

A STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE POETICS OF ARABIC QAṢĪDAH: AN
ETHNOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF THREE QAṢĪDAHS ON COLONIAL CONQUEST OF AFRICA

BY AL-ḤĀJJ 'UMAR B. ABĪ BAKR B. 'UTHMĀN KRACHI (1858-1934)

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I dedicate this thesis to
John Henry Hanson and his wife Amie
Who are the architects of this achievement

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This study examines three poems composed by a West African Muslim scholar known by the name Alḥājj 'Umar b. Abī Bakr b. 'Uthmān Krachi (1858 – 1934). He was born in the Northern Nigerian city of Kano where he completed his education. He then settled in the mid-Volta region of present-day Ghana to teach, write and serve as community leader. This moment coincided with intensive colonial invasions into the region and Alḥājj 'Umar viewed it all with mixed feelings of presentiment and hope. Within a period of seven years, he composed the three poems which came to be known as his “colonial poems” to give account of the historical clashes between the European forces and Africans that culminated into the official establishment of colonial administration across the region. The first two poems were composed in Arabic in 1899 and 1900 respectively, while the last one was composed in 1907 in Hausa Ajami (the native language of the poet).

The three poetic narratives are considered from a structural-functional analytic perspective derived from the theoretical formulations of van Gennep and Victor Turner regarding the ritual transformational tripartite process of the Rite of Passage. Following Professor Suzanne Stetkevych's pioneering study of the Arabic qaṣīdah, 'Umar's qaṣīdahs have been examined as representing the trajectory of a life-changing ritual transformation in the poet's world view (as well as Africa generally) motivated by the European colonial invasion of Africa from 1884 to around 1910. The tripartite structures of the poems (the

nasīb or prelude, the *rahīl* or journey and the *ghard* or closure) are analyzed on the basis of the tripartite structure of the rite of passage: *pre-liminal/separation*, *liminal/margin*, *post-liminal/re-aggregation* that correspond to the symbolic ritual process of the poet's psychological transformation.

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Professor Salman Hassan Al-Ani PhD

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A Note on the Transliteration

I have followed the Library of Congress system.

Note on Translation

All translations from Arabic to English are my own, except where otherwise mentioned.

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Times are upset, we see, and nations rise
To strength and greatness, others fail and fall.
Troy once was great in wealth and men and gave
For ten long years her lifeblood; humbled now
She shows her ancient ruins, for her riches
Only the broken tombs of ancestors.
(Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 15.420-5)¹

Chapter I

1. Introduction

1.1 Historical Background

This study examines the poetic reactions of 'Umar b. 'Uthman b. Abī Bakr Karchi (1858-1934) to European colonial occupation of Africa. A native of Nigeria, 'Umar settled in the northern mid-Voltaic Gold Coast (now Ghana) town of Salaga (famously known as the slave market center) at around the beginning of the colonial campaigns. By 1899 when the first of these poems was composed, the area had not yet come under full colonial administrative control. Most of the surrounding regions (south, north, east and west), however, had either been already occupied or were under colonial attack. The campaign had suscitated a general disintegration of local territorial dominions and spread fear and premonition in the heart of the populace. As the conquest progressed, the capability of colonial force became apparent to many observers, and consternation turned into despair and pessimism. It was this general mood of anguish and foreboding that had inspired the composition of 'Umar's three qaṣīdahs within an interval of four years to immortalize these historic moments. It would, however, be more accurate to say that 'Umar's poems represent a single story threefold told. This is

¹ Quotation extracted from: <http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/silver/frame.cgi?ovid.influ> (accessed 8/9/2014).

because they differ little in theme, but only in style and detail of rendition. The first of these was composed around 1899, and mainly catalogues major towns and ethnicities that have fallen or were in the process of falling under colonial attack. It ends on a personal note where the poet reveals the state of emotional crisis through which he was going. The second poem is longer and more detailed than the first and contains an additional list of towns conquered and occupied, as well as anecdotes of encounters between natives and colonial forces. While both poems were composed in the same Arabic medium, 'Umar decided to compose the last poem in Hausa Ajami. The theme remains the same but the narration becomes more localized and focused on Hausa regions of Northern Nigeria that constituted his ancestral home. This double shift in medium and focus is in a way an appropriate closure for 'Umar's narrative.

All three poems evolve around the same motif of colonial invasion that the poet situates within an archetypal, eternal religious clash between Islam and Christianity. Islam had existed on the continent of Africa for more than ten centuries² before the advent of European colonialism. By the nineteenth century most of the Sahel belt of West Africa was inhabited by majority Muslims. Indeed, from the beginning of the nineteenth century to close to the onset of colonial campaign, there were series of jihadist crusades that arose in the region threatening to encompass the entire territory from north to south.³ 'Umar (like most staunch believers at the time) considers this region a natural extension of northern Islamic lands forming an integral part of *dār al-Islam*. Discussing the eighteenth and nineteenth jihad movements in West Africa, Hanson (1996, 1) states that:

They used patterns and formulas which had been followed throughout Islamic history and by their success they inscribed the *Bilād al-Sudān*, the “land of the

² Historians have dated the beginning of Islamic infiltration into the territories south of the Sahara, known by Arab geographers and chroniclers as *Bilād al-Sudan*, around the 9th century.

³ cf. Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels ed., *History of Islam in Africa*, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2000).

blacks” in the parlance of the Arab geographers, within the *Dār al-Islām*, the “realm of Islam”.

It is this theme of “clash of civilizations,” if you wish to call it, that pervades Umar’s entire narrative account. On one hand he is filled with fear and anxiety at the pending assault on Muslims and their lands; on the other hand he remains hopeful that Allah would not allow the campaign to succeed. The poems reveal a progressive psychological evolution of ‘Umar’s personality as he grows to comprehend the significance of European invasion in Africa. He tries to interpret the event within an Islamic historical perspective. “Surely,” he might be thinking, “it was something that has been willed by God,” and it is only in relation to the teachings of Islam that it could be comprehended and evaluated. Thus we see a persisting reference to Quranic exegesis. This, however, does not preclude our own evaluation of the poems as a colonial text documenting that historical instance of encounter between Europeans and Africans. This is more apparent in the narrative of the third poem, where we can discern a shift in his attitude from a complete religious view to a more realistic, philosophical mindset. The catastrophe after all was not a misfortune, he seems to be cogitating. He points to the positive changes effected by European colonial administration with some admiration and commendation.

The setting of the narration covers most of the region of North and West Africa. These areas were known by Europeans long before the beginning of their 19th century colonial campaigns. It was the historical source of gold that fed the European and Islamic worlds since the seventh century (and even before), as well as the principal angle in the infamous triangle of the slave trade. Furthermore, European explorers had for centuries scouted its coastal regions on reconnaissance missions and established forts and castles along them. When the scramble for Africa took off, the region was contested mainly by Britain, Germany

and France. France had managed to ward off competition from the north and so was able to establish permanent dominion over the northern lands including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Mauritania; and expanded further south to the adjacent territories of the Sahel region of Mali, Senegal, Guinea, Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Niger and Chad. It was over the southern coastal lands that the European states locked horns. Britain was able to establish authority over Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Gambia; France over Dahomey (now Benin) and Ivory Coast; and Germany occupied Togoland and Cameroon. The territory that forms the focal point of 'Umar's narrative (in the Mid-Volta) ironically became the final contentious spot between these colonial powers. The British and the Germans then resolved in keeping France away from the territory⁴ by deciding to declare the area a neutral zone. Thus ensued maneuvers and counter-maneuvers between these powers and between them and Africans. It is the account of these encounters between Europeans, on one hand, and Africans, on the other, that 'Umar captures in his historic narrative. We must, however, note, in passing, his ambiguous use of *Naṣārā* through the narration to designate all the Europeans without distinction. He views them all as just Christians, either because he was not aware of the political distinction between them, or he was considering them as of one race (white) in contrast to Africans; or was he simply making a religious statement? This last view (which I consider more probable) makes it important for us to understand the Islamic factor in this colonial moment of Africa's conquest.

1.2 Colonialism and the Islamic Factor

'Umar's poems are pervaded by a presentiment of imminent "calamity" precipitated by European descent upon Africa. As a Muslim he interprets it as *balā'* (retribution) that God is

⁴ Cf. Holger Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism: Muslims, the State, and Society in Ghana from the Precolonial to the Postcolonial Era* (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2008).

wont to bring down upon believers, to test their faith or rouse the unmindful from moral slumber. In fact he grounds the whole occurrence within a prevalent theological teleology deriving from Quranic historical narratives of confrontation between good and evil, between God's sanctioned way (*ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) and its nemesis *kufṛ* (disbelief). Needless to say, Islam and Christianity had always stood as contenders for spiritual legitimacy, and most important of all for power and political dominion in the world at large. From its onset, Islam had emerged from the Arabian Peninsula with avowed militancy, after establishing full authority across the land. Soon afterwards, it confronted the two extant powerful dominions beyond, represented by the Christian realm and Zoroastrian realm. One after the other, the ancient empires of Persia and Byzantine lost territories to this new formidable adversary. Thenceforth, a bipolar Islamic *Weltschauung* was constructed (within Muslim theo-politics) distinguishing between *dar al-Islam* or the Islamic abode and *dār al-Ḥarb*, the abode of war. Subsequently, every territory not immediately ruled by Muslims came to be considered inimical territory and under imminent threat of war. By the turn of a century of its emergence as theocracy, Islam came to dominate vast territories (wrestled from both Byzantium and Zoroastrian Persia) spanning from Spain in the West to the Indus in the East.⁵ Conflicts thenceforth between Muslim east and Christian west became multiplied and permeated every aspect of social, cultural and economic life of people. From that moment, too, a relentless antagonism characterized relationships between the realms of Islam, on one hand, and Christianity, on the other. The situation has persevered for over fourteen centuries without any likelihood of abating.

⁵ Cf. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994); Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), - *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Random House, 2003).

By the Medieval period when Europe became fully converted to Christianity, the polarization between east and west was fully established. The success of Islam's wave of conquest through the Middle Ages and Renaissance was perceived in Europe as a serious challenge to Christendom. The response was a full attack on Islam, militarily, culturally and religiously through what Said has described as the West's Oriental project. According to Said (1994, 59 – 60),

Not for nothing did Islam come to symbolize terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians. For Europe Islam was a lasting trauma. Until the end of the seventeenth century "the Ottoman peril" lurked alongside Europe to represent for the whole of Christian civilization a constant danger, and in time European civilization incorporated that peril and its lore, its great events, figures, virtues and vices as something woven into the fabric of life.

And throughout the Middle Ages up to the eighteenth century the European mindset was persistently antagonized to view Islam as the arch enemy standing in its way of progress and civilization. And this was the period, according to Hichem Djait when "the Western mind ... in its thinking about Islam, [became] ... essentially steeped in hostility."⁶ By the 19th century clashes between the two realms were numerous and intermittent. Since the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire, centered in Istanbul, Turkey, came to represent the political axis of *dār al-Islam* as Christian Europe was unified in a politico-religious empire pivoting around Rome. The age of Enlightenment and industrial advancement had by this time contributed in making Europe the new world power. When it embarked upon the "scramble" over Africa's lands, *dār al-Islam* (symbolically centered in Turkey) was in decline and had become "the sick man of Europe"⁷ after losing most of its territories and becoming indebted to it. Understanding

⁶ Hichem Djait, *Europe and Islam*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 11.

⁷ The term is attributed to Tsar Nicholas I (1796 – 1855) of Russia, in reference to the declining power of the Ottoman Empire before the rising power European states, as it lost territories and was heavily indebted to them.

this historical political scenario is important if we are to place 'Umar's reaction (which also reflects the reactions of the African Muslim *'umma* at large) within its proper perspectives.

There is no denying the fact that Muslim sovereign presence in Africa (both north and south of the Sahara) was considerable before the 19th century, and the *umma* was well aware of its religious as well as geo-political unity.⁸ Looking back at the historical events of Europe's colonial invasion, it leaves no doubt in one's mind that Europe was also fully aware of this Muslim geo-political presence and took measures to surmount its threat and opposition. Europe's purpose of colonizing Africa, overtly expressed as civilizing mission, but also covertly developed as imperial and colonial expansion, was not devoid of Christian influence. The arrival of Christian Europe in Africa was therefore bound to arouse concern among African Muslim communities as Europeans, in their turn, approached them with a measure of apprehension. Naturally, these concerns generated uncertainties, mutual mistrust and apprehensiveness from both sides considering the long historical ill will that has characterized Christian-Islam relationship. From the Muslims' point of view, the encounter with Europeans was an invasion and attack on *dār al-Islam*. From everywhere, therefore, Muslim resistance was inevitable and among the fiercest that Europeans had to confront. Europe's colonial campaigns coincided as we have pointed out with the surge of jihad campaigns, especially in West Africa. At the same time it also inspired a revival of

⁸ Cf. S. V. R. Nasr, for instance, points out that "Islam has long been important to Muslim politics. It has played a role in the struggles for liberation from colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. In various stages of the colonial era, Islamic forces, thinkers, and political leaders have played an important part in shaping Muslim politics." "European Colonialism and the Emergence of Modern Muslim States." In *The Oxford History of Islam*. Ed. John L. Esposito. *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*. 10-Aug-2014. <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/book/islam-9780195107999/islam-9780195107999-chapter-13>; see also John Hanson and David Robinson, *After the Jihad: The Reign of Aḥmad al-Kabīr in the Western Sudan* (East Lansing: Michigan University Press, 1991).

Mahdism.⁹ From North Africa to West Africa and the Sudan, Mahdi claimants¹⁰ soon emerged to confront what they conceived of as harbingers of *Masīḥ al-Dajjāl*¹¹ or the anti-Messiah. Muslim general response to colonialism was thus confrontational and many of these confrontations are the subject of Umar’s poetic narrative.

1.3 Tradition of Arabic Learning and the *Qaṣīdah* Appropriation in West Africa

Umar’s poetic works were composed mainly in the classical Arabic idiom that was introduced in southern Saharan with Islam from around the 11th century. Arabic thenceforth spread to become one of the most widely used scripts across Africa (for many generations) before colonial occupation. It served as the sacred religious language of Islam as well as representing the bond that culturally binds the *umma* into a community of common destiny. But the Arabic language in pre-colonial Africa symbolized more than this. It was the medium of commercial transactions, historic recordings, court proceedings, source of talismanic power and the medium of translating the foreign visitors’ purpose into the local.¹² In a way Arabic was embraced by all Africans, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It was the language

⁹ Muslim eschatological term referring to a prophesized redeemer who would appear at the end of time. He would join forces with Isa (Jesus) and together they would fight and defeat the *Masīḥ al-Dajjāl* (False messiah) and re-establish Islamic justice on earth.

¹⁰ Manifestations of Mahdi claimants have occurred several times in Muslim history. In respect to Africa, there had been claimants as early as the 12th century from the Maghrib. And according to Azhar Nizar “The founder of the Almohad reform movement in the twelfth century, Muhammad ibn Tumart (d. 1130), also claimed to be the Mahdi [,] with descent from the Caliph `Ali. In particular, the arrival of the thirteenth Islamic century (1785-1883 CE), which had long been expected as a time of great messianic importance, increased Mahdist belief. During that period at least three leaders of reform movements in West Africa-Shaykh Usuman bin Fodio of Sokoto, Shaykh Ahmadu Bari of Masina and al-Hajj `Umar Tal of the Tukolor empire-exploited Mahdist tendencies to launch their jihads. Expectations of the Mahdi’s arrival from the east attracted waves of West African emigrants to the Nile and facilitated the rise and success of the Sudanese Mahdi Muhammad Ahmad (d. 1885). [See the biographies of Dan Fodio and `Umar Tal.] Several Mahdis meanwhile arose in Egypt, leading uprisings against both French occupation and Egyptian government rule. By the end of the 19th century, Mahdist revolts against European imperialism were almost commonplace, occurring for example in India, Algeria, Senegal, Ghana, and Nigeria.” (<http://islamicus.org/mahdi/>; accessed 7/23/2014).

¹¹ See note 9.

¹² Europeans had made good use of this during their campaigns by using Muslim clerics as interpreters of their message to African natives.

Europeans employed in transmitting their messages and orders to natives through interpreters. Hunwick justifiably described it as the “Latin of Africa.”¹³ For just as Latin served to linguistically bind the diverse European communities into a common cultural body, during the Middle ages and Renaissance, Arabic came to represent the linguistic link that bridged Africa’s pre-colonial multicultural divide. It was extensively used, taught and learned principally as the medium of religious instruction in various academic centers located, especially, within the West Africa region.

Within this region Islamic and Arabic scholarship developed to high levels of international recognition. It was in part owing to the devotion and religious zeal, as well as great efforts expended by distinguished historical kings¹⁴ and scholars that Arabic learning had thrived in the many famous centers and mosques located across the region. Among these we can mention Timbuktu and Gao (in Mali), Gazargamu (in Borno), Kano, Sokoto, Katsina (in Nigeria) and Bonduku (in Ivory Coast) besides the numerous mosques, huts and compounds that served as classrooms spread throughout the territory. A network of routes connected Islamic centers of learning situated in North Africa, Egypt, Iraq, the Hijaz and the Sudan with centers within this region. The cities of Shinguitti, Fez, Khairuwan, in the north, the Azhar University in Cairo and Mecca and Medina in the Hijza were constantly frequented by students as well as scholars from the region for training and study. Over time a vibrant Arabic scholarly tradition developed in the region whose achievements were recognized and highly respected throughout the contemporary Islamic world. The taught curricula in these centers remained the same across the Muslim world; it was predominantly oriented towards transmitting Islamic ethics and religious sciences. All subjects (which included besides the

¹³ John O. Hunwick, “West Africa and the Arabic Language”, (*Sudanic Africa* 15 (2004)), 133.

¹⁴ Mensah Musa (1280 - 1337), Alhaj Askia Muhammad Toure (1442 – 1538).

purely religious sciences, others such as Arabic language, *ṣarf*, poetry, *maqāmah* and *ḥisāb*)¹⁵ were taught with the express goal of fostering a comprehensive understanding and application of religious ethics to the life of the Muslim.

The literary production of scholars in West Africa alone (before colonialism) is immense.¹⁶ Unfortunately much of it has been lost for lack of printing and effective system of preservation. A clear idea of its scope, however, can be deduced from thousands of extant manuscripts collected and deposited in libraries and centers of documentation across the world. Indeed, Africa's manuscript project has become an issue of urgency that has preoccupied the minds of researchers and politicians alike from the time the continent acquired political independence. It was inspired partly by an endeavor to prove a point and debunk claims formulated and disseminated by Europe about Africa's ahistoricity. The intellectual importance of this literature has, for a long time, been neglected due to assumptions of its insignificance. It is only recently that attention is being drawn to them again as scholars begin to discern the significant revelation they might provide in understanding the discursive context of the colonial encounter.

My main interest in this regard is the desire to acknowledge not only the existence of a written literature in Arabic in provenance of Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, but specifically and crucially the existence of an important poetic corpus that is worth the attention of esthetic as well as scientific research. 'Umar's poetic works form part of this large important corpus that has long remained unexamined. Historical circumstances have colluded in denying this literature similar recognition accorded other literatures (although comparatively

¹⁵ See Hunwick, 1999; Stewart, 1994; Kane, 2008; among others.

¹⁶ See Hunwick, 1999; Kane, 2008.

of less duration) produced in non-African languages.¹⁷ This lack of attention derives, I believe, from the actions of the very mindset the poems in this study meant to decry. This mindset professes in part that there was no “literature” in Africa prior to European colonization. There was only orature, which is even relegated to lower levels of primitive creativity worthy only of ethnographers’ curiosity. On this point, much anon...

In view of this research’s focus on poetic works composed by a Sub-Saharan poet, I deem it important to describe as briefly as possible the nature and scope of poetic production in Arabic within that region of the African continent lying south of the Sahara. It goes without saying that all human communities possess the innate disposition of esthetic poetic verbal expression in various forms. The difference is mainly in the verbal medium employed to express it. That is why we are able to translate the tenor of poetic expressions from one linguistic medium to another with success (even if of limited measure). It is also true to say that every original poetic expression derives its essence essentially from the culture that inspired it. This is not to deny the specific rhetoric effects conveyed exclusively by elements of a particular language that cannot be conveyed by any other. Africans had expressed themselves poetically before any external motivation could influence them to it. Because, as Vico explained in his *Scienza Nuova*, the first form of human emotional expression was poetry which “laid the foundation of pagan civilization, which in turn was the sole source of all the arts” (94). When they acquired the usage of languages other than their own, it was not strange that they would express themselves poetically also through it. This is especially true in the case of Arabic whose paramount artistic expression was poetry.

