El-Sayyid Ahmad El-Badawi (1200?-1276) is one of the thousands of 
mashayikh, i.e. saints, who are venerated in Egypt. His shrine, 
which grew to include a theological college fashioned after al-Azhar, 
is located in the city of Tanta (previously the village of Tandata) 
in the Nile Delta. Ahmad is one of the most powerful saints; the 
strength of his cult is represented by its appeal to huge segments 
of the Egyptian population (as well as to people outside Egypt) 
and by the diversity of the functions normally assigned to him.

Ahmad is believed to perform such solar, Olympian functions as 
"supporting Earth" in space, absorbing calamities on behalf of 
mankind, and achieving major military feats; he is also accredited 
with accomplishments of a more personal nature such as helping to 
give a less painful childbirth, locate a missing person, or pass a 
school examination. His image comprises a variety of traits ranging 
from those of a warlord to those of a joker.

Ahmad's cult is deeply rooted in Sufi (mystic) folk philosophy and 
rituals; it involves organized brotherhoods (ṭuruq; sing. ṭareeqah), 
group performances of rituals which lead to ecstatic experiences, 
and rhetorical poetic expressions. Ahmad is the only saint who has 
three major traditional narrative poems which may be called epics; 
these tell of his heroic supernatural deeds. In this text, Ahmad 
enters into combat with a woman named Fatma Bint-Birry and her 
armies.

A more lengthy introduction to this epic will be published in 
Volume 10, no. 1 of the Folklore Forum.
Upon you I have relied, Lord of Lords!
You are my means in every affair.

If you were to forgive me and redeem my sin,
there would be no fear over me and I would not have a care.

You, whom the lowly World has lured (fascinated),
For whom has the World lasted?

It lasted neither for Eve nor for Adam,
Nor did it last for Zain El-'Aabideen.

Many a person is searching for [any means of] livelihood,
While many a person [with plenty] has an ungrateful heart!

'Applicators diminish mountains of Kohol'
'And years diminish the plentitude of money.'

'God's Men, there is no fear for them,'
and there is no fear for the Supporting Men.

Men who have divorced the world [i.e., life] of frolic
And have forsworn the commission of sins.

They have an auctioneer and have a prosperous market
They 'sell and purchase' the unjust ones.

They sell and purchase the dishonest,
And he whom they dismiss is never well again.

And among them is he who became a spicer with a saddle-bag.
Selling aloe to the wounded.

And among them is he who "escapaded" and witnessed the Day of Resurrection
And witnessed the houris and the 'Paradise-of-Graces.'

And among them is he who became a praiser of the Supporters.
People always plunge into his honor [backbite him].

And among them is he who became a praiser using a tambourine,
Praises the conscience of the Disabled.
15 Men who have divorced night sleep
To them are the secrets of the Long Road.

Men whose power in the universe is evident
And swore not to abandon the meagre-ones.

Talk between you and me returns to
[the talk] between the Supporting Four.

And between the 'Aisawite,³ the camel of heavy loads'
Oh, Abu Farrag, your crescent turned to the right.

Our Sheikh, 'the camel of heavy loads,' stepped,
He became at the Well of Zamzam's edge [drinking].⁴

20 He says, "God, am I to live estranged [and] lonely,
While my paternal cousins in the universe are numerous?

"God, aid me with The Three,
My dear, esteemed paternal cousins

"Aid me with Al-Kilani and Al-Rifā'Al,
And the beloved of the Prophet, Sidi Ibraheem."

No sooner had he finished his prayer than they came to him.
Mounted on camel backs, traveling.

"Peace be upon the 'Camel of Heavy Loads'!"
A greeting that was cast, and they sat to the right.

25 And after the greeting they remained on the chairs;
And the Cup went around serving the comers.⁵

The Cup went around serving the Nation of Mohammed.
Health to the men who are faring well (salikin).

A little later Ibn-Ghazi is coming.
He came from the west riding a he-camel (hajīn).

He came with his heart unifying God.
On his right shoulder [there was] a silk banner.

With God's command the camel obeyed him.
On the ground it was almost like flying.

30 He said, "Axes, why do you sleep?
And be epicured with your sleep?

"It is he who has a free heart that sleeps the night,
[while] The Afflicted stay awake!"
"Here are the Afflicted, they do not sleep. They spend the night in drawing moans.

"Axes, here a woman appeared; Many an elevated man has she delivered to humiliation!

"Ten thousand; she has taken their Drinks and made them go back, dragged and afflicted with disaster.

35 "She is named Fatma, from the offspring of Birry. Oh Guide! The girl has been granted [plenty] by The Generous.

"He who goes to her and returns safely, becomes a sultan over all of us.

"There should be one who goes to the girl, and reigns over the Supporting-men."

