to the new King to explain his unconcern at being threatened with death (for poisoning King Şālih).

(p.46, 4 lines)

**poem 66:** Quotation by Narrator to describe a handsome mamlūk.

(p.47, 2 lines)

Shāhīn warns the King of the need to defend the country against the threat of invasion by the Franks.

**poem 67:** Quotation used by King to Shāhīn (about cowards who pretend to be heroes) to describe the weakness of his ministers.

(p.59, 3 lines)

**poem 68:** Quotation used by King to Shāhīn on same theme.

(p.59, 1 line)

Shāhīn recommends the new king to make Baybars his trusted advisor.

**poem 69:** Baybars welcomes Shāhīn to his house when he comes bearing the new king's commission.

(p.61, 2 lines)

**poem 70:** Shāhīn to Baybars after giving the good news.

(p.61, 2 lines)

**poem 71:** the King addresses a cup of wine after admitting his addiction to it.

(p.69, 6 lines)

Attempting to hide his wine from Baybars, the King falls from a dais and dies.

**poem 72:** Baybars encourages himself as he leads his troops into battle.

(p.71, 11 lines)

While Baybars is defeating the Franks, he is accused by Aybak of having murdered King ʿĪsā al-Ghāzī and sentenced to death.

**poem 73:** Quotation used by Baybars to comment on the false testimony of his enemies.

(p.74, 4 lines)

**poem 74:** Quotation used by Baybars to express his willingness to abide by God's judgement.

(p.75, 3 lines)

**poem 75:** Baybars addresses the crowd in order to calm them.

(p.76, 4 lines)

**poem 76:** Baybars to his brother in saying farewell.  
(p.76, 5 lines)

**poem 77:** Baybars' mother addresses Baybars.  
(p.83, 1 line)

Baybars' innocence is proved. Al-Şāliḥ's second son assumes the throne, under the title of Khafīl al-Ashraf. He is a virtuous man who becomes a good friend to Baybars. After one failed assassination attempt, al-Ashraf's death is arranged by Aybak, who succeeds him with the title of King Aybak al-Mu'azz. He asks Baybars to support him.

**poem 78:** Quotation used by Baybars to Aybak to stress his independence.  
(p.102, 2 lines)

**poem 79:** Quotation used by Baybars to Aybak to describe the inevitability of fate.  
(p.102, 2 lines)

**poem 80:** Quotation used by Baybars to Aybak re. God's power.  
(p.104, 2 lines)

**poem 81:** Gnostic quotation (speaker undefined).  
(p.141, 1 line)

**poem 82:** Quotation by Narrator commenting on Aybak's state before his single combat with Baybars.  
(p.174, 1 line)

**poem 83:** Quotation by Narrator about a girl seen by Aybak.  
(p.177, 5 lines)

**poem 84:** Aybak reflects on seeing a beautiful girl.

(p.178, 4 lines)

**poem 85:** Quotation by Shāhīn to Qalwūn re friendship.

(p.188, 30 lines)

**poem 86:** Najm al-Dīn to Shāhīn when seeking his advice (as the only one willing to speak honestly to Baybars).

(p.189, 3 lines)

**poem 87:** Shīḥah Jamāl al-Dīn, the Dervish, greets Baybars after visiting him in his castle (despite the raised drawbridge).

(p.190, 5 lines)

**poem 88:** Shīḥah advises Baybars in the light of advice received from al-Khiḍr and the *Kitāb al-Yūnān*.

(p.191, 18 lines)

**poem 89:** Shāhīn explains to Baybars why he is weeping after arriving at his castle.

(p.193, 2 lines)

**poem 90:** ʿIsā al-Nāṣir begs Baybars' pardon after being brought to him from prison.

(p.196, 2 lines)

**poem 91:** Sharaf al-Dīn quotes from a book to Baybars when he is deciding what to do with ʿIsā.

(p.196, 12 lines)

**poem 92:** Abū ʿAlī greets Baybars on entering his presence.

(p.199, 2 lines)

**poem 93:** Quotation by Abū ʿAlī to Baybars.

(p.199, 3 lines)

**poem 94:** Juwān to Sayf al-Rūm when they are drinking wine together after he has spelt out his plans for destroying the Muslims.

(p.204, 3 lines)

**poem 95:** Qiṭāyah recites as he leads the Muslim army into battle against the Christians.

(p.206, 2 lines)

**poem 96:** Quotation of a proverb by a soldier.

(p.209, 2 lines)

**poem 97:** Dā'i' al-Ism recites as he goes into battle against the Christians.

(p.209, 19 lines)

**poem 98** 'Utmān laments the (supposed) death of Baybars.

(p.222, 4 lines)

The Christian king Zaynatū challenges and defeats the Muslim champions one by one, taking them all prisoner.

**poem 99:** Quotation by the King to express his admiration of Aydemar's devotion to Baybars.

(p.225, 2 lines)

**poem 100:** Baybars recites as he goes in to fight the Christians.

(p.229, 6 lines)

**poem 101:** Shāhīn encourages the troops in battle.

(p.230, 6 lines)

**poem 102:** Baybars pretends to rebuke Shāhīn by repeating what he has overheard in the camp.

(p.234, 20 lines)

**poem 103:** Quotation by Juwān to Sayf al-Rūm about the attractions of Juwān's daughter.

(p.236, 4 lines)

**poem 104:** Quotation by the Pope to Juwān.

(p.238, 6 lines).