Among the Arabs poetry composition is highly valued. It is described as their *diwān* (literary record). It represents their esthetic expression par excellence, the unique literary

¹⁷ Especially in French, English and Lusophone

genre that dominated their entire historical existence (from *Jāhiliyya* to modern times). May be it was rivalled later only by the Quran. Indeed, even in the modern era, nothing moves the Arab to ecstatic heights more than the words of a well-crafted qaṣīdah. Among the peculiarities of Arab culture and identity that Islam transmitted to converted nations was this Arab penchant for poetry. So skill in poetic knowledge and its composition is much revered among Muslim people, Arab and non-Arab alike. Regarding the practice in relation to the West African region, Hunwick (1996, 83) notes that “West Africans have probably been composing poetry almost as long as they have been using Arabic as a literary language, and that is a long time.” He further remarks that “The tradition of writing poetry in West Africa, and in particular praise poetry, has continued over the centuries...” The skill of appreciating poetry and composing it developed among West African Muslim literati in Arabic through patient and enduring study of the Arabic poetic library, especially its classical corpus. No effort is spared by ambitious students in memorizing this classical poetic lexicon and emulating it. Hunwick remarks that “The ability to compose Arabic verse came to be regarded as the hallmark of the scholar” among West African literati (85).

Indeed the classical form of Arabic poetry was that part of the poetic corpus that served as essential foundation for the study of the Islamic sciences of Quran and its exegeses, especially across the non-Arab Muslim lands. And the distinguishing feature of this poetry is the mono-rhymed qaṣīdah, a unique genre consisting of fixed sets of formalistic structure, style, conventions and lexicon. The qaṣīdah has had a deep and diverse impact on literatures of the Muslim world for many generations. This impact was critically explored in a conference held in London in 1993 to examine its enduring legacy across the Muslim cultures that have appropriated it. Multiple specimens that were presented and analyzed

attested to the qaṣīdah's profound generative force as a literary catalyst in these foreign cultures. While all the varied qaṣīdahs presented at the conference exhibited core common features of the Ur-Arabīc qaṣīdah, it was their discriminate cultural elements that in the end marked them out as original creative works.

The qaṣīdah is used to express varying emotional *aghrāḍ* (sing. *gharḍ*). In a study related to the uses of the qaṣīdah in West Africa, Abdul-Samad presents its various manifestations as,

... lyrical (al-shi'r al-ghinā'ī) and didactic (al-Shi'r al-ta'līmī). Lyrical poetry represents the majority of poems. This genre also includes a wide range of forms, from panegyric (al-madīḥ) to elegy (al-rithā'). Its types include pride (al-fakhr), description (al-waṣf), love (al-ghazal), fortitude (al-ḥamāsah), militantism (shi'r al-Jihād), complaint and nostalgia (al-shakwā wa al-Ḥanīn), occasional poetry (shi'r al-munāsabāt), and encomiastic verse praising the Prophet Muhammad (al-madā'iḥ al-nabawīyyah).¹⁸

A cursory survey of these forms would certify to their correlation with those forms and *aghrāḍ* employed by Arab poets themselves. Indeed these forms of the qaṣīdah are prevalent everywhere across the region. But it is most of all the madā'iḥ that predominate. The qaṣīdah is normally composed, as we have indicated above in the classical idiom and observes strict metrical conventions and styles. We note this especially in the compositions of highly trained 'ulamā' like 'Umar Karchi.

1.3.1. Ajami Literature

Besides its purely Arabic imitations, the qaṣīdah has also contributed to the evolution of indigenous forms in which the poet employs the medium of his own language usually inscribed in Arabic script. This type of poetry has come to be known as 'Ajami literature,

¹⁸ Abdul-Samad Abdullah and Abdul-Sawad Abdullah, "Arabic Poetry in West Africa: An Assessment of the Panegyric and Elegy Genres in Arabic Poetry of the 19th and 20th Centuries in Senegal and Nigeria" *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 35:3 (2004), 375. (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4183524> , Accessed: 23/07/2012 12:27).

derived from the Arabic root *'j.m* which denotes foreignness in respect to the Arab. Ajami literature is not restricted to poetic production alone. It is used in many ways to record important chronological events such as births, deaths, commercial transactions, and predominantly in teaching and learning. The instructional nature of Arabic within indigenous milieus is usually not conducive to a development of spoken proficiency. This is because (despite the wide exposure of students to Arabic texts of various kinds) there are hardly sufficient opportunities that would motivate practice of oral performance. For that matter literacy in Arabic is quite limited; only a very few are able to develop perfect reading or writing skills in it. If the capable writer wants to reach a wider audience, therefore, his only choice would be through Ajami, since it only requires a mastery of the corresponding Arabic letters to sounds in the indigenous tongue.

The Ajami literary tradition has developed mainly among communities with a long history of Islamic practice.¹⁹ In Sub-Saharan Africa the Ajami literary library includes Kiswahili, Somali, Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya and Malagasy; and in Mande languages such as Bamanan, Maninka, Mandinka, and Jula; in Kanuri, Wolof, Yoruba, Hausa and Tamasheq languages, as well as in Fulfulde, Dagbani, Songhai and Mosi. In West Africa specifically, the role played by Ajami literature during the 19th-century jihads was very considerable. It was especially employed by the Fulfulde clerics and jihad leaders to compose didactic and *tahrīd* poetry in their own idiom as well as Hausa. It was for this reason that some scholars (Stewart) have argued that Ajami literature especially in Hausa was introduced by the

¹⁹ See Jan Knappert, "The Transmission of Knowledge: A Note on the Islamic Literatures of Africa" (<http://org.uib.no/smi/sa/07/7Knappert.pdf>, accessed 01/23/2011); see also Fallon Ngom, "Ajami Scripts in the Senegalese Speech Community" *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 10 (2010).

Fodiyawa²⁰ who have left us a considerably large corpus of Ajami writing in Fulfulde as well as Hausa. Others, however, assert that it is quite possible that this form of writing dates further back than the Fodiyawa's era. By the end of the 19th century, however, Ajami writing had become quite popular in Hausa land and was being employed widely to compose eulogies, histories and occasional poems. The corpus of 'Umar Krachi's writings attest to this fact as it was common and easy for him to write in the two media.

The Hausa Ajami qaṣīdah bears a lot of resemblance to its Arabic prototype because of the extensive literary influence the latter has exerted on Hausa literary composition as a whole. The extent of this influence has not yet been fully studied. It can be clearly observed both in the structure of texts, their style as well as their themes. Structurally, Hausa poetry adopted many of the metrical patterns of the Classical Arabic qaṣīdah, as well as its dual hemistich verse and mono-rhyme. In “*Lābarin Naṣārā*,” for instance, 'Umar employs the *wāfir* meter which runs “*mufā'alatun mufā'alatun fa'ūlun (X 2)*”. It is a meter very appropriate to Hausa composition considering the quantitative nature of Hausa poetic meters and the existence of only two syllable types in the language. While discussing the nature of Arabic poetic influence on Hausa poetry Russell Schuh makes the following significant remarks,

Discussion of Hausa poetry has generally distinguished oral poetry, which finds its roots in ancient Hausa tradition and written poetry, which dates from the 19th century and whose meters can be traced to Arabic Islamic verse. Though the large and continuous evolving body of Hausa poetic literature

²⁰ See an insightful discussion of the development of Ajami literature during the reign of the Fodiyawa and after by Ousmane Oumar Kane *Non-Europhone Intellectuals*, Translated from French by Victoria Bawtree, (CODESRIA, 2013); John Edward Philips, “Hausa in the Twentieth Century: An Overview” *Sudanic Africa*, 15 (2004), 55-84; Abu Ezzati, *The Spread of Islam : The Contributing Factors* (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies, 2002), chapter 4; Abdul Rasheed Na'allah, *African Discourse in Islam, Oral Traditions, and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2010) chapter 3.

derives from these separate origins, there has now been considerable cross-fertilization between the two traditions, both thematically and metrically. Moreover the “oral” vs. “written” distinction is misleading. Although poets working in the so-called “written” tradition generally codify their works in writing using regular stanzaic patterns, all Hausa poetry is composed for presentation in song or chanted form – prose-like recitation; much less silent reading of poetic works is quite foreign to Hausa. Indeed, the Hausa language has a single word *waka*, meaning either ‘poem’ or ‘song’.²¹

It is indeed significant to take note of Russell Schuh’s assertion regarding the nature of Hausa poetry, being composed for recitation instead of “reading,” in contrast to how poetry is conventionally comprehended in Western culture. This clearly explains why ‘Umar’s *qaṣīdahs* exhibit extensive elements of performativity, emphasizing thereby the need for their oral performance above merely reading them.

1.4. Postcolonial Studies and the Neglect of Arabic Literature

The discourse of ‘Umar’s poems is conspicuously colonial. It is what motivates it and stands in relation of *différance*²² with it. I consider it a counter discourse to colonialism, which it challenges and tries to displace. This study is therefore motivated in large part by my interest in postmodern critical perspectives, especially that predicated by Postcolonial studies. Postcolonial studies as an academic research field has gained a lot of attention since the last quarter of the twentieth century.²³ It strives, inter alia, for a critical examination of

²¹ Russell G. Schuh, “Text and Performance in Hausa Metrics” (*unpublished ms*, 1994) at Russel G. Schuh Home Page: <http://www.linguistics.ucla.edu/people/schuh/>, accessed, 10/07/2009). (http://www.linguistics.ucla.edu/people/schuh/Metrics/Papers/anti_mutadarik.pdf).

²² Philosophical term coined by Derrida to express the combined senses of “defer” and “differ” in time and space. It is not a word whose meaning can be pinned down; it eludes definition. I wish, however, through it to emphasize the impossibility of both Colonialism and Umar’s text to exist independently from the other and to thus acquire significance. By this I mean that Umar’s text represents, in a contesting way, the *modus operandi* that brought colonialism about: the tales of its conquests. For further readings on this term and its use in postcolonial criticism see Revathi Krishnaswamy, “The Criticism of Culture and the Culture of Criticism: At the Intersection of Postcolonialism and Globalization Theory” (*Diacritics* 32.2 (2002) 106-126; muse.jhu.edu; accessed 2010).

²³ Edward Said’s work *Orientalism* represents the literary stimulus to this discipline.

colonial textual legacies in order to reinterpret, contest and respond to their discursive claims of authority. Strategically it intervenes (politically) to unmask and expose the façade concealing regime of truths that provided (and continues to provide) legitimacy and powers to colonialism (and its subsequent hegemonic order) to enable it perpetrate its violence. In practice it undertakes critical reexamination of colonial discourse through its archives and ideological philosophy of universalism and humanism employed to rationalize its claims of racial supremacy and prerogative. Postcolonial Studies has surely made considerable contributions to critical theory and human intellectual understanding. It has, however, come up against immense challenges, criticism and attack. This is partly because as Anita Loomba (2008, xii) suggested for instance that “the term ‘postcolonialism’ has become so heterogeneous and diffuse that it is impossible to satisfactorily describe what its study might entail,” besides its confusing jargon that is at times difficult to understand. Notwithstanding the “beleaguering”²⁴ nature of the field, Postcolonial Studies continues to be one of the most critical fields of theoretical as well as practical intervention vis-à-vis western cultural hegemony imposed by colonialism upon the rest of the world.

My purpose in this study is to examine ‘Umar’s three colonial qaṣīdahs as being part of indigenous historical documentation of anti-colonial resistance literature in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is sad to observe that Postcolonial research endeavors on African colonial and anti-colonial discourses have predominantly remained focused on written texts in colonial languages and (hesitatingly) orature to the neglect of local indigenous knowledge written specially in Arabic. In this regard, one cannot but lament the residue of colonial prejudice oftentimes evinced by postcolonial intellectuals (more sadly African) who continue to spurn local indigenous knowledge production in the name of scientific rigors and exclusivity. In

²⁴ Anita Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), xii.

this way much of precolonial Africa's literary knowledge is perceived by them as primitive and fabulous. There are even claims that Africa has had no literature prior to European colonialism. And that it was only after Europe introduced them to its literacy culture that Africans began to produce works of literature. This is attested by Oboyade (1976, 1) when he remarks,

The growth of written literature in West Africa is a process that is, often erroneously, associated solely with the introduction of Western-oriented literacy into West Africa. The truth is that the Arabic script had already been in existence several centuries before the arrival of the Roman script in West Africa. ... Nevertheless, no discussion on the growth of written literature in West Africa can be regarded as full if we completely ignore the place of Arabic in the evolution of the literary tradition in West Africa, or the place of the "embryonic" scripts in the history of writing in this region.

This Eurocentric mindset is unfortunately prevalent in Africa up to this day. As Ousmane Kane (2012, 1) points out, when commenting on the works of Mudimbe and Appiah (two celebrated African intellectuals who have made significant marks in western scholarship) that,

What was more striking as a common denominator between the two authors (which they share with African intellectuals trained in the Western languages) was their very Eurocentric approach to the production of knowledge in Africa and on Africa. Mudimbe argues that the writings that have contributed to the invention and the idea of Africa were, for the most part, produced by Europeans during the colonial period: they formed what he called the colonial library. [...] Like the great majority of Europhone intellectuals in sub-Saharan Africa, these two authors do not seem aware of their region's important Islamic library. As a result, they do not sufficiently integrate the epistemological references of this Islamic library in their syntheses on the production of knowledge in Africa – which are indeed remarkable. In his book which refers to several hundreds of European and Europhone African authors, Mudimbe (1988:181) mentions only in one paragraph that Islamic sources have always been important in the research for and invention of African paradigms, and that Islamic culture has made a great contribution to the passion for Otherness, particularly in West Africa. [...] He does not cite any Arabist Africans, some of whose works have been translated into Western languages. Such summary treatment does not do justice to the Islamic library of sub-Saharan Africa consisting of writings in Arabic and in *'ajami*.

Indeed even African orature, as African indigenous knowledge production, has not received the serious critical attention it deserves, as Djibril Tamsir Niane (1960, 6) here disdainfully laments in the introduction to his *Soundiata ou l'Epopée Mandingue*,

L'Occident nous a malheureusement appris à mépriser les sources orales en matière d'Histoire; tout ce qui n'est pas écrit noir sur blanc étant considéré comme sans fondement. Aussi même parmi les intellectuels africains il s'en trouve d'assez bornés pour regarder avec dédain les documents « parlants » que sont les griots et pour croire que nous ne savons rien ou presque rien de notre pays, faute de documents écrits. Ceux-là prouvent tout simplement qu'ils ne connaissent leur propre pays que d'après les Blancs.

It is unfortunate to say that if Academia does not fully commit itself to accord indigenous knowledge an unbiased critical examination, it would only be condoning the Eurocentric cultural hegemony established by colonialism and thereby becoming unconsciously complicit in the continuous marginalization and dominance of Africa by the West.²⁵ The perpetual exclusion of thousands of literary materials in Arabic and Ajami, produced before and during colonialism, would contribute to denying expression to a crucial stage in our history. It would not permit a full understanding and adequate contestation of the scars left by colonial violence and hegemony that characterize the identity crisis prevalent in postcolonial societies today. As Richard Howit and Sandra Suchet-Pearson, also critically observed,

The assumption of Eurocentric knowledges' universal relevance parallels the political processes of imperialism and displacement. Other knowledges are rendered silent. They are ignored, devalued and/or undermined so that Eurocentric knowledges see only themselves, becoming self-legitimizing rather than self-aware.²⁶

²⁵ Cf. this assertion from Sabelo N. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "One of the strategies that have sustained the hegemony of the Euro-American-constructed world order is its ability to make African intellectuals and academics socially located in Africa and on the oppressed side to think and speak epistemically and linguistically like the Euro-American intellectuals and academics on the dominant side." In his book *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa Myths of Decolonization*, Dakar: CODESRIA, 2003, 5.

²⁶ In Kay Anderson et al, *Handbook of Cultural Geography* (London: Sage, 2003), 558.

Postcolonial Studies, unfortunately, has willy-nilly become implicated in this complicity as George Sefa Dei (2002, 6) in turn tells us,

an examination of colonial histories of marginalized communities is a necessary component of the process of decolonization. However as a discourse, postcoloniality disturbingly ignores the indigenous histories of Southern peoples, which must be centred in any analysis of contemporary imperial relations. A transformative dialogue must be centred by speaking of colonized peoples' situated understandings of their histories.

Arabic writing was the only widely used script in Africa prior to colonialism. It is strategically important that every literary material produced during this period be accessed and critically utilized in the postcolonial effort of understanding the power dynamics of its discursive field. Resistance to colonialism as has been pointed out above was strongest in Sub-Saharan Muslim communities. The tales of these confrontations have usually been documented by colonial administrators, but they remain tales that represent only one side of the story. And colonial representations, as Postcolonial critics have often theorized, serve to sanction ideological discourses that helped construct colonized identity for the purpose of rationalizing dominance.²⁷ By neglecting these Arabic materials Postcolonial scholars are committing the error of what they have denounced as denying “the Subaltern” voicing.²⁸ Through these poems composed by ‘Umar we are able to salvage (although indirectly through his own voice) the testimonies of countless victims of colonial violence and my study proposes to undertake that.

1.5 Methodology and Research Framework

²⁷ This is the same ideological framing carried out by the orientalists as Edwards Said described it in *Orientalism* for instance.

²⁸ See Gyatri Spivak’s pioneering article on this entitled “Can the Subaltern Speak?” and ensuing critical engagements by Postcolonial scholars like Benita Parry, Aijaz Ahmad, Meenakshi Mukherjee etc.

This research is chiefly focused on examining primary source documents first collected between 1961 and 1964 in Ghana. They form part of what has been designated as IAS/AR (Institute of African Studies/Arabic) documents.²⁹ Their authenticity and attribution to 'Umar has been positively attested without doubt due to their longstanding wide circulation among Arabists within the region. The study shall consist of the critical analysis of the three poems through close reading of content and form (textual features, techniques and structure) as well as their contextual historical dimension with the purpose of understanding the discursive strategies 'Umar employs in order to successfully “inform and warn” (as he says) his audience at large. I shall thereby often draw from traditional critical literary analytic tools of narrative and poetic discourse, specifically those related to poetics of Arabic qaṣīdah, this being the genre in which the poems have been composed.

'Umar's three qaṣīdahs represent an interesting structural phenomena that I find insightful in the manner they seem to allegorically construct a trajectory of Africa's transformation from pre-colonial cultural space, through colonialism, and finally to its rebirth into the neocolonial. These three stages seem mirrored and structurally woven within the narrative structures of the qaṣīdahs. Either by design or accident, each one of the poems demonstrates (in varying degrees of expressivity and mode of development) its own structural determinacy as well as complementariness with the rest. In other words they form a three-part integral structure. Temporally they represent a chronological chain in the progressive metamorphosis of Africa being envisaged by the poet at the time. On the other hand, each poem depicts also an internal structure of its own synthesis which corresponds to the conventional tripartite structure of the qaṣīdah. In addition, we must also note that the three poems represent at the

²⁹ The project was the realization of joint research efforts of various faculty staff of the Institute of African Studies among who were Profs. Wilks, Hunwick, Hodgkin, and Assistants.

microscopic level a psychological evolution of the poet's own persona, while simultaneously reflecting at the macro level the transformation of the whole continent imposed by colonialism.

The qaṣīdah's distinctive tripartite thematic structural division was well understood by ancient Arab literary critics. Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) was perhaps the first who had critically discerned its thematic divisions into *nasīb* (prelude), *rahīl* (journey), and *madīḥ* (praise). Nevertheless Arab critical evaluations of the qaṣīdah genre had remained formalistic for many centuries. In her book, *Early Islamic Poetry and Poetics*, Professor Suzanne Stetkevych has described how critical studies of Arabic classical poetry shifted from "the traditional Orientalist approach" "towards a more disciplinary focus." Beginning from the critical engagements of Jaroslav Stetkevych (1969, 1980, 1987, and 1993), studies of Arabic classical poetry became more and more geared towards "Western [critical] trends." By the 1970s, her own research works, as well as those of many other scholars in the West, became informed by structuralism's theoretical formulations and applications of ethnological paradigms as well as "socio-culturally contextualizing" poems as a basis of understanding the contextual historical and political significance of the Arabic qaṣīdah structure. More specifically her application of the van Gennepian theoretical formulations of the rites of passage towards a more functional interpretation of the qaṣīdah's tripartite structure is an outstanding pioneering critical undertaking which shall both inform and guide this study.