They said, "The one who asked about her should be the one to go to her: Sidi Mohammad, the Stoic (lawindi) of the Pious."

He says, "Axis, I am the one who killed her brother, under the veil of the night, while they were asleep.

40 "He pretended to be my Aspirant, [while] in the middle of the ruins? He was heading ten armed slaves.

"It is sinful, Sleep, do not fall in love with my eyes. I am afraid of Bint-Birry."

They all gathered and said, "Oh, Disuqi, You-With-the-Eyes, Master (sidi) Ibraheem."

He says, "I have shown a miraculous manifestation (karamah) While I was still running water in the Unknown.

"In the Unknown my mother was pregnant with me. And she had a great deal of beauty.

45 "One day, she went out roaming in the wilderness To gather firewood to bake the dough.

"It happened that in the open, there was an adulterer Cursed Eblis whispered to (instigated) him over my mother.

"Cursed Eblis spurred him towards my mother He intended to corrupt the path of the pious one.

The Truth sent her a revelation. She cried, "Oh, Disuqi! Prevent the adulterer, Master Ibraheem!"
"I heard my mother while I was [still] in the loins of my father. While I was [still] in the Unknown, [still just] running water.

50 "The Justice created me as a 'ferocious lion';
    with fangs that were sharp.
    
    I snatched the adulterer between my teeth
    And flung him. He went to the country of the infidels.
    
    I protected my mother while I was [still] in my father's loins
    Men [nick-]named me Abu-Khaleel.
    
    "In short, I wouldn't go to Bint-Birry
    She might take my drink away, and I may return repentful."
    
    All of them gathered and said, "It is El-Kilani
    The Knight of Baghdad, the Head of the Forty." 9
    
    The Sheikh says, "I have shown a miraculous manifestation
    While I was in Baghdad, the rest of the pious.
    
    In Baghdad, I had an endeared ox
    When he turned [the Water-Wheel] it filled the free-water-
    stand (Sabeel).
    
    A lion from the deceptive World aggressed against it;
    And its [the lion's] neck was like that of a camel.
    
    Dear friends, he ate my ox;
    And he left my water-stand destroyed.
    
    All the people in the city doubted me
    And said 'The lion ate the ox of the fakir!'
    
    If he were [truly] a Sheikh, the lion wouldn't have eaten his ox
    And let his water-stand be ruined.
    
    'Let's go tear down and not[show] respect for his-shrine,
    neither with a saying, nor with celebrating a great birthday!'
    
    Do you blame me! I wasn't present!
    Three days I have been in the Kingdom-of-The-Generous.
    
    The first day I was at the One-Whose-Light Avalanched 10
    Witnessing, along with the Disabled.
    
    The second day I was with the Sultan, fighting.
    Slashing the necks of the disbelievers.
    
    The third day I returned to Baghdad, our home
    To find its gates closed."
"I meet the Marshall, complaining and weeping
The tears of the eyes were pouring down from him.

"I say to the Marshall, 'Do I see you crying?
Who in this Universe would be cruel to the Marshall?'

"He says, 'Paternal Uncle, if you were to know what happened to me
You would excuse me, by the Right-of-the-Pious!

"'A ferocious lion came to us during your absence;
with a neck more than the neck of a young camel.

70 "'Oh Kilani, it ate your ox,
and left your water stand in ruins.

"'If you have strength, enter the city
'If you have no strength, turn away while you still are at a [safe] distance.'

"I said, 'Marshall, Come! Rely on God.
'He who aims towards the Super-Guardian, never loses.'"

[Performer changes to descriptive style]

He strolled to the lion and brought it
From the woods; it came with him willingly.

He said, "Lion, what brought you to our country?
'Do you think the land is unattended?"

75 It answered, "I was humiliated by hunger, Kilani.
'Hunger was irritating me exceedingly.'"

"Forgive me, and I will get you another ox instead of it.
Ten oxen to run for you the water-stand."

He says, "Lion, I wouldn't accept a compensation!
It would be a shame among the Pious.

"You ate the ox, you carry the yoke in its place
Or else my spear will work on you!"

The lion said, "God has sentenced me,
'And He [is the one who passes] sentences on ferocious lions!"

80 The lion got up and attached himself to the water wheel.12
And carried the yoke turning it to the right.

Every midnight, it would fill the drinking vessels
And at the break of dawn, it would return home.
The Sheikh passes and says to him, "God help you! This will be regular [on you], for the rest of the years.

"If you were to die, lion, another lion should come instead For there are [plenty] of lions present now.

"The point of my talk is that I would not go to Bint-Birry. Lest she may take my Drink and I would return worn down!"

They gathered and said, "Rifâ'Ai! You, Sheikh-of-the-Brotherhoods from long ago."