**Appendix 24: Poems in *Sīrat Baybars (Damas)* which are quoted (wholly or partly) in other works**

[ any identifications not attributed to George Bohas  
in the footnotes have been made by the author ]

<u>poem</u>	<u>author / work</u>
1	<i>1001 Nights</i> (981)
3	<i>1001 Nights</i> (prelude) <sup>1</sup>
5	Ibn Ḥātim al-Anṣārī <sup>2</sup>
6	al-Shāfi‘i <sup>3</sup> and <i>1001 Nights</i> (148 and 819)
7	<i>1001 Nights</i> <sup>4</sup> (21 and 309)
8	Abū al-Khaṭṭāb al-Kalwādhānī <sup>5</sup>
13	<i>1001 Nights</i> (436)
17	‘Abd al-Muḥsin b. Muḥammad al-Ṣūrī <sup>6</sup>
20	<i>1001 Nights</i> (997)
21	<i>1001 Nights</i> (21)
22	Baḥā al-Dīn Zuhayr <sup>7</sup>
27	Abū al-Qāsim al-Tanūkhī <sup>8</sup>
30	Abū al-Ḥasan b. al-Munqidh and <i>1001 Nights</i> <sup>9</sup> (11 and 21)
31	<i>1001 Nights</i> (21)
32	<i>1001 Nights</i> <sup>10</sup> (107)
33	<i>1001 Nights</i> <sup>11</sup> (964)
38	(quoted by) al-Ibshīhī <sup>12</sup>
48	Ibn al-Fāriḍ <sup>13</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bohas (2004) p.4

<sup>2</sup> ibid p.4

<sup>3</sup> ibid p.6

<sup>4</sup> ibid p.6

<sup>5</sup> ibid p.6

<sup>6</sup> ibid p.6

<sup>7</sup> ibid p.7

<sup>8</sup> ibid p.8

<sup>9</sup> ibid p.8

<sup>10</sup> ibid p.8

<sup>11</sup> ibid p.9

<sup>12</sup> ibid p.10

- 49 (quoted by) al-Ibshīhī<sup>14</sup>
- 50 *1001 Nights* (35)
- 52 *1001 Nights* (38)
- 56 ‘Antarah<sup>15</sup>
- 57 (quoted by) al-Itfīdī<sup>16</sup>
- 59 (quoted by) al-Ibshīhī<sup>17</sup>
- 60 Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ilbīrī<sup>18</sup>
- 61 (quoted by) Ibn al-Jazarī *et al.*<sup>19</sup>
- 63 Burhān al-Dīn Abū Ishāq (called Ibn Zaqqā’a)<sup>20</sup>
- 64 ‘Abdallah b. Sulaymān b. Wahb<sup>21</sup>
- 65 Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī<sup>22</sup>
- 66 (quoted by) al-Ibshīhī<sup>23</sup>
- 67 Kamāl al-Dīn Abū ‘Amr al-Anṣārī<sup>24</sup>
- 68 *1001 Nights*<sup>25</sup> (18)
- 69 Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Nabāta al-Miṣrī *or* Burhān al-Dīn al-Qīrāṭī<sup>26</sup>
- 70 (quoted by) al-Itfīdī<sup>27</sup>
- 74 al-Buḥturī<sup>28</sup>
- 75 *1001 Nights* (477)
- 76 ‘Abd al-Muḥsin b. Muḥammad al-Ṣūrī<sup>29</sup>
- 77 *1001 Nights*<sup>30</sup> (149)
- 78 *1001 Nights*<sup>31</sup> (38 and 804)
- 79 *1001 Nights* (303 and 799)

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<sup>13</sup> ibid p.10

<sup>14</sup> ibid p.10

<sup>15</sup> ibid p.11

<sup>16</sup> ibid p.11

<sup>17</sup> ibid p.12

<sup>18</sup> ibid p.12

<sup>19</sup> ibid p.12

<sup>20</sup> ibid p.13

<sup>21</sup> ibid p.14

<sup>22</sup> ibid p.15

<sup>23</sup> ibid p.16

<sup>24</sup> ibid p.16

<sup>25</sup> ibid p.16

<sup>26</sup> ibid p.17

<sup>27</sup> ibid p.17

<sup>28</sup> ibid p.18

<sup>29</sup> ibid p.19

<sup>30</sup> ibid p.19

<sup>31</sup> ibid p.19

- 81 (based on lines by) al-Mutanabbī<sup>32</sup>  
 85 *1001 Nights* (765)  
 88 *1001 Nights* (515)  
 90 Shams al-Dīn Qābus<sup>33</sup> and *1001 Nights* (940)  
 91 *1001 Nights*<sup>34</sup> (290)  
 93 Kuthayyir ‘Azza and *1001 Nights*<sup>35</sup> (not traceable)  
 94 Mujīr al-Dīn b. Tamīm<sup>36</sup>  
 95 Abū al-Ḥasan b. al-Munqidh and *1001 Nights*<sup>37</sup> (11 and 21)  
 (identical to poem 30 above)  
 98 Muḥammad b. Ḥalaf al-Taymī<sup>38</sup>  
 101 (quoted by) al-Ibshīhī<sup>39</sup>  
 102 Majnūn Laylā and *1001 Nights*<sup>40</sup> (866 and 950)

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<sup>32</sup> ibid p.20

<sup>33</sup> ibid p.20

<sup>34</sup> ibid p.20

<sup>35</sup> ibid p.21

<sup>36</sup> ibid p.21

<sup>37</sup> ibid pp.8 and 22

<sup>38</sup> ibid p.22

<sup>39</sup> ibid p.22

<sup>40</sup> ibid p.23