Van Gennep's insight into the symbolic significance of *the ritual of rites of passage* was extended and elaborated upon by Victor Turner in his book *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Stetkevych (1993, 6-7) points out that Turner's re-conceptualization of the three stages of *the rites of passage* analogously enacts the qaṣīdah's structural pattern and

becomes thereby relevant to its ritual interpretation, since the Arabic qaṣīdah also embeds ritualistic nature. In addition to Stetkevych's analogous use of Turner's ritual concept, I shall lay particular emphasis on what Turner views as both serial and special transitions of the ritual process. As he explains,

Van Gennep, the father of formal processual analysis, used two sets of terms to describe the three phases of passage from one culturally defined state or status to another. Not only did he use, with primary reference to ritual, the serial terms *separation*, *margin*, and *reaggregation*; he also, with primary reference to spatial transitions, employed the terms *preliminal*, *liminal*, and *postliminal*. When he discusses his first set of terms and applies them to data, van Gennep lays emphasis on what I would call the "structural" aspects of passage. Whereas his use of the second set indicates his basic concern with units of space and time in which behavior and symbolism are momentarily enfranchised from the norms and values that govern the public lives of incumbents of structural positions. Here liminality becomes central and he employs prefixes attached to the adjective "liminal" to indicate the peripheral position of structure (166; emphasis in the original).

This structural description is relevant to my analysis of 'Umar's qaṣīdahs because, as I have explained above, they allegorically enact the process of Africa's metamorphosis, not only linearly in time, but also spatially. Each poem describes this metamorphosis within a specific temporal latitude; 1899, 1901 and 1903. In the end we have a simultaneous tripartite movement: first vertically (spatially) through the poems' internal structure, and then horizontally (temporally) across the three poems. The temporal setting is signified by the years 1899, 1901 and 1903 which represent the historic moments of composition. I shall employ "the serial terms *separation*, *margin*, and *reaggregation*" to refer to the internal (vertical) structural analysis of the qaṣīdah and the triad "*preliminal*, *liminal*, and *postliminal*" to denote the diachronic (horizontal) analysis.

1.6 Literature Review

From a general point of view, Arabic literary compositions, south of Africa's continent, have not been studied much as products of aesthetic art³⁰. Interest in them has remained focused only in their historical, religious and political relevancies. The work of Muhammad Sani Umar, *Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria*, is the first full length monograph of its kind, in which the artistic use of discourse in Arabic and Ajami poems is used to interpret historical situations. In addition Professor Abdul-Samad Abdullah's critical research engagement with specifically Arabic poetry in West Africa is worth commendation. Of note are his two articles, (1) "Arabic Poetry in West Africa: An Assessment of the Panegyric and Elegy Genres in Arabic Poetry of the 19th and 20th Centuries in Senegal and Nigeria" and (2) "Intertextuality and West African Arabic Poetry: Reading Nigerian Arabic Poetry of the 19th and 20th Centuries" both published in the *Journal of Arabic Literature* [35: 3 (2004) and 40:3 (2009)] respectively.

Research interest in the works of Umar Ibn Abī Bakr specifically has been extraordinarily extensive and varied. His poetic works especially have attracted the attention of scholars from varied intellectual background. Furthermore, he gains constant citation whenever reference is made to Arabic or Islamic intellectualism, Muslim politics in Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Benin and the rest of the West Africa sub-region as a whole. Example are: Krause, 1928; Rattray, 1934; Wilks, 1963, 1989; Hodgkin, 1966; Martin, 1966; Martin in Goody and Braimah, 1967; Goody, 1970; Goody & Wilks in Goody, 1968; Odoom, 1968; Sölken, 1970; Ferguson, 1973; Maier, 1983; Nehemia Levtzion, 1968, 1971, 2000; Holger Weiss, 2008; Abdullahi Iddrissu, 2012; and David Owusu-Ansah, Abdulai Iddrisu and Mark Sey, 2014. A

³⁰ Ajami literature in the various languages (which is quite abundant) is an exception in this regard especially those in Swahili, Hausa and Fulfulde.

number of dissertation, monographs, articles and translations have also been devoted to him across the globe.

From the moment he settled in Salaga around 1892, 'Umar's intellectual talent became recognized and turned to advantage by a number of Europeans (mostly Germans) who included Gottlob Adolf Krause, Adam Mischlich, R. S. Ratray and Angus Colin Duncan-Jonhstone. Adam Mischlich's acquaintance with him was, particularly, the most intellectually, fruitful one. 'Umar taught him Hausa language and customs from which he was able to write a German-Hausa dictionary and grammar. It was through his encouragement also that 'Umar composed a number of historical manuscripts which would later be published in Germany.³¹ 'Umar probably became one of the most highly recognized Muslim scholars in West Africa in Europe from the beginning of the twentieth century. This would subsequently give rise to research interest on him and his works.

B. G. Martin has translated a number of 'Umar's poems which appeared in a joint publication entitled *Salaga: The Struggle for Power*. This included full annotated translations of the poems: *Tanbīḥ al-ikhwān fī dhikr al-aḥzān*, *Ṭal'u al-munāfa'a fī dhikr al-munāza'a* both of which provide historical accounts of events that led to the 1896 civil war between the royal houses of Gonja in the district of Salaga. He has also made partial annotated translation of *Naẓm al-la'ālī bi-ikhbār wa-tanbīḥ al-kirām*, which represents the second qaṣīdah that will be analyzed in this study. Most of these and other individual studies inclined towards thematic analysis and historical commentaries of the poems. Other research endeavors were more explorative but could not demonstrate significant application of any critical theories,

³¹ They underwent many translations in German and English; the latest is Stanislaw Pilaszewicz's edited monograph, *Hausa Prose Writings in Ajami by Alhaji Umaru*, Berlin: Reimer, 2000.

literary or otherwise. Douglas E. Ferguson's Ph. D thesis written and submitted to the history department of UCLA in 1973, was a translation (accompanied by notes and commentaries) of some of the Ajami manuscripts 'Umar had composed following the request of Adam Mischlich, the German colonial officer, with whom he became acquainted in the early parts of the 20th century. Ferguson's objective was, as he stated, to produce "the first English translation" of 'Umar's work from Hausa Ajami texts which were published (alongside their German translation) by Mischlich. His method in this, he says was 'to try to retain the original "flavor" by including important and interesting Hausa words and passages [from the original]. ... [He had hoped that] it will be of interest to Hausa-Speaking people from West Africa. ... [He had] worked for clarity of expression and ... [has] tried to avoid ambiguity. ... [He has] also tried to stick as close as possible to a literal translation of Imoro's accounts.' Ferguson's goal in translating 'Umar's manuscripts is a historical one; he wanted to produce English equivalents of these documents for an objective historical analysis and I think he has accomplished this to a great extent.

Another historical study devoted to 'Umar's works was undertaken by Mustapha Talatu in 1970 as an M. Phil thesis research³² presented to the University of McGill's department of history. Talatu's main focus was historical, and he states his purpose as, "1) to evaluate the contribution of al-ḥājj 'Umar's works to our knowledge of African history and 2) to illustrate the historical use that can be made of works such as al-ḥājj 'Umar's." In order to accomplish these objectives Talatu selects from 'Umar's works those materials that he considered of great historical value to the history of West Africa. Talatu was writing at a time when the

³² It was entitled "A Historiographical study of four works of al-Hajj 'Umar ibn Abi Bakr of Kete-Krachi".

concept of African historiography was being re-examined to reflect the exigencies of African context and truth. He explained that,

... modern African historiography has been motivated by a sincere desire on the part of scholars to appreciate some aspects of Africa's past which they consider to have been neglected or misrepresented. The main impetus for their approach has, however, been provided by the political consciousness that has characterized modern African states for the last decade. As many Africans became independent of their colonial "masters" they began to re-examine and re-evaluate aspects of their culture which has formerly been dominated by the colonial cultures. They sought to revive their past to provide a national consciousness and an inspiration for the future and hence the establishment in many African universities centres for African studies and research which have in turn proved the main backbone for modern African historiography. Without the devotion of the scholars in these research centres modern African historiography would not have made the significant strides of the last decade; yet it is the new political consciousness which made the modern historiographer aware of the necessity of a new approach to African history. Prior to this new approach, the majority of the sources that were relied on for the interpretation of African history of the period before the first European voyages of discovery and exploration came mainly from medieval Arab chroniclers. Yet during their long association with Africa since their conquest of Egypt in 639 A.D. the Arabs tended to ignore the uniqueness of the African. He was interesting to them only as a Muslim. (12)

Talatu selects four poems from 'Umar's corpus and then subjects them to a literal translation. Three of these selected poems include the three poems of our study and in addition he includes one historical poem that recounts 'Umar's sojourn to the neighboring town of Gambaga during a time when he became displaced and was seeking a place of refuge. He then adopts a close reading approach to analyze and critically evaluate 'Umar's historical claims on the basis of historical evidence. He does not examine the literary devices the poet uses or the relevance of historical context to the significance of the poems' message. This is understandable owing to the fact that the "post-turn"³³ did not become popular until the eighties. And disciplinary boundaries were still being piously kept and defended. I must

³³ By "post-turn" I am referring to the new critical theoretical developments that emerged from the later part of the seventies to the earlier parts of the eighties. These included Post-structuralism, Post-colonialism Historicism etc.

say that my own translations owe nothing significant to what Talatu has produced; I have not consulted them while developing my versions.

The next major research on the works of 'Umar consists of another unpublished M. A. thesis prepared by Idriss Abdul-Razak in 1996 and submitted to the religions department of the University of Ghana (Legon). The title of the thesis is "Alhaj Umar of Kete-Krachi: A Muslim Leader, a Teacher, a Poet and a Social Commentator of his Time". Idriss' objective is a combination of religious, social and intellectual evaluation of 'Umar's contributions to Muslim intellectual history in Ghana in particular and West Africa in general. His analysis is thematic. In combination with field work interviews and examination of primary and secondary literature, Idriss sets out to examine themes of colonial (Christian) impact on Muslim life in the region and how it has contributed to Muslims self-perception and others in later post-independence Ghana. He also touched on the themes of social relevance such as health and unity that are reflected in 'Umar's writings. He provides us with a semi-literal translation of three poems composed by 'Umar on Muslim unity (*barr al-ḥaqq*), the coming of Europeans to West Africa, and on the outbreak of Influenza. The second poem consists of the second poem of our study. But I must stress that this translation has not contributed in any way towards my translated version of the poem.

Since I have so far been discussing academic graduate research endeavors that have been carried out on 'Umar's works, I must cite a final MA thesis work written by Abass Umar Muhammed and submitted to the department of Arabic Studies of the American University in Cairo in 2003. The work entitled "Alhaj Umar Abubakar Krachi: A Bio Critical Study" sets out to describe Umar's poetic works as vindication of Muslim literary capabilities and contributions to Arabic literature in the sub-region. Consequently, the author sets about

critically examining 'Umar's poetic corpus, thematically and stylistically. The critical frame of reference of the analysis is derived from Arabic traditional poetics of formal reading and analysis. No attempt was made by the author to provide full translation of any of the poems examined. In line with his thematic objective study, he examines relevant extracts from various poems and presents both the Arabic and English translated equivalents.

Finally, I must say that the most extensive and intensive study of 'Umar's works was the one undertaken by the Polish Africanist scholar Stanislaw Pilaszewicz (b. 1944). In addition to a doctoral thesis written in Polish and published in 1981³⁴ about 'Umar and his work, Pilaszewicz has also published (in English and Polish) a number of articles and monographs on 'Umar's poetic achievements. Some of his research includes the following:

1. "An image of the Hausa Diaspora of Kumasi in an Ajami poem from IAS/AR/292 Manuscript", *African Bulletin* [Warsaw] 41 (1993), 7 - 97
2. "Homiletic Poetry of Al-Hāji 'Umaru", *African Bulletin* [Warsaw] 30 (1981), 73 – 110.
3. "The Song of Poverty and Wealth: A Hausa Poem on Social Problems by Al-Hāji 'Umaru", *African Bulletin* [Warsaw] 37 (1991), 7 – 18.
4. "'The Arrival of the Christians': A Hausa Poem on the colonial Conquest of West Africa, by Al-Hāji 'Umaru" *Africana Bulletin* [Warsaw] 22 (1975), 55-129

I must remark that Professor Pilaszewicz's research engagements with 'Umar's works are both extensive and outstanding in comparison to what has been written about 'Umar and his works globally. I will cite, as much as possible, those of Pilaszewicz's writings that only bear direct theoretical significance to the literary critical methods and approaches I wish to adopt

³⁴ The full title of his thesis is "Alhadzi Umaru (1858-1934), poeta ludu Hausa: Studium historyczno-literackie (Rozprawy Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego)".

in this study of 'Umar's poems. It is therefore relevant on this regard to mention that one of the poems I will examine has been translated and literarily evaluated by him. This is the third poem composed in Hausa Ajami. I have benefited from this work in relation to the thorough editing and annotations the author has carried out on them. The version of my translation, however, differs from that of Pilaszewicz in both style and transparency. Overall, his translation is a hybrid between literal and paraphrase. I have, however, adopted a close literal approach in my translation of the poem in line with my purpose of trying to closely reproduce both literary qualities and discursive effects displayed by the original. Furthermore Pilaszewicz's primary aim which, is a simple close reading of the poem's narrative, differs from my own in which I will be applying a critical theoretical framework to analyze the poems.

It is quite obvious to me from the researches that have so far been devoted to 'Umar's poetic works in general and the three poems of my study specifically that no systematic attempt has been made to examine these works in line with critical literary theory. In terms of translational style, I have attempted on my part to render a close literal version of the original poems, while in comparison, previous translations (that I have examined) demonstrate a range of misreading, mis-translation and paraphrasing. Before embarking on translating the poems, I have subjected them to critical editing by comparing variants (when they exist) in order to construct a workable final version.³⁵ Many problems that I have discerned from previous translations, I believe, arose for neglecting this crucial issue. In respect to the theoretical framework I have chosen to apply in this study, Professor Stetkevych's pioneering work on the qaṣīdah shall, as I have already stated above, be my guiding template. Although

³⁵ With regard to the third poem, I relied on Pilaszewicz's excellent editing and annotations.

the qaṣidah's literary significance has been recognized and examined (to a limited extent) within Sub-Saharan Arabic literature, its functional structural significance is yet to be explored as Stetkevych has been doing in respect to the qaṣidah within indigenous Arab literary culture. Furthermore the significance of Arabic indigenous writings, as indicated above, has not yet been adequately explored for its contribution and relevance to modern critical theoretical engagements about Africa, such as Postcolonial studies, feminism and Subaltern Studies. I hope this study will develop further interest in Sub-Saharan indigenous Arabic literature in general and also encourage the development and promotion of Arabic literature and language across these regions of Africa.

Chapter II

Life and Works of Al-Ḥājj ‘Umar b. Abī Bakr b. ‘Uthmān al-Kabawī al- Kanawī al-Salagawī

2.1. Formative Years

‘Umar b. Abī Bakr b. ‘Uthmān al-Kabawī al-Kanawī al-Salagawī was the pen name by which he signed his writings. He was most popularly known as Al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Krachi³⁶ (Mālam ‘Umar before his first pilgrimage to Mecca) by his contemporaries as well as generations after him. He belongs to the Hausa ethnic branch of Kebbi from northern Nigeria. He was, however, born in the city of Kano, in the year 1858. Not much is known of his grandfather, Mālam ‘Uthman, who was popularly called Mālam Bāwa.³⁷ Despite the claim by Hunwick et al (2003, 38) that he hailed from the Hijāz in Arabia, there is no historical record about ‘Umar that could substantiate such a claim, other than it being attributed to Ivor Wilks.³⁸ In his autobiographical sketch, ‘Umar had stated his ignorance regarding any knowledge of his grandparents from the father’s side, although he said he remembered his mother’s parents very well.³⁹ Furthermore, there is no supplementary allusion (direct or indirect) in his extant works regarding his father’s father. One would

³⁶ The name ‘Umar which is of Arabic origin is pronounced and written variously across the world in accordance with the cultural milieu where it is used. It is therefore common to come across written variants that reflect these various verbal cultural nuances of articulation. Among Hausa linguistic communities it is commonly rendered ‘Umar, ‘Umaru or Umar and Umaru. In the northern part of Ghana where ‘Umar spent most of his life the variant Imoro is more prevalent among non-Hausa speaking communities. In this research the variant spelling preferred by John O. Hunwick et al (2003, 586) in the fourth volume of their ground breaking compendium of “bio-bibliographical account of the Arabic literature of Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa” is being adopted. See also Douglas Edwin Ferguson, 1973, 38,fn. 1 for additional information about the pronunciation and spelling of ‘Umar’s name.

³⁷ See ‘Umar’s auto-biographic sketch in Pilaszewicz (2000, 64-74).

³⁸ Ferguson (1973)’s detailed biography of ‘Umar written in part from information gathered from interviews he has had with people who had known ‘Umar in his life time, including his son, the wife of his brother as well as students, contains no reference to this claim; neither does Pilaszewicz (2000, 9-11) edited work of ‘Umar’s writings affirm it, adding this citation from Martin 1967: 189, that “‘Uthmān, Umaru’s grandfather, lived at Kebbi in Northern Nigeria. His great-grandfather is said to have hailed originally from Kebbi and to have been an associate of Usman dan Fodio”. He also mentions in footnotes (n2) that “According to I. Wilks (1963:416), Alhaji Umaru’s great-grandfather was called not ‘Ali, but Sharīf Ḥusayn. He is said to have settled in Gobir and to have been in contact with the leader of the Holy war in Hausaland.”

³⁹ Pilaszewicz (2000, 64).

wonder whether it was possible that he deliberately omitted such vital information of his past, being a person who was very sensitive to social distinctions of hierarchy and nobility.⁴⁰

All his writings attest him to having great a self-esteem taking great pride in his Hausa ethnicity and Islamic religious belief.

2.1.1. Kano

‘Umar’s father, Abī Bakr, was according to him a “*bakabi*,” a man of Kebbi.

Professionally he was both an active scholar and trader. He had combined the two most common professional practices of contemporary Hausa men. While the establishment of the Fodiyāwā Caliphate (from the beginning of the nineteenth century) had fostered Islamic learning, the relative security and large population it encompassed made commerce profitable; and the Hausa took to it with zeal. The common commodities of transaction at that time included slaves and kolanuts, both of which were in abundant supply in markets located in the far west mid-Volta Basin of Gonja land. Here was the convergence spot of a large trade network that linked south to north. The Gonja town of Salaga emerged as principal axis of this network. Abī Bakr frequently made trips between Kano, where he had already settled his family, and Gonja land to trade and exchange goods. Probably he came to realize the need for trading in order to supplement his income, after the size of his family started growing and competition became more intensive among mālam of Kano in attracting potential students. Abī Bakr was married to a Kano woman who gave birth to two daughters: Rāmatu Autā and Zainabu; he then subsequently married ‘Umar’s mother, Maimunatu. ‘Umar recalls knowing

⁴⁰ See for instance his qaṣīdah “Naẓmu al-la’ālī” (IAS/AR. 109.ii) in which he attacks the Europeans for erasing social hierarchical distinctions between the nobility and commoners/slaves.

her parents: his grandfather, Muhamman, popularly known as Buwayī⁴¹ and his grandmother, known as Sa'adatu Bagobirā (Sa'adatu the woman of Gobir). 'Umar was probably the first child of his mother, who gave birth to another boy three years younger than him, known as Indoli. In addition 'Umar had a half-brother who was younger than him called Sullay Binta. Abī Bakr's responsibilities and thoughts of his family's welfare kept him frequently absent from home. Consequently, he would delegate his teaching to other mālams. In fact he was more inclined to his children pursuing the trade profession than teaching. So, as soon as they attained teenage-hood and had acquired enough learning, necessary for practical Muslim life, he took them along on his trade expeditions. That was how both 'Umar and his siblings got inducted into trading, from an early age and had come to know all the trade routes linking Hausaland to Gonjaland.