Abu-El-'Ainain says, "I have manifested plenty With the lame One, with the broken right [leg].

"The first proof: I have put back together the broken animal. With God's permission I dressed it in silk.

"I spat in the well when its waters overflowed. It thundered like the large sea.

"The second proof, I put back together the pot after it had become broken sherds.

"But, Axes, I wouldn't go to Bint-Birry; I will get confused and the trip to her is long!"

[Here El-Sayyid speaks]

"Are you afraid to say 'Come Sayyid!'? You are its camel, you Fetcher-of-the-Captive."\(^13\)

He laughed and mounted; that Camel-of-Heavy-Loads He shook his comical cap (kaṭur) at them; it was high [on his head].\(^14\)

"Three Axes are scared of a Lass!! Is she an ogress that will devour the Supporters!?"

"With God's permission, I will go and reach her country. And I will become sultan over all of you.

"But, Axis, I need the mark of distinction over you For travelling her road and [my] returning successful."

El-Rifâ'Ai answered him first and said, "Whatever pleases you will be agreeable to us.

"Two kerats\(^15\) from my domain are coming to you And two kerats are coming to you from Sidi Ibraheem."
"And two kerats from the domain of El-Kilani are coming to you.
This would make six, Bringer-of-the-Captives.

"Here are six beside your [own] six
And half the universe has been assigned to you from ancient."

100 He says, "Tip! Your domains will not come to me.
I am [already] a sultan over you all

"But Axes, I want from you three;
"Three little things to be brought to me.

"The first thing, bring me a poor Sufi's mantle (dil').
'Light and clean but a young camel cannot stand up with it.

"The second thing bring me a dough-tray.
'Small, but to hold two whi巴斯 of dough. 16

"The third thing to bring me a high-conical-cap (tar$ur).
Three cubits in length on my head.

105 "And I, Axes, will bring a palm reed
From the Palm-tree which knelt to the Beloved."

Every Sheikh stretched out his hand toward one thing
They brought immediately three things in all.

He put on those and those.
He became a dervish [floating] on the flood of the Generous'.

He stepped, while his heart was unifying god.
He became penetrant from his door to the Window. 17

This is the claimer and his father and his mother.
And went around the House along with the right [hand] corner.

110 At 'Arafat, 18 Ibn-Ghazi met him;
The Cause for the conflict among the pious.

"Ibn-Ghazi, you owe a testimony.
'Is the country of Birry distant or close?"

He says, "Paternal uncle, by God, for you it is distant!
Between you and it, [there is] a period of years.

"Twelve years for he who walks diligently.
As for you, twenty; because your belly is huge!"

He said, "stop your talk, Ibn Ghazi!
'It wouldn't be distant for Those-Who-Are-Reigning.
"If I were to step, the universe wouldn't hold my foot. I shake the universe by unifying the Generous.

"I am El-Sayyid, by the Triple Yeminite [-oath] I am the destroyer of the homes of the Denyers.

"I have sworn never to step all my life. Except for [visiting] The-One-With-The-Glowing-Forehead.

"I brought back the Sharifah from the hands of the Christians I am El-Sayyid, the-Bringer-of-the-Captive.

"I brought back the Sharifah from our enemies I am the protector of the honor of the pious."

Abu Farrag wagged on his foot. He became descending in the Land of Birry.

He descended on her land in the middle of the night. He took over all the soldiers from her.

It is hopeful for he who has mentioned the Name and has the intention For this is a caller (hatif) who comes to those who are asleep

Bint-Birry heard; and [still] she slept! She saw El-Sayyid grabbing her throat [in a dream].

Of the wind, Abu-Farrag grasped out a handful. Seven flames of roaring fire.

He poured them on the body of the lass. Between the slips and the silky-valak (buttocks).

The lass sits up frightened and crying. Calling, "Oh, power and will of the Pious."

Her Deputy says to her, "May God's name be on you! You have disturbed the people while they are asleep!"

She said, "Deputy, take me and go outside; for the fire is catching in my body."

That Deputy took her and went outside. To find El-Sayyid leaning on his elbow at the door step.

She said, "Deputy, this is the one who disturbed my sleep. He horrified me with that conical-cap of his."

She said, "Deputy, go to that old man and ask him. May God will that the old man is astray!"
"If he speaks, I will understand his talk. 
If he does not, my paternal lineage are plenty."

Her deputy went to ask, "Oh, Sayyid." 
He found him a dumb heart, very still.

He says, "Oh, Mistress, this one whom I have interrogated 
seems to be a slave sent to us by the Generous."

She said, "Deputy, you don't know him! 
He is an old scabby-headed, a stud, full of tricks.

"Go slap him, twice or thrice. 
And slap him twice on his right cheek."

Her deputy went to slap you, Sayyid 
His arm was suspended while he was still far [from you].