When 'Umar was born in 1858, it was during the reign of Abdullahi dan Dabo,⁴² sultan of Kano. In his autobiographical sketch, he vividly recalls his childhood days. He was then called dan Goje, he says, in affiliation to his maternal aunt who was so called. At the age of three, he was weaned and taken to Jega, in the district of Kebbi, to stay temporarily with his maternal grandmother Sa'adatu. After spending five years in her care, 'Umar was returned to his family in order to begin his education. Among the Hausa, the education of children traditionally begins after their sixth or seventh birthday. This seemed to be on the average the general trend all over precolonial African traditional societies. In his analytical book, Abdou Moumouni (1968, 26 – 27) stressed how importantly precolonial African societies regarded the education and training of children to assume future social, economic and

⁴¹ It is usually an epithet used to refer to a shāmaki (an official responsible for stables). It also literally connotes a powerful indomitable person for which it is used as epithet for God; in addition it describes a state of wonder and bewilderment at a sight. See *Bargery Hausa English Dictionary Online* under *Buwaya*.

⁴² He was the 4th Emir of Kano and reigned from 1855 to 1882 when he died.

political responsibilities. Methodologically, this was accomplished in phases, in correspondence with children's growth. He describes the system prevalent in Muslim societies such as the Hausa as follows,

In Muslim areas, [...], the Koran is taught. This is done by marabouts, starting when a child is six or seven, and consists essentially in learning the Koran by heart, and absorbing enough Arabic to be able to explain and comment on the Koran. This teaching lasts three to five years, according to the method employed, and is completed by secular knowledge drawn from various treatises on law, history, geography and others, on an elementary level. At the end of the cycle which is marked by an important ceremony, the adolescent acquires the title of 'Malam' or 'Alfa' and is entitled to teach. If this education is interrupted [which happens most of the time] he will at least know how to say his prayers correctly. The new 'graduate' can pursue what corresponds to higher education with his own marabout, or with marabouts with a scholarly reputation, who surround themselves with numerous disciples. Universities existed in a certain number of famous cities: Timbuktu, where the renowned University of Sankore had a great reputation in the Muslim world; Dinguiray in Futa, Sokoto in the Hausa country, Jenne in the loop of the Niger, and many others. Several of the teachers of these universities have remained celebrated for their reputation and scholarly output; Ahmed Baba, Muhammad Koti El Timbuktu and the Sheikh Usuman dan Fodio of Sokoto.

This was the path that has culturally been destined for children like 'Umar in their precolonial social settings.⁴³ As soon as he rejoined the family home, therefore, 'Umar's father sent him to begin learning the Quran with Mālam Muḥamman Takiki, son of Mālam Lukuti, whose school was located at that time in the Magoga ward of Kano. At this stage of their education, children are normally introduced to the writing and pronunciation of Arabic

⁴³ Ferguson (1973, 17) narrates how 'Umar convinced his father to send him to 'makaranta' instead of preoccupying him with trading, 'At the age of seven he had a conversation with his father which had a great bearing on his subsequent life. Abu Bakr had just returned from Salaga and Imoru asked him: "Father, what do you want me to do when I grow up?" Abu Bakr said he would like for Imoru to follow his occupation of trading. Imoru replied: "No, I dreamed I saw a tall person - I don't know where he came from- and he started to teach me to read and write. I want to go to school to study so I can become a malam. Please, I beg you, send me to school!"' See also Idriss Abdul-Razak, *Alhaj Umar of Kete-Krachi: a Muslim Leader, a Teacher, a Poet and a Social Commentator of his Time* (Unpublished M. A. Thesis, Department of the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon, October, 1996), chapter two, 16 – 51, in which the author provides detailed account of 'Umar's life from childhood to his death.

letters, basic Quranic vocabulary as well as phrases and short sentences; at the same time they are made to memorize the Quran, starting from short *sūrah*s. Children would hardly come into contact with a full Quran copy, until they have learned at least half to two thirds of it. It took seven years for 'Umar to complete this first stage of his education: an initial five years of quran memorization followed by two years of *tūshewā*.⁴⁴

After successfully completing the first phase of Quranic schooling, most students stop and acquire different, more practical professions. Some, however, might choose to continue with the next phase of learning and at the same time pursue different practical professional callings. Others, motivated and naturally inclined by intelligence and dedication or simply guided by parental choice, move on to the next stage where they start a gradual procession through advanced studies: beginning with essential curricular contents of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *nahw* (Arabic grammar), *tawhīd* (theology), *ḥisāb* (arithmetic) and then upgrading later into *shi'r* (poetry), *'arūd* (prosody), *'adab* (belles lettres), *ḥadīth* (traditions of the prophet), *tafsīr* (Quran exegesis), etc. This list presents more or less an accurate content of Muslim educational curriculum prior to the colonization of the African people. Students tended generally to specialize in a major field of Islamic science by the end of their discipleship. It was thereafter that they would begin gathering testimonials (*'ijāzāt*, sing. *'ijāzah*) from well-established contemporary scholars that would sanction them to assume teaching responsibilities in their turn. This process of “endorsement” was a necessary induction into the professional circle of eminent teachers and scholars in the field. 'Umar's education had followed similar path in orientation. In his regard, however, the father had played significant role both as exemplar and guide throughout the course of his studies up until he had reached the age of twenty five. Then the father died. Previously, while still

⁴⁴ This corresponds to a rerun of the whole process of memorization to insure its efficacy and endurance.

pursuing his studies with the father, 'Umar also used to attend the schools of other mālams in Kano. As such he had studied first with Mālam Ibrahim dan Maikasuwā for two years before the father introduced him to Mālam Alḥājj Abū Bakr alias Alḥāji Babba with whom he continued to study when the father was away on his trade journeys.

2.1.2. Sokoto

With the father now dead, 'Umar was twenty five years old and had reached a decisive moment of his adult life. At this stage he does not tell us anything (in his autobiography) about his relationship with the rest of the family, nor do we know the nature of the responsibility he had assumed thereafter vis-à-vis the father's household. Judging from his autobiography, he was most elderly son of the father; by tradition, responsibility for the family shifted upon him when the father passed away. This sudden change in fate compelled 'Umar to assume a more assertive attitude and independence of thought. Thus as soon as the father's funeral obsequies were completed, he took the route for Sokoto where he intended to pursue his objective of furthering his studies as well as carrying on with his father's trading business. Sokoto was the political metropolis of the Hausa-Fulani caliphate. It was *Garin Shehu*, the town of Shehu 'Uthman dan Fodio in which he was buried. In addition, it was the residence of most of the members of the royal family, close associates and prominent elites of Shehu's entourage. And as a result, Sokoto had come to symbolize the center of Islamic learning in contrast to Kano, which represented the center for business and commerce. At that time scholars and students turned towards Sokoto to drink from its fountains of knowledge and, in part, to acquire the *Baraka* (blessings) of Shehu.

After an eventful journey, 'Umar arrived in Sokoto in the midst of political crisis following the death of the visiting sultan of Kano. He was, however, soon able to settle down

when he found a place to study. Mālam Shaibu was his teacher. 'Umar applied himself to his task with devotion and diligence. His studies did not prevent him from devoting some time to commerce. He traveled quite regularly on commercial trips across territories adjoining Sokoto and became acquainted with various peoples and cultures. This was psychologically a fecund period in his life: his mental as well as cultural horizons expanded tremendously. He mentioned how he came to know many ethnicities in the region such as the Zabarma, Songhai, Mossi, Borgou, Dandi, Gurma, Fulani, Guronshi, Gonja and Dagomba among others. These cultural immersions would later become so significant in shaping 'Umar's world view with regards to colonial invasions and would assist specifically in developing his colonial narratives. In total 'Umar spent nine years in Sokoto. Mālam Shaibu remained his principal teacher all through these years until his death. Thereafter, 'Umar continued to take lessons from the son for a period of one year. In all likelihood he had by now collected as many *'ijāzāt* (sing. *'ijāzah*), testimonials from pre-eminent scholars of Sokoto as would qualify him to successfully assume a career of professional teacher of Islamic sciences. He has now attained the mature age of thirty four years. In order to fulfill his father's wishes, 'Umar decided to set out for the lands of Gonja in the Volta Basin where his two brothers, Indoli and Sullay Binta, had been carrying on with their father's commercial ventures.

So in 1892, 'Umar once again took the road towards Gonja; and this time for good. He describes his journey from Sokoto to Salaga, in company of a caravan of mostly Hausa traders, as arduous but adventurous. It is noteworthy, however, to point out that 'Umar's westbound migration, at this historical period, was neither unique nor extraordinary within the region. As alluded to above, the entire regions, encompassing the territories of present-day Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Benin (formerly Dahomey), Togo (formerly

Togoland), Ghana (formerly Gold Coast) and Cote d'Ivoire, were interconnected by trade networks running all across the lands. The main confluence of these trade networks was centered in the Gonja lands of the mid-Volta Basin, located in the mid-northern part of Ghana as well as adjoining territories of Togo. The powerful southern Ashanti had by the eighteenth century expanded their dominion northwards to encompass Dagbon and these Gonja territories. This expansion boosted Ashanti political ascendancy and economic power across the region and enabled them to control trade between south and north by providing political stability as well as security.⁴⁵ By this period, gold had long ceased to be a predominant trade commodity due to the general insecurity caused by wars as well as increasing difficulty in its extraction and conveyance. It was replaced by kolanuts, a caffeine-containing fruit cultivated in the rainy-forest regions of the south and highly valued for its stimulating effects on mental activities. Besides this, it is also extensively used across the regions for various cultural purposes. Because of its high demand in Hausaland, traders traveled all the way to Gonja where they bought it in large quantities and then transported it back home where it was sold profitably. This situation subsequently led to a growing influx of Hausa migration towards northern Gold Coast (Ghana) and ultimately resulted in the development of significant Hausa diaspora across the region. Over time, many trade centers soon sprang up in the territories. But soon the town of Salaga grew to become the dominant market. Holger Weiss (112) describes how this trade networking contributed to the growth of Salaga becoming one of the most flourishing trade centers in Africa:

By the nineteenth century, [the town of] Salaga had emerged as not only one of the largest transit markets in West Africa – Lovejoy assumes that Salaga was almost as big as Kano and could have had some 40,000 – 50,000 inhabitants – but also a leading regional centre of Muslim learning. Although

⁴⁵ See Holger Weiss, 2008, 108.

Hausa trade with Asante originated in the eighteenth century, the trade was not fully developed until after the *jihad* of Usman dan Fodio in Hausaland (1804 -1808). By the 1810s Hausa immigrants settled in a number of local market centres, including Salaga, in response to the commercial expansion in northern Asante

Thus 'Umar's 1892 travel was an ongoing common trend in the economic migratory pattern that developed between Hausa land and Gonja land, at the close of the nineteenth century. And it coincided with that moment when Europeans had begun their colonial invasion into Africa.

2.2. 'Umar in Salaga

Unfortunately, however, 'Umar's sojourn to Salaga was ill-timed. Hardly was he able to settle down when the town became embroiled into ethnic unrest among the Gbanya of Gonja land. The disturbances were caused by a crisis in royal succession between the Gbanya chiefs. Pilaszewicz (2000, 12) describes that moment of 'Umar's arrival and the ensuing crisis that developed as follows,

Umar arrived in Salaga around May 1892 when the town was on the brink of civil war. There was a dispute over the succession of the chieftaincy of Kpembe (the sister town of Salaga) one of the divisional capitals of the Gonja kingdom. The situation made it impossible for him to settle permanently and teach. The civil war broke out some seven months after his arrival in December 1892. 'Umaru chose to side with the insurgent Issifa who – with the aid of Dagomba from the north – became the ultimate victor. Issifa took power from Napo by driving him from the chieftaincy.⁴⁶

'Umar's implication in the events that proceeded from the war can be understood from an allusion he makes in one of the *qaṣīdahs* that he composed to give an account of the fight and its ensuing incidents. At one point he describes how one of the adversaries appealed to the people for contributions in money in order to seek the spiritual assistance of Muslim

⁴⁶ For more details see J. A. Braimah and Jack R. Goody, *Salaga the Struggle for Power* (London: Longmans, 1968).

marabouts. This is a common practice among West African communities. Whenever faced with calamity they approach local marabouts seeking favorable spiritual intervention in their behalf.

154. He said: O people, we are frightened by this situation
Come let us appeal to God for relief.

155. Let us gather money to seek prayers;
And let us supplicate God in our suffering.

156. Then they collected thousands in all earnestness,
And took it to the 'īd prayer ground.

157. They raised their voices in reciting the Quran
And raised their hands in supplication.

It is quite conceivable in this particular instance that 'Umar (a newly arrived and highly regarded Hausa scholar) was approached by Issifa or his men to seek prayers that would insure them victory over their adversary. Subsequently when the tides had turned in their favor, 'Umar acquired respect, honor and high status in their society. The losing side, however, became resentful towards him and harbored lasting animosity. And as fate would have it, opportunities soon shifted favorably towards this losing faction after four years of patient scheming and maneuvering, they succeeded in giving vent to this animosity.

'Umar's new social prestige, acquired after Issifa's victory, afforded him a chance to settle down finally and begin to think about prospects of his teaching career. Subsequently, he established a modest school and began receiving students, especially those that had already graduated from *makaranta* studies, and were matured enough to progress into the advanced stage. It was also at this time that 'Umar made the acquaintance of a German resident in Salaga, by the name Gottlob Adolf Krause (1850 – 1938). He had preceded 'Umar to Salaga and had claimed to residents that he was interested in trading and studying the

history and culture of Africans. Krause was probably more than a mere trader and “anthropologist” and could even have been clandestinely serving German colonial interest. When the two finally met, Krause went by the name Mālam Musa, a name which Pilaszewicz (2000, 72, n.77) alleged was given to him by the local people. They both happened to be lodging in the same compound belonging to a local landlord by the name Aḥmadu dan Zabarma. ‘Umar recalls the first time they met. It was shortly after the war during which most of the residents of Salaga were forced to flee and seek temporary refuge elsewhere. When they returned later, they discovered that all their goods and properties had been looted in their absence. As ‘Umar relates,

All our properties were stolen completely. When Salaga was scattered, there was a Banasāre (Christian) at the house of Aḥmadu dan Zabarma, he was called [...] Mālam Mūsa. He was familiar with my younger brother since [long] from Moshi and Gurinshi [lands]. So for him he did not run away. Since we returned here and before even we could put our luggage down, my younger brother went to greet him. As for Mālam Mūsa, he asked him and said, “So you were around?” He (my brother) said, “We have just arrived, together with my elder brother.” He said, “Where is he?” He said, “He is here.” He said, “Well, you see I have no one except one servant, his name is Dan Jimma. And work has become too much for me. I want you to come here close to me, you and your elder brother. You would become my servant, and as for your elder brother he would become my friend.” He said, “Alright.” He came and informed me, and I said alright. That is that. We settled in with Mālam Mūsa, our houses close to one another. At that time people have ran away and left food waste, they were not being bought. That Batūre (Whiteman) said he would not eat someone’s food for nothing. But there was some food, left by Aḥmadu dan Zabarma inside his house. They should be priced, before he would eat them [he said]. When they meet (again) he would pay him or it would be settled within the debt that he owed him. Very well, we did it that way indeed. And that is that. We grew very familiar with him. I used to do some writings for him about stories, and histories and fables. I [also] made corrections of the words which Hausa folks told him and which were incorrect. In that way he was selling his odds and ends saving money until we were close to one year⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ From Aḡjami manuscript of ‘Umar’s autobiography published in Pilaszewicz (2000, 495, 494); my own translation.

This was how the two came to forge a cordial relationship during which Krause took opportunity to learn Hausa from 'Umar, and solicited anthropological materials from him as well. Krause and 'Umar never had the chance for a second meeting after he later departed for Germany, leaving 'Umar and his brother in Salaga. Meanwhile the political situation in Salaga kept worsening; and in 1896, the German district head, Graf von Zech, who was then stationed in the neighboring twin towns of Kete-Krachi, had been won over to the side of those who had previously lost the war. At their prompt, one day, he marched on Salaga, burnt it to the ground and reinstalled his favorites. He then gathered the migrant merchants and told them to evacuate the town and move over to Kete-Krachi, where he could monitor their activities, more closely perhaps. He specifically addressed 'Umar, who was all willing to leave Salaga, as the developing situation did not augur well for his continuous stay. Together with other merchants 'Umar then set out for Kete-Krachi where more difficulties awaited him.

When Napo (the now victorious chief under German protection) had lost his bids for the throne in the civil war, four years before, it was in Kete-Krachi that he went into exile. He succeeded during this exile to win over support, not only of the German district chief officer, but the sympathy of locals also, both indigenous and foreign. Upon his arrival at Kete-Krachi, therefore, 'Umar received a cold reception. Local Muslim leaders, especially the chief and Imam of Kete-Krachi, felt intimidated by 'Umar's prestige and scholarly superiority. It soon became evident to him that prospects of settling at Kete-Krachi were gloomy. He therefore decided to try his luck elsewhere in surrounding towns. However, he would soon come to discover the fruitlessness of his efforts. His reputation preceded him whenever he went and people received him in acrimony and malevolence. On one occasion

which he captures in a memorable qaṣīdah,⁴⁸ he recalls how leading members of the town of Gambaga, ganged up and plotted against him, until he was forced to depart in fear.

30. I left our Krachi⁴⁹ in the year sh.k s.d.⁵⁰
I say I departed from it out of hatred and to foreswear;
31. Until I arrived at Gambāga⁵¹ which has been ascribed
Good qualities, but it tuned out to be a lie.
32. An ignorant, devious and immoral chief is there,
Hater of people of Ilāhu al-`Arsh,⁵² an oppressor;
33. He has exceeded all bounds of foolishness and perfidy,
He worships idols and graven images.
34. What an evil man the Imam of Gambāga is!
Enemy of the Lord of humankind. Allah be praised! Allah be praised!
35. I did not find a house to shelter in;
Or helper, no, or provision,
36. Because that inane man has overpowered them,
As is Allah's wont often with reprobates.
37. This envious man detested us without a cause;
Hating us for the mundane, suffice it as stupidity.
38. We are people who guide humankind, I say this without boast;
Our job is to show religion to those who follow religion.
39. For that, the ignorant become furious with us.
Tell him to go and die, what should have been, has been.
40. We were not seeking to wrest power from anyone,
Even his imamate, I swear by Allah, we did not covet.

⁴⁸ Alḥājj `Umar b. Abī Bakr b. `Uthmān, IAS/AR.117.

⁴⁹ Town, in Volta region of Ghana, where Umar later moved to from Salaga, to take up residence.

⁵⁰ Arabic ciphering sh = 1000, k = 20, s = 300, d = 4, total 1324 AH or c. 1906. This is by the Maghribī ciphering system where s = 300; in the sharqī it is equivalent to 60.

⁵¹ A town in Northern Ghana.

⁵² Attribute of Allah meaning God of the Throne.

41. He thinks we are like them as his goal is the mundane,
What a difference between us, [Oh] what a difference, what a difference!
42. As for my reward truly it has been prescribed,
For the noble-minded⁵³ have kept record of it.
43. His partners in deceit have multiplied;
I have witnessed the sly intrigues of enemies in various forms.
44. But know that in Gambāga, there are devoted men of God.
However, their chief was a Hāmāna.⁵⁴
45. Quit this and that, then resume your words in verse,
About the beloved who surpassed all rivalry,
46. In knowledge, deeds, good manners and pious abstinence,
Chastity and generosity, suffice that as adoration;
47. Add happy mien and characteristics of good will
With humility, take those as standards [of good behavior].
48. When they hatched their plot, woe betide them, they lied,
They embellished their words when the liars told their lies.
49. Their leaders alleged that I would dominate them.
And most of them became devilish through envy,
50. We flew away quickly out of fear and dread;
We have, however, put our trust in our Lord.
51. We had wanted to visit the tomb of our master
Muhammad, grandfather of Salmān; that was why we travelled.
52. So close was your land, but we did not find an entranceway;
Nor a honorable person to achieve our aspiration.
53. For the fear of dishonor, as people have spread falsehood

⁵³ Kirām al-Kātibīn are angels who keep record of human deeds.

⁵⁴ The name is mentioned several times in the Qur’ān in relation to one close confidant of Pharaoh during the time of Moses. He appears to be Pharaoh’s overseer of sorts, and so ‘Umar’s analogy.

And calumnies about us across those lands.

54. Because of that I aimed straight until I landed in Tamale,
Veering off your town we were not able to see each other,

55. Until I entered Salaga⁵⁵ in flight and fear.

This qaṣīdah vividly reflects the difficult moments ‘Umar had to confront, in his bid to find suitable refuge after he left Salaga. As one reads from some of his qaṣīdahs composed during this period of his life, one begins to wonder what sort of man he was, that could attract so much antagonism and hatred from people around. After all he had hardly spent four years in Salaga itself, much less in surrounding towns, where he might have not even visited before. In order to understand the motivations of these feelings that caused ‘Umar so much pain and undue inconvenience, we need to closely examine his life and how he related to his contemporaries in general. To begin with, the level of ‘Umar’s knowledge in Arabic and Islamic sciences was outstandingly remarkable compared to scholars of his social milieu. Many testimonies have confirmed that he was one of the most knowledgeable Muslim scholars living at that time within the region.⁵⁶ Furthermore, his students, who had by this time begun to grow in numbers, had made his reputation known across the towns. He was no more a stranger to people wherever he went. Such people of wide fame and reputation would scarcely live without attracting envy and grudge from peers. There is no denying the fact that ‘Umar’s scholarly achievements earned him respect and deference from people of all social ranks and background. In communities such as in Africa, mālams, such as ‘Umar, have

⁵⁵ Town in Northern Ghana where ‘Umar first resided when he came to the region.

⁵⁶ Many of these testimonies came from Europeans who became acquainted with him at the time, such as Adam Mischlich, the German colonial administrator who cultivated his friendship for many years while he was in Africa as well as the British anthropologists Robert Sutherland Rattray according to who “The Gold Coast, or rather its mandated area, is fortunate in being the home of the most eminent, perhaps, of those Hausa mallams or teachers who have a wide local reputation.” Quoted in Pilaszewicz (2000, 15).

significant roles to play as religious and social leaders, and are thereby able to wield immense authority and power. There is lack of cases when political leaders had felt threatened by community mālams and had adopted covert or overt measures to curb them. The case of Uthman dan Fodio, in the late eighteenth century, and the pre-jihād Hausa leaders is the most obvious and comparable to that of ‘Umar. As dan Fodio’s reputation in learning and eloquence grew, he came to wield more authority and influence around him and became more threatening to the traditional Hausa authorities. It was only a matter of time before he led and successfully carried out his jihād that overthrew them. There are no indications, judging from his works, that ‘Umar entertained any revolutionary ideas to develop a jihād like dan Fodio. One cannot, however, dismiss the presence of certain tendencies for outbursts of passion which he exhibited in some of his virulent attacks against opponents either personal or social. It is sufficient to recall his diatribes leveled against, for instance, a Mahdi imposter called Musa⁵⁷ as well another one that he composed to detract an intruder who criticized his pronunciation of “Allah” in the phrase “Alḥamd lil-lāh.”⁵⁸ Note how he vents his venom on the intruder in these verses:

3. They invaded our school insolently and shamefully,
And what they concocted about us became devilish insinuations,
4. Alleging that we mispronounced the Almighty’s name,⁵⁹
How unfortunate is their error. O damnation upon damnation!
5. They knew nothing on the subject of morphology,
And how could they know *tauriyā*?⁶⁰ They have become *jawāmīs*.⁶¹

⁵⁷ See Mss, IAS/AR 109 (ii), 135.

⁵⁸ See Mss, IAS/AR. 121 and 137.

⁵⁹ الله

⁶⁰ Double meaning, polysemy, ambiguity, dissimulation.

6. One of them approached us deceptively,
He wanted to test our mind and lay a trap.
7. We said to him, “You are perfidious, so do not approach.”
We did not want to keep him close or intimate.

Some of his poems and pronouncements, discernible across his writings, portray 'Umar as a Muslim community scholar conscious of his role as watch dog over social and moral behavior. As consequence, he felt the ethical responsibility to critique and denounce any sign of ethical deviation, in order to preserve honor, respect and devotion among the community. He would scarcely compromise on these principles. Would these idiosyncrasies not arouse resentments and disquiet the minds of people who derive power from injustice and social oppression? It was therefore no wonder that 'Umar failed to find refuge anywhere after he left Salaga in 1896.

2. 3. 'Umar's Life in Kete-Krachi

The twin towns of Kete-Krachi located, about a hundred miles south-east of the town of Salaga, were very close adjoining settlements. They were, however, ethnically distinctive and separate, until the Germans arrived and established administrative quarters there in late 1894. Relations between the two communities had been all but cordial.⁶² The migrant Kete

⁶¹ *جواميس* is the plural of *جاموس* which means buffalo. It is borrowed from Persian *کوامیش* (*kawāmīsh*). The poet uses it here either for the rhyme or as metaphor for illiterateness. The word is also the Hausa *Ajamī* pronunciation for German, thereby insinuating perhaps that their speech is unintelligible like German to Hausas.

⁶² Ferguson (1973, 19) gives account of the historical background of how these two communities came to exist side by side. “The Hausas, and other Muslims, moved southwest from Salaga to the land of the Krachi people between 1874 and 1880. It was inconceivable that they would settle at Krachikrom. First, the Krachi people would never have permitted it for they were a homogeneous settled community which worshipped at a common shrine. In contrast, the newcomers were not Krachis, spoke a different language, pursued different occupations, were often transient as traders, and would never worship at their shrine. The two communities appeared to be incompatible.

The pursuit of Trade by the Hausa people, however, encouraged them to remain nearby Krachikrom in the face of opposition from many of the people at Krachikrom. The traders settled two miles away from Krachikrom at a site called Kete. The Hausas say they were never concerned about spreading Islam into this region, for “the Krachis were lost.” This was, of course, a recognition of the strength of the Dente fetish in the

inhabitants, who were mostly Hausa and Muslims, despised the Krachis' profanity and "reprobate" fetishism fostered by the powerful Dente Bossomfe priest and his entourage. Similar feelings were equally harbored towards this migrant community by the Krachis, who felt, besides, that these renters owed them more respect and deference than despise. The two sides, however, kept their mutual feelings of animosity restrained as they both needed each other for the sake of the trade. And the situation would probably have continued to remain peaceful if the Germans did not interfere - as they had been doing since their arrival - in sheer demonstration of absolute authority. They did not conceal their preference for the Hausa merchant community over the local indigenes because of their invested economic interest in the promotion of trade. Their first provocative act was arbitrarily banning the payment of taxes imposed upon the merchants by Krachi leaders. What became most unbearable to the chief of Krachis and his council, however, was the German administrator's scorn for them on first visiting the *Sarkin Zongo* (equivalent to ward leader) of Kete (in utter disregard of all customary decorum), and then requiring him and his entourage to come over and pay him respect there. The chief could not restrain his anger and fury any longer on arrival at the house of *Sarkin Zongo*. He showed his disdain by verbally insulting the German administrator who would order him and the Dente priest executed.⁶³ After so many years of co-existence the two communities have never been able to forget their mutual animosity as its repercussions rebounded as late as 2005.⁶⁴

region. The Hausa position was to co-exist to pursue trade; the Krechi position was to get the "strangers" out." See also Abass Umar Muhammed (2003, chapter III).

⁶³ See Ferguson (1973, 20 – 22) about how this incident developed; also Samuel Aniegye Ntewusu, "Kete Krachi under German Rule: 1894 – 1920 in *Germany and its West African Colonies: "Excavations" of German Colonialism in Post-colonial Times*, Wazi Apoh and Bea Lundt (eds) (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 2013), 233 - 245.

⁶⁴ As late as Monday, February 2005, an article entitled "Two Killed in Clashes in Volta Region" featured on www.ghanaweb.com announcing the break of inter-ethnic clashes between people of Kete and krachi towns. A spokesperson from the Kete group was quoted as saying "... it was rather an attack on the Muslim settlement on

This was the general state of affairs within the communities of Kete-Krachi when 'Umar moved there from Salaga in 1896. He could not fully anticipate the cold reception reserved for him at Kete having considered it both religiously and socially "home." The Kete leadership at that time (headed by the *Sarkin Zongo*, Audu Badi and Imam Gado) could not entertain 'Umar's imposing presence in their community, as it jeopardized their own authority and influence. So 'Umar had to wait for almost another four years before circumstances would bring light back again into his life.⁶⁵

Eventually the German authorities, who had been keeping close watch over activities within the two communities, became aware of contraventions to their laws being perpetrated by no common person other than *Sarkin Zongo*, Audu Badi. They soon arrested and jailed him for six months. When he was released later, he could not survive for long, as he died soon thereafter. According to Ferguson (1973, 25), a member of the community who could still recall the event informed him that, after Audu Badi's burial, 'Umar went and stood beside the tomb and said "God will not be compassionate with Audu Badi! Munkar and Nakiri,⁶⁶ ask him about everything he did in this world! Ask him daily! Don't stop!" 'Umar's position within the community was still precarious, though, as the chief Imam Gado continued to entertain resentment towards him and begrudged him his superior knowledge and high social prestige. Months later when a new *sarkin Zongo* was appointed to succeed

one side of the town namely Kete by their settler sisters dominating the Krachi side of the town, namely Krachis" (<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/regional/artikel.php?ID=74906>; accessed: 10/10/2014).

⁶⁵ Information regarding 'Umar's migration from Salaga and his final settlement in Kete is not clear. While Ferguson (1973), Abdul-Razak (1996), Pilaszewicz (2000) all date his return to Kete from around 1900, Hunwick et al (2003, 587) claim that, "'Umar, headed for Kete Krakye, then a small trading station on the Volta. A quarrel with the *Sarkin Zongo* there, Audu Badi, induced 'Umar to leave, and he spent several years in Bagyemso (8° 04' N - 0° 14' W), Walewale (10° 21' N - 0° 48' W), and Gambaga (10° 32' N - 0° 26' W). He returned to Kete Krakye in 1907, after Audu Badi had been removed from office by the German administrator, and was appointed imam."

⁶⁶ Munkar and Nakir are two angels believed by Muslims who would interrogate the dead concerning their lives spent on earth. They would torture anyone who has not lived a pious life.

the deceased Audu Badi, it happened to be one of 'Umar's students. As much as he would prefer his teacher to assume the Imamate, it was not going to be easy deposing Imam Gado and replacing him without incurring displeasure from elderly conservative members of the community. The intellectual inadequacies of Imam Gado to continue to hold office of Imam in the presence of a more qualified candidate such as 'Umar was, however, difficult to hide. Members of the community became divided as voices were raised demanding change. It so came to pass, at the time, that a new administrative officer was just assigned to take charge of the Kete-Krachi station. Adam Mischlich (1864 – 1948) was a Protestant missionary who took charge of the administrative office. He was both a linguist and anthropologist with keen interest in studying the languages and cultures of colonial subjects, particularly the Hausa. Missionaries such as this became motivated in understanding the culture and language of practitioners of the only religion which proved a challenge to Christianity in the region: Islam. Adam Mischlich's arrival therefore seemed to augur well for 'Umar. He was soon made aware of the crisis developing in the community and decided to intervene. He gathered the people and demanded aspirants to the imamate to submit themselves to a reading test. He presented them with a copy of *Al-Qāmūs*, an Arabic dictionary compiled by the lexicographer Abū al-Ṭāhir b. Ibrahim Majd al-Dīn al-Fairuzabadi (1349 – 1414). It was an astute ruse: he realized that only a person versed in Arabic could conveniently read such a rare text, hardly known in far corners of Africa as he imagined. It did not take long to realize that 'Umar was the most qualified candidate and therefore most capable and deserving to assume the imamate of the community.⁶⁷ 'Umar did not express his triumph with vindication, but went on to humbly accept a position which he believed God has assigned to him by right and which He would want him to execute with justice and impartiality. Thenceforth, 'Umar's

⁶⁷ See Ferguson, 1973, 25-26.

fortunes changed favorably as he settled down to face more challenging developments engendered by the new colonial establishment.

When he assumed the office of Imam in the Kete community 'Umar's sphere of influence within the region expanded. His first task consisted in organizing his school and beginning to deliver lessons in varieties of subjects in the Islamic sciences. He was kept preoccupied throughout the day. From morning to night, his time was devoted to praying, reading, teaching, officiating Muslim social events, advising and resolving disputes, and at times travelling upon invitations across the country, as far as Kumasi, Accra, Tamale, Tetemu, etc. But he still had time to write some memorable texts in classical Arabic as well as Hausa Ajami. 'Umar became also very active and prominent in contemporary colonial politics that concerned Muslims within the Gold Coast Colony especially. He gained respect and trust of colonial officials, both British and German, and maintained cordial relations with them without in anyway compromising his commitments towards his African constituency at large, particularly Muslims. His opinions and views were often sought for by colonial officials, regarding many matters of social, religious as well as political importance to the community. Holger Weiss (2008, 245.n301) mentions how 'Umar was highly regarded, by both colonial authorities and locals, by virtue of his learning and social status as "the most esteemed Muslim scholar of his time." As a consequence "Imam 'Umar was able to establish himself as a kind of 'peace broker' who was called upon in (sic) by both local Muslim communities and colonial authorities to solve internal disputes in the *zongos*." In the twentieth century (around the twenties) when the Ahmadiyya Muslim movement started evangelizing work in Ghana, some of their pronouncements raised concerns from local Muslim groups, and colonial authorities were called upon to intervene in order to forestall

potential confrontations that might threaten public security and peace. According to Holger Weiss (2008, 284 -285), at the initiative of the local Ahmadiyya representative,

The DC called a meeting, which was attended by several key Muslim scholars, including Imam 'Umar of Kete and the *sarkin zongo* of Kumasi, Malam Salo (sic) Katsina. However, the listening ended in a dispute between Imam 'Umar and Mauliv Hakeem and the Muslim delegation left.

This goes to show how influential 'Umar had already become within Gold Coast socio-political spheres by the mid-twenties. Furthermore, Holger Weiss also cites an instance that demonstrated the extent to which 'Umar's prestige had gained esteem and acknowledgement from colonial authorities. He recounts how in 1930 'Umar prevailed upon the Commissioner of the Southern Province Duncan-Johnstone to intervene on behalf of the local community of Kete, by overriding the Omahene of Krachi's attempt to impose an objectionable candidate as *Sarkin Zango* on the people of Kete. He argued that the said nominee was an ex-Gurinshi slave and the community did not feel comfortable with such a person leading them; they should be rather allowed to make their own choice. Thereupon, the Commissioner gratified his demand.⁶⁸

It would be fair to say that quite substantial interest has so far developed about 'Umar and his work relative to the general research on Sub-Saharan Muslim histories. Unfortunately there is still a great deal about the life of this great Muslim scholar that we ignore. For instance, our knowledge about his family background in Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto and Kete-Krachi is scanty. From all indications, 'Umar did not take a wife until he was probably in his thirties, when he had completed his studies and moved to Gonja land. On his trip to Mecca, to perform the ḥājj, sources mention that he was accompanied by “one of his wives and his

⁶⁸ Holger Weiss, 2008, 275.n102.

son, Muhammadu Labbu.”⁶⁹ This was in 1913. We do not know how many wives he had at this time, nor the number of children. This son unfortunately did not survive him. He died some years after their return and ‘Umar was disconsolate. He poured out his lament in an elegy composed in his memory beginning,

1. *Mā bālu Hindin na’at annā bi gayri Qilā*
Wa sārat ‘anbā’uhā yutlā malā wa milā

(1. Why has Hind deserted us without our showing ill
Such that her news is chanted in full tune and in chorus)

‘Umar had an only surviving son, however, Imam Abubakari Titibrika, who Ferguson was fortunate to meet with during his field work and who provided him with such relevant information that he could recall of the father.

2.4. ‘Umar’s working relations with Europeans.

As mentioned above, Adam Mischlich, the new German administrative officer, became acquainted with ‘Umar when he was called upon to arbitrate over the controversial imamate of Kete. As soon as he discerned his tremendous abilities and knowledge in Arabic, he was determined to use him in achieving his linguistic and anthropological aspirations.

Consequently, ‘Umar became his primary informant in learning the Hausa language as well as eliciting anthropological and historical data on the Hausa people and their affiliates. Adam Mischlich kept regular schedules to meet with ‘Umar and study under him. He also persuaded him to write down historical accounts of the Hausa, their ethnicities, the Fulani, their jihād and their caliphate, including also accounts of other ethnicities like the Zabarama, Gonja, Dagomba, Gunrinshi, and cities such as Sokoto, Kano, Zamfara, Katsina, Kebbi, Bauchi and Nupe. When later he returned to Germany, Mischlich was able to publish two

⁶⁹ Pilaszewicz (2000, 14).

books⁷⁰ and a number of articles from 'Umar's collection, according to Pilaszewicz (2000, 25). Subsequently, the collection would also become one of the most important archival primary sources for studying aspects of social, cultural and political life of the region, in addition to providing relevant insight about the life of its author, 'Umar.⁷¹ Mischlich regarded 'Umar as one of the greatest Muslim intellectuals found in Africa during his time. In an introduction to a book of fables on Africa he authored in 1929, he briefly comments,

My principal informant was for many years the intelligent and very gifted Imam Umaru from Kano who, having made a tour through Hausaland the Sudan, lived for some time in Salaga and eventually came to Kete in Togo. [.....] He knew the entire Koran by heart and spoke Arabic easily. He understood neither German nor English so that we communicated with each other in Hausa. He was in possession of a very well stocked library, with many commentaries on the Koran. [.....] Imam Umaru saw, and became acquainted with a large part of Africa. He broadened his spiritual outlook in an unusual way, and was able to comment upon any question. He knew in detail the history of his country, especially starting from the time of its conquest by the Fulani.⁷²

In yet another monograph authored in 1942, Mischlich reveals his high admiration of 'Umar and further elaborates upon their relationship during those years of his colonial administrative duties in Africa:

One can judge from his familiarity with all aspects of the African cultural life that this man is not a common phenomenon. One is surprised in seeing how thorough his education [.....]. He was my principal informant in the research on the Hausa language, and after we had associated with each other for many years, often, every day, I eventually went with him to Misahohe in Middle Togo, where I was responsible for the District Office. Here he was very helpful to me in the continuation of my inquiries about Muslim customs and habits.⁷³

⁷⁰ These consist of a grammar of Hausa entitled *Lehrbuch der hausanischen Sprache*, 1902; 2nd ed. 1911 and a German Hausa Dictionary entitled *Worterbuch der Hausasprache*, 1906. (Pilaszewicz, 2000, 25.n12).

⁷¹ The first of these studies was Ferguson's 1973 PhD dissertation which translated and commented of 'Umar's writings, entitled "Nineteenth Century Hausaland Being a Description by Imam Imoru of the Land, Economy and Society of his People."

⁷² Quoted and translated in Pilaszewicz, (2000, 23), from Adam Mischlich, *Neue Märchen Aus Afrika*. (Leipzig: R. Voigtländer, 1929), 131.

⁷³ Quoted and translated in Pilaszewicz (2000, 23) from Adam Mischlich, *Über Die Kulturen Im Mittel-Sudan: Landwirtschaft, Gewerbe, Handel Unter Beifügung Der Haussa-Texte* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1942) vii.

We have already referred to the German explorer, trader and linguist, Krause as the first European who 'Umar had made contact with in Salaga. Krause also had enlisted 'Umar's pedagogical services during their residence in Salaga. Since 'Umar could not communicate in any European language, the two communicated in Hausa, as Krause (like Mischlich) was already familiar with the language. Under Krause's guidance, 'Umar had also written down a number of essays on the history, culture and society of the Hausa, which would later be published in Europe. After Krause departed for Germany (a year after their meeting) he kept correspondence with 'Umar. And in the letter which he wrote in Ajami, Krause "describes 'Umar as a man of acute intelligence and of universal interest in great historical events of his time."⁷⁴ It is quite evident that Krause also had discerned 'Umar's immense knowledge and intellectual importance for an understanding of African historical events of his times.

Most of the Europeans who were able to make his acquaintance seemed quite impressed by the level of 'Umar's intelligence and scholarly abilities. In similar manner, the British lawyer and anthropologist, Robert Sutherland Rattray (1881 – 1938) could not hold his admiration of him and extolled his erudition and intelligence. He even deferred to 'Umar and considered himself as his "humble disciple." His enthusiasm carried him to say of 'Umar that "The Gold Coast, or rather its mandated area, is fortunate in being the home of the most eminent, perhaps, of those Hausa mallams or teachers, who have wide local reputation."⁷⁵

2.5. Spiritual Transformation

In 1913, with the help of Adam Mischilch, 'Umar embarked upon the pilgrimage to Mecca, accompanied by his wife and young son. We lack adequate information concerning this

⁷⁴ Quoted in Pilaszewicz (2000, 22).