He [the Deputy] says to him, "[How could] you suspend my arm 
While I and you are [co-] conspirators against her?"

"One night before you [came], the Prophet came to me [in a dream] 
And recommended you, Ahmad, plenty.

"And said, 'Your responsibility is the Camel-of-Heavy-Loads. 
'Tomorrow he will come to you here, estranged.'"

He says, "You dog, what have you done with the advice!" 
'Here you are, coming to strike me on my right cheek."

He says, "Paternal-uncle, by God, I didn't know you! 
'How many a cow [rustic vagabonds] passes by us!"

"But, Paternal-uncle, cure my arm 
For my arm is hurting me plenty."

He said, "Deputy, stretch your hand and your foot." 
Beside him, he became as docile as dough.

Abu-Farrag went with his hand over the arm 
By [the power of] He-Who-Resurrects-the-Bones-After-They-Have-Decayed.

Her deputy returned complaining and crying 
(Tricks and schemes conjured by the Deputy!)

Our lady said, "I see you crying! 
'And who in the universe would be cruel to the Deputy!'"

He says, "Mistress, crying because of your deeds. 
A beggar! And you tell me he is the Prince!"
"A beggar that you said 'Is the 'Aisawite,'

It turns out, our Lady, that you are very much of a simpleton."

150 She said, "Let us kill him and terminate his life-span.

And take his Sufi-mantle and his large conical cap!"

He says, "Mistress, the slaying of a soul is a sin!

The torture of the polytheists, Tomorrow, will be prolonged.

"Instead of killing him [let him] herd your camels

'Along with the rest of your slaves.

"Neither you will see him, nor he will see you.

When his sufi mantle wears out, the Generous will ease things up.

"When the sufi mantle wears out, another will come!

And in Egypt, conical caps are abundant."

155 She said, "Sheikh, who will appease him?

'I will accept whatever you say!"

[The Deputy returns to El-Sayyid]

He said, "Paternal uncle, would you herd the camels of Bint-Birry?"

He answered, "The Helpless have numerous conditions.

"Here I am a shepherd for the camels of Bint-Birry.

'I must fasten young foals for her."

She said, "Deputy, lead him to the path, lead him!

Perhaps this old man is one of those who are intelligent."

Her deputy went to guide the 'Aisawite

He found him knowledgeable of all the lands.

160 He said, "Deputy, get off my trail!

In the Unknown, I guide those who are lost!"

Abu-Farrag waggles with his foot,

He became in the midst of the herding camels.

A slave mounted on a he-camel, meets him.

An old slave with a handsome grey beard.

He pointed at the slave, he came to him from the wilderness

Kissed his hand, and stood guarding him.

He said, "Slave, come here, tell me your name!"

'What has the Lord-of-the-Universe called you?"
He said, "Paternal-uncle, Abdul-Khair, (Slave-of-Goodness) is my name, but in reality, I am Abdul-Raheem (the Slave-of-the-Compassionate)."

"Slave-of-Good, haven't you got companions, strong like you, and able."

He said, "Paternal-uncle, we are ten-hundreds just for herding the camels. We are not able to do it."

He says, "Slave, how many camels are there? If one thousand are shepherding them."

He says, "Paternal-uncle, you wouldn't know their number even if you were to read open records!"

"If you were to read the records at my mistresses' Seven sacks of paper all full of written records."

They were gone and came back and brought the records; to the Bringer-of-the-She-Captive and the he-Captive.

Here is El-Sayyid, he was well read and knowledgeable went into the beyond in knowledge (shatah), to a great extent.

The first record which the 'Aisawite opened He found it two thousands, Prayers are due the Beloved.

And another two thousand, that would satisfy the Nation-of-Mohammad And 90,000 that would satisfy the Enamoured-ones.

And 2,000 from one valley to another And 200,000 prayers for you, Abu-Ibraheem.

And 2,000 were up there, pregnant striding, just like the blow of breeze.

And 2,000 in an outer valley And 200,000 heading for the land of the Christians.

And 2,000 to carry stone And 2,000 of pure Indian stock.

Seven days along with eight nights One thousand after another, as brick makers count.

He said, "Slave, your camels are few I can herd them, all by myself."

The slave said, "Lie over something else! How many a lie by others that were never proven!"
"You fib and say that you will herd those by yourself
God would punish you; for your lie is too flagrant!"

He said, "Slave, I'll show you a wonder
Concerning these camels, while you are looking."

Abu-Farrag waived with the palm-reed
Over those camels, they came to him willingly.

185 Every camel kisses his hand and his foot,
And steps backward, another comes succumbed.

The informant stated: "Thirty thousand died
Because of the scramble to kiss the hand of the Prince."

The slave said to him, "Step behind a little.
You have killed the camels, and my day [will be truly] long.