⁷⁵ Robert, Sutherland Rattray, "Hausa Poetry", in *Essays Presented to C. G. Seligman*, eds. E. Evans Pritchard et al. (London: Kegan Paul, 1934), 255; quoted in Pilaszewicz 2000, 15.

historic travel undertaken by 'Umar. It is, however, worth noting that the next year 1914 had marked the breakout of the First World War that created widespread insecurity across the world, especially in the Middle East, where Allied forces had to contend with Ottomans who were also in alliance with Germany. There are no echoes of this in 'Umar's extant works which might raise some wonder at this absence of pilgrims' experiences of this war anywhere in his work. Could the effects of the war not have raised any concern among pilgrims at this time? 'Umar returned home around 1918.

It would be stating the obvious to declare that this sojourn had transformed him spiritually. It did, however, in one significant sense which makes it relevant to mention here. Before his journey to Mecca, 'Umar, in consonance with most scholars directly associated with the intellectual tradition of the Fulani Caliphate, was an adherent of the Qādiriyya Sufi order. It was the official Sufi order espoused by 'Uthman dan Fodio and his family. While in Mecca, 'Umar made acquaintance with a *muqaddam* of the Tijjāniyya by name Alfa Hāshim (d. 1930), a nephew of Alḥājj 'Umar Tall. He was the nineteenth-century jihadist who succeeded in establishing a large Islamic Empire in the Western Sudan, before his death in 1864. 'Umar Tall was the primary propagator of the Tijjāniyya *ṭarīqah* across the Sahel region. This was after his return from Mecca where he had officially been initiated absolute propagator and khalifa of the Tjāniyya *ṭarīqah* by no other person than Aḥmad Tijjānī's (the founder) immediate disciple and companion, Sidi Muhammad al-Ghālī (d. 1244/1829). A great of number of *silsilāhs* converge to him. From the beginning of the twentieth century, his nephew who had then taken residence in Medina, met with West African pilgrims and initiated them into the *ṭarīqah*. Thus, 'Umar got initiated into the Tijjāniyya by Alfa Hāshim who also conferred the office of *muqaddam* upon him. Ferguson (1973, 33 and n.41),

however, claimed that, according to information he gathered from people who were conversant with the area, the Tijjāniyya did not have significant impact in the Kete during 'Umar's life.⁷⁶

2.6. General Impact

'Umar's impact on the dissemination of Arabic and Islamic culture, through his teachings and preaching, across the Western Sudan was immense. His fame transcended the immediate borders of the Volta Basin where he was residing. His students came from all over the regions, from Niger, Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Togo, Nigeria, Dahomey (Benin) and Ghana. Indeed Jack Goody believed that most of the Islamic schools that later sprang up across Ghana might have developed as consequence of the dispersal of malams and students of the "Salaga School."⁷⁷ It must be noted that at this time of the colonial era, there were three dominant influential Muslim teaching traditions prevalent in the region. These were the Hausa tradition that originated from Nigeria, the Jula tradition professed by groups of Mande ethnicities and the Fulani traditions imparted by scholars of Fulani ethnicity. Teachers usually attract students from their own ethnicities since the prevalent translation-methodology could only be carried out through a language familiar to both teacher and student. Because of the widespread of Hausa traders, indigenes with who they transacted business soon learned to speak their language, and over time Hausa developed to become a sort of lingua franca through which linguistically mutually unintelligible speakers, within the region, could effectively communicate. Consequently, Hausa is now spoken across many countries in the West African region apart from Niger and Nigeria, especially in Ghana, Togo

⁷⁶ See, however, Abdulai Idrissu, *Contesting Islam in Africa: Homegrown Wahhabism and Muslim Identity in Northern Ghana, 1920-2010* (Durham, N.C: Carolina Academic Press, 2013), 33 – 45; he believes that Sufism, especially Tijjaniyya, was prevalent in Salaga and its environs at the wake of colonialism.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Abdulai Idrissu, 2013, 36.

and Benin. This is what explains in part 'Umar's popularity and influence over other scholars, as he was able to attract students from all ethnicities other than Hausa. According to Ferguson (1973, 33),

Imoru drew students from as far off as the present day regions of Upper Volta and Nigeria, but most of them came from the Gold Coast Colony. His students were leaders in the Muslim communities of 40 or more towns, and he was especially close to those in the wealthy community of Kumasi.

'Umar's students were instrumental in spreading his knowledge across many parts of Ghana and the adjoining lands. Many of them became famous and influential mālams in turn and contributed significantly to the development of Muslim culture within the region. It is also noteworthy to mention that 'Umar received recognition and appreciation from many of these students as well, just as we have seen how his European students did not fail to acknowledge him as their teacher. The most prominent of all his students was, perhaps, Salaw. His father came from Katsina. He became settled in the northern town of Yendi, the seat of Dagbon chieftaincy, and married one of their princess who gave birth to many children, among them Salaw. After his studies with 'Umar, Salaw relocated to Kumasi where he would later become *Sarkin Zongo* of the Hausa community. 'Umar was very fond of him and had composed a number of qaṣīdahs in his praise in which he extolled his generosity and benevolence towards him. Despite his high status and the privilege he held in society, Salaw always deferred before 'Umar and continued to serve him as humble student. Salaw rose to become very powerful in Kumasi, and in 1907 the British colonial administration appointed him Qādī over Muslim affairs. Indeed his power of jurisdiction went beyond even the Hausa community when he jailed the Asanthe in 1930 for an infraction of the law. Salaw is immortalized today in some of 'Umar's writing.

Today it has become almost impossible to give an adequate assessment of 'Umar's impact as teacher, in terms of his contribution towards the teaching and training of scholars and teachers, both of his generation and later. There can, however, be no doubt about the extent and lasting effect of this contribution within present-day Ghana specifically, as well as other towns and cities across the region. The lack of sustained research interest regarding the scope, nature, structure and distinct organizational patterns of Islamic scholarship, from precolonial times up to today, within the West African region in particular and Sub-Saharan African in general, has left our knowledge of the field barely tentative and speculative. The reason for this can partly be attributed to the Eurocentric intellectual mentality of African scholarship and research efforts. The colonial anthropological premise of esteeming precolonial African knowledge production as of less critical value, by European standard, continues to shape the mental attitudes and judgments of even prominent scholars across Africa. These attitudes unfortunately are residues of such racial prejudice of anthropological promulgation as the "Hamitic theory" as well as a religious antagonistic tendency of colonial Europe to undervalue and degrade Muslim knowledge among Black Africans, in order to make it less challenging to a dominating Euro-Christian intellectual self-conceit. This is what Vico (1999, 76 – 77) has critically referred to in his axioms as the tendency of people to evaluate what is unknown to them by imposing their own familiar and present standards, the conceit of nations and the conceit of scholars.⁷⁸

Although one cannot deny the fact that significant changes are occurring in research regarding Muslim indigenous productions, in both Arabic and Ajami, across Sub-Saharan Africa, yet still, it is bewildering to realize how ignorant most African scholars pretend to be of its existence and value.

⁷⁸ See axioms 2, 3 and 4 in Giambatista Vico, *New Science* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 76 – 77.

Alḥājj 'Umar is remembered today not only for his selfless pedagogical services to mankind, but for his effective and judicious communal leadership during the first part of colonial control over West Africa. He had rendered invaluable services to both German and British colonial administrators, without in any way compromising or betraying his duties towards the African communities. He is more remembered for these contributions as well as his prodigious intellectual contribution to African scholarship. On Friday the seventeenth of the month of Rabī'ul 'Awwal, 1353 of the Muslim calendar (30th June, 1934), 'Umar had just officiated the grand opening of his renovated mosque in Kete. Many of his students, community leaders, mālams and other dignitaries were invited. He might have just finished reciting the Quran when he suddenly collapsed in the hands of one of the students and died.⁷⁹ He had already foreseen this day, as far back as 1930 when he wrote to the colonial authorities for permission to be interred in his mosque when he passes away.⁸⁰ In fulfilment to this wish he was thus buried in the structure whose opening he just celebrated. One of his students later said in *rithā'* of him,

God created the sun and the moon,
today the two have vanished.

Now, we have only the stars;
the stars which witnessed their departure.

So, I ask all the stars,
where has the sunshine gone?

We are told, our Shaikh Imoru has left us.

The grave where he lies is shining;
the light of God radiates from it.

He came into this world to teach us;

⁷⁹ See Ferguson, 1973, 36; Pilaszewicz, 2000, 15.

⁸⁰ Holger Weiss, 2008, 267.

He has returned to the Creator whose light shines bright!⁸¹

2.7. 'Umar's Literary Works

'Alḥājj 'Umar had been active and productive throughout his life. We cannot effectively assess the full extent of his intellectual contribution, owing in part to lack of access to adequate and certain primary information on him and in part to lack of sincere commitment from the scientific community at large to devote resources, human and material, in developing research interest on him. It was from the mid-sixties of the twentieth century that 'Umar's significance came to the attention of the intellectual community, following efforts made by faculty and staff of the newly founded Institute for African Studies of the University of Ghana, Legon. Through the combined efforts of scholars like Ivor Wilks, Thomas Hodgkin, J. R. Braimah, Jack Goody, with the assistance of a local Muslim scholar from Kintampo, Alḥājj 'Uthmān b. Ishāq Boyo, a collection of Muslim literary production began to be gathered from Muslims in the region. Approximately 500 manuscripts which made up the initial collection were predominantly represented by works produced by 'Umar.⁸² Some of his productions stirred significant interest and admiration from Africanist researchers. This led a student like Ferguson to devote his PhD thesis research to examining some other writings of 'Umar which began to be published in Germany at this time. They formed part of the compositions 'Umar authored at the initiative of his German "student" colonial acquaintances. Meanwhile, in Warsaw, Professor Stanislaw Pilaszewicz, had been focusing research efforts in studying, translating and publishing, all writings of 'Umar that came to his attention. His invaluable PhD work, written in Polish and later published in 1981, remains of

⁸¹ Alḥājj Muhammad Tetemo, IAS/AR.238 quoted in Ferguson, 1973, 39-40.

⁸² The collection which has been designated IAS/AR are kept by the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon; copies of the original collection were also donated to the Northwestern University by Professor Ivor Wilks at his retirement and are preserved as *Arabic Manuscripts from West Africa: A Catalog of the Herskovits Library Collection*; <http://digital.library.northwestern.edu/arbms/>.

limited accessibility to all but those who can understand Polish. Around the nineties, he became aware of Mischlich's collection, and undertook to edit and publish them into a book entitled *Hausa Prose Writings in Ajami, by Alhaji Umaru*. At last the writings of 'Umar have thus become available to the international scientific community. 'Umar's literary works can be grouped into poetic and prose compositions.

2.7.1. 'Umar's Poetry

The study of poetry, in its classical form, had constituted a significant part of Muslim traditional studies at advanced levels. Conventional wisdom grounded in sayings and attitudes attributed to the Prophet, his companions and other Arab and Muslim personalities have fostered memorization and study of Arabic poetry, especially in its classical form, as essential to understanding the Quranic discourse. The following quotations represent just a few of many of those sayings that constitute that conventional wisdom,

1- "إن من البيان لسحراً، وإن من الشعر لحكماً"⁸³

1. There is captivating charm in eloquence; there is wisdom in poetry

2- "إن من الشعر لحكمة، فإذا ألبس عليكم شيء من القرآن فالتمسوه في الشعر، فإنه عربي."⁸⁴

2. There is wisdom in poetry, whenever something becomes difficult for you to comprehend from the Qur'an, look for it(s) [explanation] in poetry, for it is the Arabic koine.

3- وروي عن عمر قوله: "نعم ما تعلمته العرب الأبيات من الشعر يقدمها الرجل أمام حاجته فيستنزل بها الكريم، ويستعطف بها اللئيم، مع ما للشعر من عظم المزية، وشرف الأبيية، وعز الأنفة، وسلطان القدرة."⁸⁵

3. It is narrated from 'Umar (RA'), his saying: "The most beneficent thing that Arabs learn are verses of poetry that a person can recite when he is in need in order to get the generous to yield it to him, or to mollify the ignoble; because of poetry's [ability to inspire] great virtues, lofty sense of nobility, prideful sense of self-esteem, and powerful authority.

4- قال ابن عباس: "إذا أعياكم تفسير آية من كتاب الله، فاطلبوه في الشعر، فإنه ديوان العرب."⁸⁶

⁸³ Famously attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) through various traditions quoted in Jawād 'Alī, *Al-Mufaṣṣal Fī Ta'rīkh Al-'Arab Qabla Al-Islām*, 4th ed. Vol. 17 (Beirut: Dār Al-'Ilm Lil-Malāyin, 1968), 64, (<http://shamela.ws/browse.php/book-7299/page-1#page-5949>; accessed, 10/30/1914).

⁸⁴ Attributed to the Prophet (SAW), quoted in Jawād 'Alī, 1968, 64 (source and access as in n. 47).

⁸⁵ Attribution to 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (RA') quoted in Jawād 'Alī, 1968, 65 (source and access as in n. 47).

⁸⁶ Attribution to Ibn al-'Abbās (RA') quoted in Jawād 'Alī, 1968, 65-66 (source and access as in n. 47).

4. Ibn 'Abbās (RA') said: "Whenever the interpretation of a qur'anic verse proves to be challenging to you refer it to Poetry, because it is the record of the Arabs.

5- وقيل إنه -أي ابن عباس- ما فسّر آية من كتاب الله، إلا نزع فيها بيتًا من الشعر.⁸⁷

5. It is said that he – that is Ibn 'Abbās – never interpreted a verse from the Book of God, without citing a verse of poetry [that relates to it].

6- وأنه [عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه] كتب إلى أبي موسى الأشعري: "مُرْ من قِبَلِكَ بتعلم الشعر، فإنه يدل على معالي الأخلاق، وصواب الرأي، ومعرفة الأنساب."⁸⁸

6. And he - ['Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, (RA')] – wrote to Abī Mūsā al-Ash'arī saying: "Exhort the people [who are under you] to learn the Poetry, because it teaches noble virtues, good sense of judgment and the knowledge of genealogy."

7- قال العسكري: "لا تعرف أنساب العرب وتواريخها وأيامها وقائعها إلا من جملة أشعارها، فالشعر ديوان العرب وخرانة حكمتها ومستنبت آدابها ومستودع علومها."⁸⁹

7. al-'Askari said: "Arab genealogy as well as their histories, wars and events can only be known from the totality of their Poetry; for Poetry is the Arabs' historical record, the storehouse of their wise-sayings as well as the source of their literature and reservoir of their sciences."

8- فالشعر سلاح ماضٍ عند العرب، مثل الأسلحة الأخرى وربما كان أمضى منها أثرًا في نفوسهم لما كان يفعله فيهم، وكذلك النثر من أثر في النفوس يحملهم على الإقدام وعدم التهيّب من الموت.⁹⁰

8. Poetry is a sharp cutting weapon for the Arabs, just like other weapons; and perhaps it cut is more penetrating in their souls because of the effect it engenders upon them. Likewise their prose, it has a strong impact on them that could drive them to surge forward into the [mouth] of death without fear."

It is evidently clear, from the above quotes, how significant poetry was considered to be as an essential tool for the effective study of the Islamic sciences. Indeed it was in great part what inspired and promoted the mass philological collection and codification of classical Arabic poetry during the Abbassīd era. Reynold Nicholson (1956, 282) has observed that,

Accordingly the Moslem sciences which arose at this time proceeded in the first instance from the Koran and the Ḥadīth. The sacred books offered many difficulties both to provincial Arabs and especially to Persians and other Moslems of foreign extraction. For their right understanding a knowledge of Arabic grammar and philology was essential, and this involved the study of

⁸⁷ Also attributed to Ibn al-'Abbās (RA') and quoted in Jawād 'Alī, 1968, 66 (source and access as in n. 47).

⁸⁸ Attribution to 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (RA') quoted in Jawād 'Alī, 1968, 71 (source and access as in n. 47).

⁸⁹ Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. 1005) Arab scholar and literary critic; wrote *Kitāb al-Ṣinā'atayn* from which the quotation is extracted (source and access as in n. 47).

⁹⁰ Jawād 'Alī, 2001, 69 (source and access as in n. 47).

the ancient Pre-Islamic poems which supplied the most authentic models of Arabian speech in its original purity. The study of these poems entailed researches into genealogy and history, which in the course of time became independent branches of learning. Similarly the science of Tradition was systematically developed in order to provide Moslems with practical rules for the conduct of life in every conceivable particular, and various schools of Law sprang into existence.

The study of classical Arabic poetry still remains an essential part of Muslim educational tradition in West Africa up until today. 'Umar, like many Muslim scholars across Africa, was exposed to this literature during his studies and had successfully assimilated its features into his style as we can clearly observe through his compositions. Indeed as Pilaszewicz (2000, 16) observes,

His local fame is mainly based on a substantial corpus of his praiseworthy Arabic poems. They attracted the attention of a dozen or so scholars from both Africa and overseas. [And] [a]ccording to T. Hodgkin (1966:453), Alhaj Umaru was the most interesting and historically significant poet of Western Africa. He went on to say "His poems might be described as making poetry the vehicle of social commentary, social criticism, and reflections on the history of his time" (Hodgkin 1966:454).

In fact Hodgkin (1969, 456) admiringly writes that

Other West African authors had of course, written poems of this type – but I do not know of any earlier writer who produced so remarkable a range of works dealing with such an interesting variety of events, situations and experiences.

Such esthetic appreciation, coming from the pen of a western critical scholar of Arabic literature as Hodgkin, could surely not be far from the truth about the literary skills manifested by 'Umar in his compositions. By the time of his death in 1934, 'Umar might have authored quite a substantial number of qaṣīdahs, in both the classical Arabic idiom and Ajami, only few of which survived. According to Pilaszewicz (2000, 16), his only surviving son Imam Abubakari Titibrika claimed that there could have been as many as a hundred and

twenty poems authored by his father before his death. Unfortunately, barely a fifth of this is today extant.

ʿUmar might have fully comprehended the important cultural role poetry and poets had played in ancient Arab society: as vehicle for boosting tribal eminence and mouthpiece to defend it among enemies. His poetry had addressed all the major motifs of classical Arabic poetry, including *madḥ* (praise), *hijāʾ* (satire), *rithāʾ* (elegy), *waṣf* (description), *shiʿr al-munāsabah* (occasional poems), in addition to the purely narrative and historical. We will be able to illustrate only a few of these motifs.

2.7.1.1. Shiʿr al-madḥ (Praise Poems)

There is no doubt that ʿUmar had effectively mastered the skill of composing the classical *madḥ* qaṣīdah in its structure, form and diction. Two main categories of *madḥ* can be identified in the literature of the Arabs: (1) tribal *madḥ* in which we see the poet extolling the virtues and noble attributes of his people and (2) the purely panegyric addressed to individuals. This latter can also be subdivided into: panegyric on behalf of the prophet Muhammad (SAW),⁹¹ which gradually developed into an independent literary genre by the thirteenth century with the composition of *qaṣīdah al-Burdah* (the Mantle Poem), by Imam Sharf al-Dīn Muhammad al-Būṣīrī (1211 – 1294), and panegyric composed in behalf of other people. We can find examples of all these motifs in ʿUmar’s collection. His *madḥ al-nabawī* consists of a *takhmīs* as well as a *tarbīʾ* of al-Būṣīrī’s *burdah*. In effect this is how the *Burdah* has effectively evolved among its composers throughout the ages. With regards to

⁹¹ Al-Būṣīrī’s qaṣīdah is a literary mimesis of the famous conversion qaṣīdah of Kaʿb b. Zuhayr, which he recited to the prophet, Muhammad, in order to conciliate him. The prophet became moved by the poem and took his cloak (*burdah*) and covered Kaʿb with it. It has since that time become the prototype of all later praises to the prophet beginning from al-Būṣīrī. See Suzanne Stekevych, *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muḥammad*. (Indiana University Press, 2010) as well as related articles authored also by her; and Zakī Mubārak, *Al-Madāʾih al-nabawīyah fī al-adab al-ʿArabī* (Cairo: Dar al-Katib al-Arabi, 1935), 199 – 200.

madh composed on behalf of individuals, 'Umar's *madā'ih* in praise of his student-patron, Salaw (once *sarki* of Kumasi, Ghana) are most prominent. The relationship that prevailed between 'Umar and Salaw was that of *shā'ir* (poet) and his *mamdūh* (patron). Salaw, who had studied under 'Umar, had maintained an intimate relation with his teacher and continued to serve him as inferior to superior (despite his social elevation) and bestowed expensive gifts and assistance upon him on several occasions. 'Umar had expressed his gratitude through a number of panegyrics that have survived. Suzanne Stetkevych⁹² has theorized the panegyric as symbolic token of gift exchange binding poet and *mamdūh*. The following are extant qaṣīdahs of this type composed by 'Umar:

- (1) qaṣīdah with *maṭla'* (من عند هند بصير) (بشري أذاك بشير)
- (2) qaṣīdah with *maṭla'* (لم نجد فيها دثار) (غادرت سلمى ديارا)
- (3) qaṣīdah with *maṭla'* (رب البرية موهب النعماء) (فتارك الخلاق نو الألائي)

Each of these qaṣīdahs is structured in the classical Arabic pattern. 'Umar opens his qaṣīdah with a conventional *nasīb* (prelude) in which the poet addresses an amatory proem to imaginary maidens over whom he had pined in vain. For instance in the prelude to the first qaṣīdah he says,

1. Good news brought by a herald,
From Hind,⁹³ well versed,⁹⁴
2. And from Sulaymā and Da'd,
And from Lamīs a sign,
3. And from Sumay and Laylā,⁹⁵
From each one an envoy.