"Oh! How long your time will be with Bint-Birry!
She might take your Drink and you would return humiliated."

He said, "Slave, do not fear over them!
With God's permission, all of them will stand [again]

190 There; El-Sayyid waved with the palm-reed
They stood up alive and roamed, all of them!

He said, "Slave, haven't you got a little morsel?
For hunger is irritating me a lot."

He answered him, "God's slave, be patient for a while
Noontime-prayer-cry brings plenty of baking.

"At noontime-prayer-cry, our dinner comes to us
Loaded over thirty loaded camels.

"Ten with bread and ten with water
And ten with aged onion.

195 After a while, the slaves served their dinner
And on top of the dinner they had slaughtered a young camel.

El-Sayyid lied-down, with his elbow on the ground
While his eyes were affixed on the fatta."

All of them said to him, "Get up. Eat with us.
Maybe the Blessing will yield plenty."

He said, "Slaves, have your dinner and get up
I am full, from the Generous!"
They swore by Him, Who-Guaranteed-the-Gazelle\textsuperscript{19} to join; with something even if it happened to be little.

200 "[Just] for you oath. I will join you for one morsel
And without it, I am already full!

"But slaves, make room for me
To hold ten [persons] lying down.

The informant states: "Thirty slaves got up until they
fitted him in with that huge belly [of his]."

It turned out that El-Sayyid wagged and came to them
Just like a Southern Egyptian boat fully loaded.

Abu-Farrag sat amongst the group
He scrunched up and sat, tersely.

205 He prayed, "God-of-Might, I ask you
By the Well-of-Zamzam [and] by the Prayers of Abraham!

"And [by] Moses over the mountain; My Lord is his conversant
That you would relieve the distress away from the Distressed!"

He opened his mouth; you may say [it is] a through-path
Larger than a moaque, with its walls fallen down.

[laughter]

He neither smacked his lips, nor chewed on it.
He did not stretch either, it went down tumbling in one lump.

Quickly, those slaves coiled back for him
And their appearance became very much reddish.

210 He said, "Slaves! Hurry, save me with some water!
For the morsel is scorched in my throat."

He says, "How can I stay with you, oh Sa'Aid?
May God provide you with an aid!

"Oh, Sa'Ad! Come speak to Gadalla!
Oh, Morgan! Escape while you are still away!

"Oh, Sh'Aban, this is a single morsel!"
What if he got hungry? He would devour us all!"

All this; a turn occurred from El-Sayyid.
To find all the slaves running away.
He said, "God's Omnipotence! Fasten them all, till the Sure-Day!" 20.

By God's permission, the earth held them They became piled up like sheep.

He said, "Slaves, why do you run away from me?"
They said, "Paternal-uncle, your talon is huge."

"Your deeds scared us, short-one.
You might swallow us; the young before the old."

"What is this, slaves! Haven't I eaten as much as a hundred!
When it comes to fatt my talon is great." 21

"If I were to encounter a nice fatta
'I would say, 'It is the Generous who mends the broken spirit."

"But, Oh slaves, mention the name of Allah
"You will find him Alive! Aloft! Glorious!"

They said, "We have lived in the wilderness
And do not know [anything] except about camels."

"I say 'Allah!' you answer 'Allah!' 22
"How sweet it is in the hearts of the chanter!"

The slaves answered; all of them mentioned [the name of] God
They [immediately] became seized by the Majesty.

Seven days along with eight nights
Everything left them except the 'mentioning' of [the name of] the Generous.

The eighth night, El-Sayyid was free to nurse his thoughts
And said, "The completion of good deeds is a virtue.

"Have we come [here] to fight Bint-Birry.
"Or to untangle [those] accepting slaves!"

He put his hand over the head of one of them
And said, "Wake up, Sheikh Abdul-Raheem.

"Wake up, slave, report to your mistress
'And tell her of what the Slave-of-the-Helper has done."

He replied, "Yes 'Siree'. The country of my mistress is crooked.
"Today I need to ride a camel."

He said, "Slave, it is not crooked for me
"I stretch out my hand from Tanta, I bring the captives[back]."
He put his hand on the slave's back and pushed him
He became standing in front of his mistress.

He found her commanding a government
A government that [can] break asunder the mighty iron.

When he saw her, he mumbled at her
He was thundering like a huge tower.

She said to him, "From where did this sainthood get to you! 23
'You left sound, and [now] you return siezed!"

She took his Drink before she would ask him
And she landed [her hand] over his cheeks, slapping

She said, "You slave, son-of-El-Galila 24
'Seven days [that] you are dizzy in the night.

"Neither did you carry provisions, ncr did you take water. 'While you are carrying away my camels."

He swore to her by Him-Who-Guaranteed-the Gazelle
"We haven't taken of your camels except a young one!"

"As we were roaming, a short man came to us
A short man with a huge belly."

She said, "Slave, tell me about his deeds.
Are they the deeds of sound [people], or trivial ones?"

"The first thing he caused your camels to die.
The Lord-of-the-Universe resurrected them for him.

"The second thing, he made your camels do zikr
And with the zikr, he erased the sadness.

"The third proof, he pushed me, I became in front of you.
This is the reason behind [the entire] story and the proof."

She said, "Slave, tell me about his attire
Are they new or decayed clothes?"

"Oh, my lady, if you were to see his Sufi mantle
'Light and nice [but] a full grown camel cannot stand up with it.

"Oh, my lady! If you were to see his conical cap
Three cubits in length on top of his head.

"Oh, my lady! If you were to see the [little] dough-tray
'Small, but holds two whibas of dough.
"In his hand [there is] a palm-reed unifying god. 25

250 "His feet are stone[-like] from staying up nights.
And from washing for prayers they are always circled.

"He has a forehead which resembles the full moon
And he has a mole on his right cheek.

"When he takes the mask off, his cheeks show.
"His descent goes back to the Prophet, whose forehead is
glimmery."

[Bint-Birry speaks]

I said, "He is the 'Aisawite!" They thought I was lying
"May God make your [always] advice fail, Deputy.

"Cavalry-Marshal! Beat the war drums.
"And gather ten thousand close friends, for fighting him."

255 She beat her drums; the lands responded.
All the Birry-Tribes came to her in arms.

They said to her, "For what reason is the drumming?
"Which tribes are rebelling against you?"

She said, "People, there are not tribes,
"We are going to fight a Poor man!

"It is a simple man named El-'Aisawi,
I've seen him in my dream grabbing my throat."

One said, "Bint-Birry, rest
I will bring him, strapped [and] shackled in bonds."

260 She said, "People! Go and leave me!
I might sell you off, young and old.

And she said, "Deputy! Saddle a riding animal
And put on the golden reins.

The Horse-Marshall prepared the veil,
And seven wild [birry] poisoned spears.

Don't forget to get my shield and my brethren
And bring two cloaks [bishts] of mighty iron.

But, Deputy, prepare me my [feministic] spears.
With them I will capture the minds of the pious.
265 Go, Deputy, bring me my liquor
Nine pure pounds in weight."

She rode ahead, spear-heading [her army] for the battle with 'Aisawite;
the dust of the horses is uproaring storms.

Two hundred banners [flap like a] stream, while the girl is speeding [ahead].
Two hundred messengers traveling in front of them.

She traveled with the soldiers for seven days.
The morning of the ninth day, she was at the Prince's.

When she saw him, she stirred and stormed.
He halfway reclined, in the middle of the road.

270 He took off his Sufi-mantle and kept searching it. ‘As if the dog hasn’t eaten any of his dough.’

She said, "A magician! What brought you [here]?"
A slave said, "He is a fat flea."

She said, "Lice, go get the 'Aisawite!"
They became on top of him; like a barley threshing-ground.

With God's command, the lice mounted all over him.
For it turned out that the lass was one of those who have [supernatural] means.

"Lass, lice! This, is not that clever.
I have ants [to work] against it, in floating abundance."

275 Ants were the armies of El-Sayyid Ahmad.
Seven seas came to him flowing.

He said, "Ants, go after the lice and drag it!"
"Don't let even a flea escape!"

Thirty ants would drag one louse
Ten went for nothing, and ten are buried.

The leader of the ants was running on the conical-cap.
Saying, "My disgrace is great with this Prince!"

It says, "What a disgrace with you, Sayyid.
"I've run hard, but did not attain much!"

280 In a wink of an eye the 'Aisawite was [fully] cleansed.
Even of lice which was on him from before.
She said, "Old Man! Mount on, and fight. This is the first of your trying nights."

He says, "Lass, bring out whatever occurs to you. God loves the Patient, indeed!"

The first spear, that she thrusts at you, Sayyid, he intercepted between the luminous palms of his hands.

The second spear and the third spear, you sustain them. You 'mend the tilting sails.'

The fourth spear, and here is the fifth spear:
You send free the innocent who are in prisons.

The sixth spear, you sustain with might
in the mantle, it became like a stitched-in needle.

There, the mantle says, "Get with it!
Lest she might beat you, then; Your day will be long."

"Here you are, my mantle, if you were to tire-out of her [attacks]
"I will complain about you to the Lord-of-the Universe."

The seventh spear that Bint-Birry throws
He said to it, "Go to my shrine, as a visitor!"

Now it is there, inside his shrine,
and every year it receives a silk banner.

She says, "Oh, people. What stamina he has got!
Seven spears, that have not hit!