⁹² See Professor Suzanne Stetkevych's outstanding works related to this in her works: *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993); and *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana UP, 2002).

⁹³ هند , Hind.

⁹⁴ Verses 1-16 form the *nasīb* or sensual prelude to the classical qaṣīda.

⁹⁵ The female names mentioned refer to those who inspired several classical poets writing in Arabic during the classical period.

4. My love for them is old,
Their dalliance is fiery.
5. I had a dialogue with a dove,
She will not fly from her bough.
6. Their hearts are empty,
Their promises are rumbling noises.
7. They have captivated my mind and heart,
It has become to me like a ripple.
8. They left me in agony
As if I am dead and buried.
9. They saw grey on my chin
And said this is an old camel.
10. He kept chasing them
Until the day was spent.
11. The night became dark, but he kept running
Until dawn approached;
12. He did not sleep for the whole night,
He was suffering from cold and hunger,
13. But he kept listening to their voices,
Like birds hearkening,
14. To the sound of an eagle hovering,
As if it was a mandolin.
15. But he had missed his heart's desire;
Suffice that as a great loss.
16. He became reduced and bereft,
As if he was an old ugly lizard.
17. Will you be my helper?
O you glower.
18. If you will not be my helper,
I have a mighty helper;
19. That is Salaw,⁹⁶ the amīr,⁹⁷

⁹⁶ The subject of the praise poem, Malam Salaw, Sarkin Zongo of Kumase.

The famous lion.

It is quite evident from this extract how 'Umar had fully adapted the classical amatory prelude not only in its structural details, but even the maiden names, Hind, Lamīs, Da'd and Sumay. In addition there is also the prototype image of the wailing dove that appears in most qaṣīdahs of the Jāhiliyyah period. However, the prelude still bears distinctive marks of 'Umar's originality. Besides these, 'Umar has also composed *madh* qaṣīdahs on behalf of communities where he was well received and treated with generous hospitality. Among these we can mention his qaṣīdahs in praise of the people of Tetemu and that in praise of the people of Yendi.

2.7.1.2 Shi'r al-hijā' (Satire Poems)

Satire is the mirror image of the *madh* genre. While in *madh* the poet extols the virtues of the *mamdūh*, satire reduces them and paints the *mahjū'* and all his kin with the most evil caricatures and moral fallibilities imaginable. Just like *madh*, *hijā'* was a common feature in classical Arabic literature. The rivalries and mutual antagonisms that marked ancient Arab tribal life fomented sustained attacks upon individuals and their kin. In *hijā'* the moral spirit of people are usually the target of caricature and any least blemish that could be recognized in individuals or their kin (past and present) became basis to create a plethora of grotesqueries in association of his person as well as his tribe.⁹⁸ 'Umar's *hijā'* was mainly levelled against people who were Muslims. For this reason most of his attacks reflected person's or community's religious immorality and depravation. In other words his standard of ethical judgment was more Islamic than really ethnical in comparison to the Arabs.

⁹⁷ Literally "commander," a reference to a titled political leader.

⁹⁸ See for instances the famous poetic flightings which became known as *naqā'id* between al-Jarīr (d. 728), on one hand, and al-Farazdaq (d. 729) and al-'Akhtal (d. 710), on the other.

As illustration we can cite his *hijā'* of a pretentious preacher who presented himself as Mahdi, called Mūsa⁹⁹ as well as a polemic levelled against another person who criticized his pronunciation of the phrase “al-ḥamdu li-Allah.” Mūsa was allegedly a Fulani from Adamawa in Nigeria who had come to the regions of the Volta Basin (then under British and German colonial rule) to declare religious revivalism and also call upon people to rise against the European colonialists. His activities did not settle well with either colonialists or local scholars like 'Umar who had at that time decided to adopt a pacifist stance vis-à-vis Europeans. Abdulai Iddrissu (2013, 45 – 48) has speculated that 'Umar was in part driven to attack Mūsa because of the threat he posed for 'Umar “with respect to his intellectual and religious prestige among the African Muslim communities.” Whatever his motivations were, 'Umar had reacted by writing a fierce tirade against this pretentious Mahdi, in which he painted him as an imposter and hypocrite, whose main goal was to acquire power over people and also to amass wealth. Mūsa's activities were, however, cut short as the colonialists became more and more alarmed of his potential threat to them. Consequently, he and his three associates were arrested, humiliated and deported from the area. 'Umar's *hijā'* is woven around Mūsa's activities from his arrival, his false preaching under the cloak of a hypocritical mystic, and money grabber. He also mentions how he was arrested, tied and pilloried and later deported and asked never to return. People in the community at large who supported and welcomed Mūsa and his associates did not escape 'Umar's invectives either.

The other personal *hijā'* 'Umar composed was a polemic written to express his personal indignation and fury at the guts of an intrusive visitor who scoffed at his pronunciation of “al-ḥamd li-Allah” in response to a student who had just completed his daily readings and thanked him. The intruder did not hesitate to censure 'Umar, citing a certain scholar as point

⁹⁹ See Holger Weiss, 2008, 203 – 207; Abdulai Iddrissu, 2013, 43 – 48.

of authority; a scholar 'Umar said who had never been known throughout the region or beyond. In his *hijā'* 'Umar's rage was evident as he went on to castigate his adversary, denouncing his pretensions to scholarship and learning, asking him to return and learn well the books of acknowledged scholars. At the same time he boasted of his own erudition and vast learning and knowledge of philosophical intellectual authorities, both Muslim and western.

'Umar has also levelled satire against communities. For instance he had reviled leaders of the town of Gambaga, in a *hijā'* that begins with the verse:

أَمْ مَيِّ شَاقَتَكَ حَتَّى صَرْتَ حَبِرَانَا أَوْ هَلْ تَهَيِّمُ بِذِكْرِي دَعْدَ هَيْمَانَ

The *qaṣīdah* begins with a mixed prelude of unrequited love lament and self-censure. The poet goes on to rebuke himself for showing such amorous weakness and then asserts that his love of God is worth more than that of maidens. Here is the prelude,

1. Was it Mayya¹⁰⁰ who has filled you with desire until you crave?
Or are you enthralled remembering Da'd and pine?
2. Or has a specter coming from Hind visited you?
Or Su'ād who has gone far from home and neighborhood?
3. Or has an orchard dove held you speechless artfully,
In remembrance of her chicks that have died long ago?
4. Or how do you cry with tears so mixed with blood;
Tears flowing from your eyes looking henna hued?
5. Or is it in remembrance of abodes where you have lived
A life of comfort free and satisfied?
6. Where your word was law, your slumber long and sweet
Unmindful of the passing time inebriate?

¹⁰⁰ Conventional Arab poetic muse, likewise all the names that follow represent female names conventionally used by ancient Arab poets in their amatory prelude.

7. Are Salmā's dwellings far way or Shayzama,
That you pass all the night bewailing and in woe?
8. If you do deny our claim, our witness is
Your wasted body, sembling a dry twig of dates.
9. What would you tell a dove when she enchants,
During a snooze or playing game of chess?
10. Longing is hard and grievous, and could not be so endured
Except by aid from Him who remains forever merciful.
11. Quit that and this, give that up and turn not to that.
Allah knows our secrecies and public acts.
12. It is not my love for Mayyah or for Da'd
Worthy as Lord of humankind, take my word for it.
13. And I give no thought to the malice of foes,
Or to those who have become the devil's advocates.
14. So tell a dove when she psalmodies on boughs,
"Were you bewailing a dead chick or soloing?"
15. Fully expressing joy at eggs and nest,
Or savoring fragrances from far away?"
16. We are not the likes of you, and surpass you in pain;
For our love has wasted body and soul.
17. How could a beloved, cultured, wise and astute
Be compared to a bird's chick? Suffice that as analogy.
18. The Waliyi's¹⁰¹ progeny, beloved of Allah in constant remembrance of Him,
O father of Sulaym,¹⁰² suffice a man of love,
19. Open-handed, acute of mind, pure of heart,
I would not forget him were I to possess Baghdān.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Friend of Allah, or saint.

¹⁰² Diminutive form of Salmān.

20. I would not forget Salmān and his sagacity,
 Were I to travel far as Indian towns or Sheghan.¹⁰⁴
21. Nor would I cease to mourn for his father
 Muhammad, our master, were I to become pre-eminent.
22. May Allah shower constant torrents upon him,
 And continuous showers of good-will and augment in grace.

In this prelude the poet projects his mental state of sadness by evoking such images as unrequited love, the lament of the dove; and in verse 13 he gives hint of the cause of this sorrow while trying to console himself by saying,

13. And I give no thought to the malice of foes,
 Or to those who have become the devil's advocates.

This qaṣīdah is really remarkable by its complex structural organization. While the predominant motif is that of *hijā'*, 'Umar crafts it as a missive addressed to a *mamdūh* (patron) whose virtues are extolled. 'Umar then describes his painful reception and betrayal by leaders of Gambaga who ganged up against him and spread evil rumors about him in order to discredit him in the eyes of the community at large. In this regard 'Umar depicts his experience as analogous to that of Moses in Egypt when he wanted Pharaoh to liberate the Israelites. The Quran mentions Hāmān being a deputy and coordinator of Pharaoh's evil activities. Thus one can comprehend the morale of evoking this story as like that of Moses, 'Umar only came to save this community from the evil doings and tyranny of its clique of evil leaders (the chief and Imam of Gambāga). As Moses would later have to run to escape the plot to assassinate him, 'Umar also describes how he was able to escape and return to Kete-Krachi. It is significant to note that 'Umar focuses his criticism mainly around the

¹⁰³ Probably Baghdad.

¹⁰⁴ This refers probably to Shagnan, a city in central Asia. I owe this to Professor Paul Losensky who pointed this out to me.

community leaders' corruptive Islamic practices which demand civility and kindness towards strangers. These leaders had failed to honor these virtues; therefore 'Umar was concerned they were not worshipping the Muslim God, but rather worshipping idols. In narrating his experience, 'Umar reveals that he was attracted to the town from good reports he received about it. Upon arrival, however, he discovered the town to be contrary to how it was described. He could not find a single house to lodge in as both the Chief and the Imam have scared people from offering him hospitality. 'Umar believes they were acting from fear that he would erode their authorities among the people; therefore they did not want him around. He, however, refutes this from him alleging that he does not covet the mundane; his only purpose was to promote righteousness in the communities unlike them who fight to protect the worthless worldly power. Thus he says,

48. When they hatched their plot, woe betide them, they lied
 They embellished their words when the liars told their lies.

49. Their leaders alleged that I would dominate them;
 And most of them became devilish through envy.

50. We flew away quickly out of fear and dread,
 We have however put our trust, in our Lord.

Let us just note in passing how conscious 'Umar is of his social responsibilities and how different he views himself vis-à-vis other social and political wielders of power. In effect this is exactly what we discern across his narrative: the exemplary spiritual leader who must guide the people in their tribulation.

2.7.1.3. Shi'r al-rithā' (Elegiac Poems)

The third poetic motif predominant in 'Umar's qaṣīdah collection is the *rithā'* to which he has made a number of excellent contributions. The famous one of these, obviously, is his

rithā' composed in memory of his son Muhammad Labbu who suddenly died in 1932 after a short illness. It is evident from the emotional sorrow conveyed by 'Umar that the love of this son was great in his heart. He had probably discerned in him a person to whom he could bequeath his intellectual legacy. Unfortunately, for reasons already alluded to above, we lack adequate information about this son of 'Umar. In line with the poetic tradition of the *rithā'* 'Umar enumerates his late son's virtues which included, learning, generosity towards all, piety, sympathy towards others, etc. Muhammad Labbu was 32 years old when he died according to 'Umar's poetic verse,

ولقبه لب وسنه لب فاعجب تطابق اللقب والأعوام يا رجلا

His nickname was Labbo, his age was 32; is it not amazing
That the nickname corresponds with the age, oh man?

In this sad moment, people demonstrated their love for this great scholar by sending gifts and condolences from all over the region. 'Umar counted about 106 of these donations and was expecting more. This is testimony to how widely 'Umar was respected and revered across the region before his death. Like most of his poetic compositions, this *rithā'* is constructed in the classical formalistic pattern of *rithā'* poetry consisting of lament, enumeration of the deceased's virtues, the impact of his/her absence upon the living, condemnation of his enemies and prayers that clouds of mercy shower abundantly over the tomb. Two years after his son's death, 'Umar also followed, which leaves one wondering whether he did not succumb finally to the pangs of pain caused by the loss of this beloved son.

In addition to his son's *rithā'* 'Umar has also composed another one in memory of the father of one of his intimate friends, Ṣāliḥ. Because of the peculiar introductory information provided by the poet I would like to cite it here:

‘Umar b. Abī Bakr al-Kabawī *nasban* (by kinship), *al-Kanawī mawlidan wa maskanan* (of Kano by birth and resident), says I have fraternized with friends and loved ones and associated with students and companions, socialized with both city and rural people, and interacted with people both at home and in travelling going back and forth, and kept company with people both in my town and villages and I have not found, nor seen, nor known a person more suitable to fraternize with, or better to associate with, or more delightful to socialize with, or more worthy of interaction or more profitable of keeping company with than Ṣāliḥ b. Muhammad (deceased i.e. referring to the latter). And in testimony of what I have said, [know that] we became acquainted and interacted with each other for about ten years or more, while living among people of our times, who are fond of spreading evil on earth more than doing good, and I have not discerned any hostility or heard any distaste from him towards me or another person ... so when we learned of the death of his father, al-Sheikh Muhammad, we eulogized him with these verses composed in the *kāmil*¹⁰⁵ meter, portending that God would effectuate his mercy upon him in the hereafter, and through these verses which are skillfully introduced, for anyone who could ponder on it, by our saying “hal wābilun ...” (is it a downpour or ...); because our intention is [to pray] for the downpour of mercy to rain on that deceased; and then I composed it in eighty-five verses, analogous to the sum of the letters in the word “*Jannah*”¹⁰⁶ (paradise) by numeral calculation (*ḥisāb al-jummal*) portending that God would house that deceased in the highest [level] of His vast paradise; and I also sought the favor of blessed people of God; and chose to rhyme it in the letter ‘b’ portending that God would open for him the door (bāb) of mercy, entitling it “Sūl al-Rāthī,” petition/orison for the deceased.¹⁰⁷

The qaṣīdah was composed, as ‘Umar has stated, to eulogize the father of Ṣāliḥ b.

Muhammad. He was al-ḥājj Ṣāliḥ b. Muhammad b. ‘Uthmān of Jinni, a Dyula scholar who migrated to Ghana upon invitation of its Dyula community in 1924 to take charge of teaching Islamic sciences over there. The sketchy historical data is not adequate to provide us with clear information about how friendship developed between ‘Umar and Ṣāliḥ. We know,

¹⁰⁵ One of the sixteen prominent meters of classical Arabic poetics that runs as *mutafā’ilun*, *mutafā’ilun mutafā’ilun* x (2).

¹⁰⁶ J = 3; n = 50; h = 5; total : 3 + 50 + 5 = 58.

¹⁰⁷ See IAS\AR 76.

however, that both of them were Tijjānī *muqaddams* within the region. Šāliḥ b. Muhammad died in 1932,¹⁰⁸ the same year in which ‘Umar lost his son Al-hājj Labbu.

2.7.1.4. Other Poems

‘Umar has composed many other poems which cannot be categorized under any of the above classes. Among these are his famous tirade narratives of colonial conquest and subsequent occupation of the continent. These three poems form the subject of the present study. They were composed by ‘Umar within a period probably ranging between 1899 and 1907. We will discuss them in greater detail later in the course of the study; suffice it therefore to refer to them here in passing.

‘Umar’s historical narratives also include other qaṣīdahs that gave account of contemporary historical events such as the civil war between the royal Dabgana houses of Gonjaland that erupted in 1892. It coincided with the time ‘Umar had just come from Hausa land to begin a new life in the Volta basin where trade and teaching were thriving professions. Already, as the caravan among which he was traveling approached Gonja land, news of the pending war was rumored abroad. ‘Umar was able to describe the setting, background, development and subsequent events of the war as it gradually rose to crush its victims without mercy. In the end, everybody was affected, and the once prosperous town of Salaga was looted and burned down in the aftermath by Germans, never to rise again. The experience had devastated ‘Umar’s hope of a blissful life in Salaga and in one of the gloomiest moments of his life, he pours out his emotional feelings of sorrow and disappointment in the final verses of his first colonial narrative account entitled *Mashra’u mā’a al-khabar liwāridin waradahu bi al-ḥazar*. It is quite obvious, judging from the mood

¹⁰⁸ See Akbar Muhammad’s unpublished PhD thesis “Dyula Intellectualism in the Ivory Coast and Ghana: A Study of the Life and Career of Al-Ḥājj Šāliḥ b. Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān” (University of Edingburg, 1974). There is a full production of the poem accompanied by a translation by the author, 156- 167.

and contextual references, that 'Umar was still wandering around in search of appropriate refuge after he left Salaga in 1896. He has failed to obtain the cordial reception he had expected from communities within the region. On the other hand, he will not like to return to his native land however precarious present situations appeared to be. Neither will he return to Salaga even if the situation there reversed and became more desirable. He says,

59. I would not choose it for abode
For years to come, even if it became as pleasant there as Ṭūr Sīnīn.¹⁰⁹
60. And I would not sojourn there for all eternity,
With the intention of staying; speaking generally.
61. Even if it became filled with pleasant things and bliss,
It would be in Kete that I would reside.
62. Were Salga to be adorned in silk brocade,
I would openly declare my renunciation of it.
63. Know that, I bear her no ill
And I have no quarrel with its residents.
64. It is just my heart that has declined
To incline towards her again or even hear of her.

The elegiac mood prevalent in these verses reflects 'Umar's personal psychological trauma that has been made worse by the enfolding destructive colonial campaigns erupting all around him. It is the general melancholic mood of despair and despondency felt by all that he encapsulates in here in these verses.

In effect, what these historical narratives around events in Salaga reveal about 'Umar is his profound religious *Weltanschauung*. One can discern the deep impact of his Islamic learning, from which he had just graduated, coloring his interpretation of the world around.

¹⁰⁹ طور سينين The reference occurs twice in the Qur'an: In Sūra 23 verse 20 and in Sūra 95 verse 2. In the former it occurs as: وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ طُورِ سَيْنَاءَ تَنْبُتُ بِالذُّهْنِ وَصَبِغٍ لِلْأَكْلِيِّنَ (Also a tree springing out of Mount Sinai, which produces oil, and relish for those who use it for food.) and in the latter as : وَالنَّيْنِ وَالرَّيْثُونِ, وَطُورِ سَيْنِينَ (1. By the fig and the olive 2. By the mount of Sinai) [Both translations from Yusif Ali. *The Meaning of the Holy Quran*. <http://www.islam101.com/quran/yusufAli/>].