"But, by God, I'll capture you with my beauty.
And I'll take your Drink and you will return repentful."

[With] the first veil that Bint-Birry removed
A veil for him came down from the Generous.

And the second veil; and here is the third veil that she removes
The details of the two shoulders became visible.

And the fourth veil, and this is the fifth veil that she removes
(A present to the daughter of Zayn Al-'Abideen.)

The sixth veil, and this is a seventh veil that she removes.
She became totally exposed, much of her is revealed.
Then she covered her face, and said,  
"Oh, my disgrace with this Prince!"

"Oh, what a disgrace of mine with you, Sayyid.  
Call your grandfather, the Seal-of-Messengers." 27

She said, "Oh, Sheikh, look at my height;  
"A column of light, you, Captive-Bringer.

300 "But, oh Sheikh, regard the glances of my eyes;  
they can trap the roaming lions [at a distance].

"Get up and look at the eyes and eyebrows;  
"Gazelle's eyes, you Captive-Bringer.

"But, oh Sheikh, get up and look at my breasts;  
"ripe pomegranates, [still] attached to their vine.

"Come on, Sheikh, let us enjoy beauty.  
My hair is like camel saddle-ropes hanging down loose off my back.

"Why don't you come, Sheikh, and enjoy beauty;  
"and enjoy these slumbering eyes [of mine]."

305 He said, "My lady, why don't you hide your beauty?  
I am the supporter of the powerful men.

"I have a heart that's made out of stone  
"Which does not soften except by my prayers upon 'The Beautiful-one'."  28

She said, "Oh, People-of-Birry, come to my aid,  
"for this Sheikh is irritating me to an extreme!"

No sooner had she finished her say than came to her  
her men and her cavalry in a multitude.

He says, "My lady, I also have supporters.  
It is for my own door that the guide set out."

310 Abu-Farrag[with] his face to his sleeve  
Called upon the Pious-Men.

The Sheikh called upon, People-of-the-House, they came to him.  
All the family of the House-of-Prophecy [are] present.

From Mecca eighty thousand Sayyids  
Green turbans who crossed to the right.
'Aali, The Charger [mounted] on the Maymoon, came to him; and here is El-Bura'AI came to him with forty.

Abu El-'Abbas from Tayef came to him. And here is the Beloved came walking in forty.

315 A lady called, Al-Karimah came to him [She is] the Saver-of-the-Youth-who-follow-the-path.

The Axis came from the Door of Zwailah with his catapults followed by forty.

And a flyer that drops boulders came to him. And the beasts of the land came to him willingly.

[For] seven days, the battle is raging on. And here is El-Sayyid lying down leaning on his elbow.

Abu-El-'Ainain said to him, "Get up and fight! "By God, you instigated it [all]; 'your day is long'."

320 "Oh, Abu-El-'Ainain, I'll show you wonders With the whole army of Bint-Birry.

Then El-Sayyid waved with his palm-reed. It charged against the great army.

A solitary palm-reed that states God's unity; rendered them, all, piled up like sheep.

The lass intending to flee with them. El-Sayyid quickly got hold of her reins.

And said, "Oh, earth, split up and hold her." She and her horse became fastened to the earth.

325 With God's permission, the earth got hold of her. She couldn't turn, neither to the left nor to the right.

The Sheikh started reprimanding Bint-Birry [I wonder] 'over the cursed Time when it tilts'.

She said, "Oh, Time, trust should not be placed in you! You make the nights of good life and power elapse.

"The clothes of luxury wore out and we didn't feel it. The attirement of grief are upon us now!

"How could it be, girl, that you instigated your deputy to slap me over my right cheek?"
330 "How could you, girl, make me herd your camels, while I am El-Sayyid, the safety for those who are afraid. How could you let all [your] mind, slip away and escape this robust body."

She replied, "By God, Paternal-uncle, I did not recognize you. 'How many a poor person passes by us!"

She said, "By God, Paternal-uncle, take me as your legitimate-one. And marry me, you Bringer-of-the-Captives."

He wondered, "Their torment is written at my Lord's: [Girl], your salvation is determined by The-Glorious.

335 He asked, "Girl, do you have a round mortar? Seven Syrian pounds by calculated-weight.

"I'll bring the mortar and set it on the palm of your hand, and spit into it, [just] a little spittle.

If you sustain my spit, I will take you as a legitimate one. Then there will be a high and great position for you."

She answered, "The mortar is far away, how can I get it? "It's hung down, inside the palace."

"He says, "Girl, it's not far for me! "Even if it were in the clouds; my reach is long."

340 He stretched out his arm at that mortar and got it. He got the mortar while [all] the people were present.

He put the mortar on the palm of the lass. He spit in the mortar a small spittle.

[It] penetrated the mortar along with the palm of the lass. To the seventh earth his spittle went down.

Immediately the girl jumped, screaming And her mind became absent from her.

He said, "Girl [you could not sustain] even a spittle. "How can you be the legitimate-one for the Prince!"

345 Abu-Farrag signaled to the crowd; All of them became like a huge [a saint's birthday] festival.

He said, "Girl, give back to those their Drinks; Otherwise I will send you to the most nether.
"To every Sheikh, give what he deserves."
With God's permission, all of them returned loaded.

The People-of-the-House said, "Ah, Sayyid! Now you are able. Forgive, you, the One-Who-Flings-The-Long-Reach.

"For the sake of Fatma, the Daughter-of-the-Tuhamite, Forgive Fatma for the sake of The Beloved.
350 "For the sake of the Lady, be generous to Bint-Birry, for these names are dear to us.

Abu-Farrag forgave her and let her go. She became to the 'Aisawite a follower.

He administered the oath to her [and her men], they became Ahmadiyya, after the path of the 'Aisawite, they follow.

He flung her to Hejaz where her Shrine is and said to her "You'll become the guide for the lost"

At the end of my say, "Pray upon the Tuhamite Our Chosen Prophet, the One-Who-Has-The-Glowing-Forehead."

355 May God's prayers be upon him in every second. God's prayers upon Taha, the Honest.
NOTES

1. Zayn Al-'Abideen was the sole survivor of Prophet Mohammad's descendants. Several "saints", including el-Sayyid, trace their descent to this personage.

2. The Supporting Men are the four Arch-Saints, who are believed to literally carry the world.

3. El-Badawi is believed to be associated with Jesus Christ ('Aisa) and to derive some of his knowledge and powers from him.

4. The Zamzam well is a holy well in the great mosque in Mecca.

5. In Sufi parlance, the 'Cup' (Kās) usually signifies a source of divine ecstasy, 'heavenly liquor,' 'a state of bliss'.

6. Lawindi refers jocularity to a talkative smart aleck.

7. An Aspirant (or novice) is a beginner or a novice in Sufi brotherhood organizations.

8. The "running water in the Unknown" is a euphemism for a sperm.

9. "Head of the Forty" is a medieval military term for the commander of a regiment of forty men.

10. The One-Whose-Light-Avalanched is the prophet Mohammad.

11. A marshall (nāqeeb) is a person with a considerably high rank in Sufi brotherhood organizations.

12. Type 1910, The Bear (Wolf) Harnessed (motif X1216.1)

13. "Fetcher-of-the Captive" refers to one of el-Sayyid's miraculous manifestations, in which he is believed to have brought captives from Europe.

14. A tartūr is a fool's cap, one of the comical aspects of el-Sayyid's attire.

15. A Kerat is 1/24 of an acre (175.35 square meters).

16. A whiba is a dry measure.

17. "Window" here refers to the window of Prophet Mohammad's shrine.

18. Arafat is a holy mountain in Hejaz.
19. This epithet refers to a religious legend in which Prophet Muhammad interceded on behalf of a deer. This event is a subject for another religious ballad.

20. The "Sure-Day" is the day of resurrection or the day of the end of the world.

21. Fatt or fatta is a typical treat served on religious celebrations. It is prepared from crisped bread soaked in broth topped with rice and meat.

22. This is the basic form for dhikr (zikr), a folk religious dancing chant.

23. The reference here is to the dissociative mental state believed to be produced by dhikr.

24. Here the slave is being called after his mother, a common practice which is sometimes attributed to matriarchal descent.

25. This statement may be taken to mean either that it was a single palm-reed or that it was literally stating that God is one.

26. This statement refers to the irritation that results from animals eating the unbaked bread left to rise outside peasants' homes.

27. The reference here is to the belief that Prophet Mohammad is the final messenger sent by God after Moses and Jesus Christ.

28. 'The Beautiful-One' denotes Prophet Mohammad.

29. The Door of Zwailah is one of the gateways to the old city of Cairo. One of the Arch-Saints is believed to reside near it.

30. The performer used the word "tayyara" which means an airplane. However, a young listener protested: "What is that? They didn't have airplanes at that time." Slightly irritated, the performer explained, "Something that flies, and that's all!"

31. "Time" refers to fate. In this context, Time does not have supernatural connotations; it merely denotes "luck."

32. Fatma here refers to the daughter of Prophet Mohammad; 'The-Tuhanite' refers to Prophet Mohammad himself (i.e. The Person who comes from the coastal plain in Hejaz).
33. "Lady" refers to Zaynab (Zainab), the daughter of the daughter of Prophet Mohammad.

34. "Ahmadiyya" is the title of the Sufi brotherhood named after el-Sayyid Ahmad el-Badawi. Their distinguishing garb is a red turban.