His strong piety convinces him that human depravity and iniquity is driving the world to destruction. This is how the Quran depicts human evolution on earth. Across history, man's inner material nature has always rebelled against divine moral law, laid down for his own guidance towards salvation. The prophets' purpose was to come and revive human awareness of this law which, with passing time, would fall into corruption again and then would necessitate God sending once more his messengers to awaken men. One can clearly see this view in 'Umar's writings of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Besides the historical narratives, 'Umar has also left us occasional and didactic qaṣīdahs that address events and issues of his time. Among these, one can mention his qaṣīdah describing the outbreak of influenza in the Volta basin around 1918. This relates to the influenza epidemic that spread across the globe and resulted in the death of millions of people. At this period in the history of colonial occupation of Africa, health institutions and personnel were yet to be found in even main cities of the colonies, much less the hinterlands. In vivid and realistic images, 'Umar describes how the epidemic slowly spread among the community and how they struggled to endure its agonizing moments. Almost everyone was affected, old and young, men and women, the high and low. In a diagnostic description, 'Umar describes how the initial symptoms manifested and impacted its victims, their subsequent agony and behavioral change, and then when everybody had lost hope, how victims regained their health. In this qaṣīdah, 'Umar demonstrates his dramatic narrative skills of humor and pathos. We are made to feel the anguish and agony of victims, but at the same time we can also laugh at their grotesque behaviors where all social moral codes of behavior become broken. Here is how 'Umar depicts it in the qaṣīdah entitled "Tunkuyau" by its Hausa designation:

1. Stop and hear this recitation about Tunkuyau.¹¹⁰
We have seen amazing things about Tunkuyau.
2. Its beginning (comes) with severe headache,
And after a while, proceeds Tunkuyau.
3. It is said, its first (sign) is a bitter taste,¹¹¹
And soon after comes Tunkuyau.
4. It is also said, headache, dizziness and palpitation
Then rumbling stomach, after it Tunkuyau.
5. It appears bilious, but is not of bile,
And it is not phlegm, but Tunkuyau.
6. Three afflictions converge,
And are accumulated in Tunkuyau:
7. Heavy groaning, severe cold
And whimpering, all that are signs of Tunkuyau.
8. Three apertures open up
To exude, when comes Tunkuyau:
9. Sounds of farting, lots of urine,
Frequent vomiting, it is Tunkuyau.
10. Its heat is like the flow of flame;
It convulses the whole bowels, Tunkuyau.
11. You will see a man throw off his clothes
And cast them away when comes Tunkuyau.
12. His legs will quiver from severe pains,
And will upturn things from Tunkuyau.
13. He cannot sit nor stand still
From the effects of Tunkuyau.
14. He remains naked without clothes
Till covered by the family from Tunkuyau.
15. It's as if spurs and gouge

¹¹⁰ “2. An epidemic of 1918/19 (= mai bashe: a severe epidemic in 1914 and 1920).”

Bargery, George Percival. On-Line Bargery Hausa-English Dictionary (<http://maguzawa.dyndns.ws/>).

¹¹¹ مر ريق literarily bitter saliva.

- And razor have rent his body from Tunkuyau.
16. No sense of shame or honor
Remained in him since afflicted by Tunkuyau.
 17. Oblivious of his women and children
He divulged his secrets because of Tunkuyau.
 18. He made his will, disclosed his debts,
And returned trusts entrusted to him because of Tunkuyau.
 19. If you are asked, my brother, which ailment
Afflicts people the worst, say, "it is Tunkuyau."
 20. Were you `Antara¹¹² on the day of battle
You would be powerless against Tunkuyau.
 21. I ask you, o people,
Do you know of any medicine against Tunkuyau?
 22. As powerful and valiant that a man can be,
He will be thrown down instantly by Tunkuyau.
 23. Many a leader can be seen cowered,
Wailing at home from Tunkuyau.
 24. We've known no ailment like it before,
Our medicines are ineffective against Tunkuyau.
 25. Is it from an ailing stomach that it originates?
We know not, except that it is called Tunkuyau.
 26. Or is it from blood or moisture?
How will I know about Tunkuyau?
 27. Is it pleurisy, or jaundice
Or the colic? No. It is Tunkuyau.
 28. Man has no power or strength
Or bravery to withstand Tunkuyau.
 29. When it descended it affected all the people
Save a few, [behold!] Tunkuyau.
 30. Were you a lord from the Quraish tribe

¹¹² Antara was an ancient Arab Black hero famous for his bravery in battle and persistence during travails.

- You would be powerless when assailed by Tunkuyau.
31. You would loath all food,
Drink and meat when stricken by Tunkuyau.
 32. Many were those who by night were stricken,
And passed the night snoring and shambling from Tunkuyau.
 33. Many were those who by day got stricken,
And were left rolling in pain from Tunkuyau.
 34. Moaning and groaning or crying aloud,
He whimpered from the caresses of Tunkuyau.
 35. Many a bashful person who became afflicted,
And was unmindful of his in-laws because of Tunkuyau.
 36. In spite of all that,
No one had died from Tunkuyau.
 37. We have not seen, and we have not heard,
Of any sickness like Tunkuyau.
 38. Its pains were many, uncountable,
All agonies are found in Tunkuyau.
 39. But it lasts not long,
Except in few cases, hear me: Tunkuyau.
 40. How many a woman has cried aloud,
When the husband became afflicted, reviling Tunkuyau.
 41. And how many were seen, saliva
Streaming down from the mouth, afflicted by Tunkuyau.
 42. Everyone, young and old,
Became restless when visited by Tunkuyau.
 43. An aged fellow, afflicted by evening,
Forgot the night prayer due to Tunkuyau.
 44. And many an ugly old woman
Became afflicted and enfeebled by Tunkuyau.
 45. And many were the rustic ladies
Visited and adored by Tunkuyau.

46. And many a pious scholar was attacked presto
Passed the night without reciting his litany because of Tunkuyau.
47. And many a worshipper glorifying his Lord at home
Was visited and sullied by Tunkuyau.
48. The blind and the crippled, both male and female,
Were all afflicted by Tunkuyau.
49. We cannot bear to count
All who have suffered the flames of Tunkuyau.
50. O Lord, O Benevolence, O Protector,
We ask your safety from Tunkuyau.
51. O Most Merciful O
Savior, save us from Tunkuyau.

These same dramatic skills are also employed by 'Umar in describing poverty and its social impacts upon people's behavior. The *qaṣīdah* is one of many Ajami compositions by 'Umar. It was entitled *Talauci*. The poem enjoyed wide circulation across the Volta basin and Nigeria. Poverty is a common problem among people everywhere, especially during the days before colonial occupation and after. It was one of the social misfortunes that created rifts between husbands and wives, fathers and children, nobles and commons. It is the powerful affliction that is feared by kings as well as commons and drives men to commit the worst evils to fellow men. These philosophical aspects are not missing in 'Umar's narrative. It is, in a way, his own manner of pointing out men's tragic humanity and their failing to realize this mutual fragility that is innate to their human nature.

Other literary compositions by 'Umar include poetic adaptations of famous *qaṣīdahs* such as the *Burdah* of Būṣīrī that has been widely read and recited among Muslims especially the Sufi fraternities across the Muslim world. The *Burdah* has long served its symbolic role as protective cloak, under which mystics strove to seek the efflux of prophetic blessing and

salvation. Over time this verbal construction came to be reified imaginatively into the real cloak of the prophet Muhammad that was wrapped around Ka' b b. Zuhayr. Thus, adaptation consisted in the literary recreation of the *Burdah* into new form by incorporating it with one's words, in other words, blowing one's own spirit into it. Poetic structuring in *tarbī'* (composition of a quatrain) or *takhmīs* (composition of a quintrain), from the poet's original couplet verse-line, were the means through which this literary incarnation was mostly accomplished, in addition to the *mu'āraḍah* (poetic imitation). In this regard 'Umar has also composed a famous quatrain from a didactic moral qaṣīdah attributed to 'Alī b. Ḥusayn Zayn al-'Ābidīn.

In addition to the above collection of poetic compositions, 'Umar has also authored various qaṣīdahs in Hausa Ajami. Some of these consist of Ajami versions of qaṣīdahs he has also authored in classical Arabic medium such as *Lābārin Naṣārā* (the third of the “colonial” narratives), as well as didactic homilies or *Wākokin Wa'azī*¹¹³ which include among others,

1. *Wākar Talauci da Wadāta*
2. *Bismilla nā fāra ga Jalla Ubangiji*
3. *kalmōmin miyāgu*
4. *Tarbī' al-Zuhd wa al-Waṣīyyah*.¹¹⁴

The *wa'zī* Ajami poetic genre became predominant in the aftermath of dan Fōdiyo's successful jihād. Almost all scholars of repute (including the Fōdiyāwā – Fōdiyo family) tried to compose poems of *wa'zī* to exhort and admonish against impiety and inspire religious

¹¹³ See Stanislaw Pilaszewicz's article “Homiletic Poetry of Alhaj Umaru” (in *Africana Bulletin*, 30:73 -109, 1981) for a detailed information on all these qaṣīdahs, including their translation and commentary.

¹¹⁴ Pilaszewicz comments that “The Arabic text of *Tarbī' al-zuhd wa 'l-waṣīyya* (The Treatise on Ascetism with Admonition), together with an Arabic commentary, was published with its prototype, that is to say, *Kitāb al-zuhd wa 'l-waṣīyya* (The Book of Ascetism with Admonition) as a supplement to the edition of *Al-Qaṣā'id al-'ashra'īyyāt* (Ten Odes) by the Moroccan poet Al-Fāzāzī (note 28 Editor 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, Cairo 1947/48), who lived in the 13th century.”

devotion and social rectitude. It was highly successful and has persistently been cultivated among the Hausa literati up to today.

2.7.2. 'Umar's Prose Writings

The prose works authored by 'Umar are mostly historical accounts of people, towns and cities, as well as social and economic transactions across the West African territories before colonialism. Although this kind of writings had its precedents in Muslim historiographies across the Muslim world and even within the history of Sub-Saharan Africa, it did not gain serious attention from Muslim scholars until the arrival of Europeans. As we know, Africa had virtually remained unknown to Europeans for many years until colonialism. European precolonial discourse on Africa was dependent, on the most part, on exotic fabulous ideas inspired by fancy and fictional imaginings. The way we confront, accommodate and adjust to the world around us determines ultimately our attitude and conduct towards external phenomenon. In this cognitive behavior, scientists believe people tend to become influenced by what they term as “cognitive biases” categorized into (1) decision-making, belief and behavioral biases, (2) social biases, (3) memory errors and biases.¹¹⁵ Thus Europeans like all human beings formed their world view of Africa which unfortunately distorted reality. The colonial encounter afforded a possible revision of these images, but Eurocentric biases of racial and cultural supremacy had rendered that inconceivable. Information was, however, inexhaustibly garnered and studied by European scholars of all disciplines for various justifications other than affirming truth. As we have seen above, a number of German colonialists had profited intellectually from 'Umar by studying from him and encouraging him to pen for them necessary historical and cultural data. Adam Mischlich, the German

¹¹⁵ Cf. “List of cognitive biases” in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cognitive_biases, (accessed 7/11/2014).

colonial administrator of German Togoland, collected a bulk of these writings from 'Umar. All these writings were authored in Hausa Ajami. They have now been edited and published (as we indicated before) by Professor Stanislaw Pilaszewicz in 2000 into a book he entitled *Hausa Prose Writings in Ajami by Alhaji Umaru*. An adequate evaluation of 'Umar's prose work is beyond the scope of this study; it would, however, be significant to register here the general opinions of some of the researchers who are conversant with his works. Pilaszewicz (2000, 21) observes that

In African studies all over the world Alhaji Umaru became famous for his prose writings in the Hausa language. His reputation started to arise from the role he played as the teacher and informant of two German researchers: Gottlob Adolf Krause and Adam Mischilch. His prose output published until the middle of the 1960s induced T. Hodgkin to write the following words: "Al-Ḥājj 'Umar's writings would seem to be at least as significant for an understanding of the recent social history of Ghana as are writings of Wells and Bennet for the social history of Britain." (Hodgkin 1966:443)

Besides these historical writings in Hausa Ajami, there is another famous prose work known so far to have been authored by 'Umar. This consists of a general guide to correspondence in Arabic which 'Umar might have written in the very early part of his career¹¹⁶ for the benefit of local Arabic literati. This work entitled *al-Sarḥat al-Warīqah fi 'Ilm al-Wathīqah* had enjoyed wide circulation across the region. It was published sometime in Damascus and reprinted several times in Nigeria. It has been translated and studied by a number of scholars among who are B. G. Matin 1967, 189, Goody 1968, 213, Last 1977, xlix, and Ogunbiyi 1973.

¹¹⁶ Pilaszewicz, 2000, 21.n.9 states that Last (1977, xlix) had claimed that the manual was authored by 'Umar in 1877 when he was 19 years of age.

Chapter III

*Mashra 'u mā'i al-Khabar*¹¹⁷ or The Dawn of Africa's Rebirth

3. 1. Introduction

'Umar has entitled his first colonial narrative as “Entrance to the water gorge of history, by one who comes to it with insight,” “*Mashra 'u mā'i al-khabar li-wāridin 'awradaha bi al-naẓari.*”¹¹⁸ This narrative could not have been given any more appropriate title than that. When we closely examine the sentence (which by the way in Arabic rhetoric would be categorized as *'Inshā'iyya* or constative), we realize that it encapsulates a beginning: *shara 'a* (to begin, start, enter into); *mashra 'un* (entering, entrance, setting in). It also alludes to history: *khabara* (to inform, tell); *khabarun* (news, information, report, story); the plural form *akhbār* denotes also annals. *Warada* (also to arrive, enter) is that word whose opposite is always implicit within it *ṣadara* (to leave, turn away). In addition the sentence also includes the word *mā 'un* (water). And water has been certified universally to symbolize the source of all life.¹¹⁹ As such the poem announces itself as the “pre-liminal” stage not only of our narrative but also of the colonial transformation of Africa.¹²⁰

3.2. *Mashra 'u* as Pre-liminal Stage in Africa's Colonial Experience.

The phenomenon of change and transformation is a universal law underlying evolution. The process of change has attracted theoretical analysis across history from scholars of virtually every scientific field. Suffice it to mention the Hegelian historical dialectic development of the Spirit and the Marxist historical dialectic materialism as just two of the

¹¹⁷ Based on MSS. IAS.AR/4; 117.

¹¹⁸ This title appears as last verse (87) of the poem; see also a full translation of the poem in appendix II.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Quran, 21:30 “*wa khalaqnā min al-mā'i kulla shayin ḥayyin*” (and we created every living thing from water).

¹²⁰ The colonial conquests were officially set in motion after the Berlin conference of 1884 – 1885 convened by the European powers to draw the modalities of their rival operations.

most critical theoretical interpretation of the process of change. No one can deny their contribution to the analysis of literary works and theory. It is, however, the theoretical interpretations of the phenomenon of change propounded by sociocultural anthropologists, pioneered by van Gennep and Victor Turner in which I find critical insight for understanding 'Umar's poetic narrative accounts of colonialism. In his seminal work *The Rites of Passage* van Gennep declares the universality and pervasiveness of the ceremonial practice of ritual of passages observed by various cultures across the globe. These ceremonies are cyclically enacted to symbolically dramatize the processes of transformation and regeneration. He observed that these ritual processes (which he called "rites of passage") can be classified into three stages: *preliminal, liminal and postliminal*. Each of these stages occupies a specific temporality and manifests its unique characteristic forms and functions. Victor Turner's description of this phenomenon does not differ greatly from van Gennep's either in functionality or in descriptions; the distinction between them lies in details and nomenclature. I have already referred to the two theoretical presentations in my introduction. I shall focus on van Gennep's nomenclature in this part of my analysis, and it is in relation to his description of pre-liminality as representing the first stage in the ritual process of change that I shall analyze "*Mashra'u*", 'Umar's first poem.

Among 'Umar's three qaṣīdahs that I am going to analyze in this study, *Mashra'u* distinctively stands out from the other two by its structural deviation from the standard classical qaṣīdah. 'Umar has composed this poem in a variant form of the *rajaz* meter: the *rajaz mashṭūr* (the broken *rajaz*). In classical Arabic poetics, *rajaz* was, more often, a meter traditionally reserved for less grandiose themes of vulgar folk cultural expressions that required witticism and the burlesque. It suited the *maqāṭi'* (sing. *maqṭa'ah*) very well which

was so common during the *jāhilīyyah* period. It was, therefore, used to express a varied range of aphorisms, maxims, proverbs; incantations of *qahhān* (*sing. qāhin*) i.e., fetish priest, jests and satire. According to 'Abd 'Allah 'Al-Tayyib (1970 v.I, 283), “التقصيد في الرجز قبيح في الغالب,” (composing a qaṣīdah in the *rajaz* meter is most often distasteful); and, “والقطع في الرجز أنسب من الطوال. لأنه [...] وزن شعبي. وقد كانوا يكثرون منه في المبارزات, والخصومات, والحداء, وهلم جرا,” (v.I, 284) (composing in shorter verses is more appropriate to the *rajaz* meter than composing long poems in it, because [...] it is a folkloric meter: they [*Jāhiliyya* poets) were more prone to composing verses of flyting, duels, feuds or animating singsongs etc) . *Rajaz* is one of the most plastic poetic meters that are constructed from a single *taf'īlah*:¹²¹ *mustaf'ilun*, repeated three times in each *shaṭr* (hemistich)¹²². In practice, it appears in various dimunitve forms such as the *majzū'*, *the mashṭūr* and *the manhūk*. In addition, it also allows variation in end-rhyming of the hemistishes which is, otherwise, considered a serious defect in the qaṣīdah. The verse is thereby called *al-muzdawij* (the coupled) which resembles the English couplet. 'Umar's poem is thus an *'urjūzah*, *mashṭūrah* and *muzdawijah*, i.e., a poem in the *rajaz* meter, with an apocopated last *taf'īlah* (i.e., *mashṭūr*) and in rhymed couplet. Although classical poets quite often abstained from composing qaṣīdahs in *rajaz*, subsequently, however, it gained great popularity, especially during the Abbāsīd era. Owing to its plasticity and malleability, later poets found it useful in adapting it to didactic demands of their times. It was in this way that a new poetic genre emerged during the Abbasīd era: *al-shi'r al-ta'līmī* or didactic poetry (Al-Ṭayyib, v.i, 295-296). From that moment on, the use of *rajaz* became widely accepted and was successfully employed to spread theological teachings as well as grammar, jurisprudence etc. In this respect, it is significant to point out that *al-shi'r al-ta'līmī*

¹²¹ The *taf'īlah* is the metrical feet.

¹²² The complete *rajaz* meter appears as, مستفعلن مستفعلن مستفعلن||مستفعلن مستفعلن مستفعلن, while the *rajaz mashṭūr* appears as مستفعلن مستفعلن مستفعلن||مستفعلن مستفعلن مستفعلن

was exclusively composed by scholars and teachers. And it underscores the social status and the role 'Umar was playing prior to the colonial invasion. Muslim scholars were highly respected in precolonial African societies, in both Muslim territories and non-Muslim ones like the precolonial part of northern part of Ghana. As we shall see his whole preliminary attitude was dictated by this social important status of 'Umar in the community.

From a distinctively temporal perspective, one can justifiably consider the whole of "Mashra'u" as describing the *pre-liminal* stage in Africa's colonial experience. This stage, according to van Gennep, is characterized by segregating initiates and removing them from the sacred sphere of society into the ambiguous indefinite zone of uncertainty. This state is not only polluted, abhorrent and injurious, but also infectious and contaminating. This is the reason why initiates have to be isolated and ostracized. In this state, they also lose all identity and are nameless and even "inhuman." It is also a transitory stage, however, as they await their undergoing the necessary ceremony that will qualify them to change status. van Gennep (2010, 39) describes the *preliminal* phase of separation thus:

The operation of rites is the same for groups as for individuals. Among rites of separation for groups may be included a declaration of war, either tribal or familial. The European and Semitic rites of the vendetta are well known, so I shall mention the Australian ones, which have also been described in detail.* The group charged with implementing revenge is first separated from society and acquires its own individuality; its members do not re-enter society until after the performance of rites which remove that temporary individuality and reintegrate them into the society.

In line with my structural analyzes, therefore, 'Umar's first poem corresponds structurally to the *preliminal state*. The very fact that it deviates from the latter two qaṣīdahs, in structure, categorizes it as belonging to a time prior to the transformational process of colonialism. In this poem, 'Umar portrays himself as the religious teacher and guide of his community. This

is clearly demonstrated from his exhortative tone and fervent appeal to his audience to stand steadfast and not despair in the face of their immanent *balā'*, affliction. In addition, a close examination of the poem's functional elements also reveals its preliminal nature. This will take us directly to the second part subtitled "*al-muḥāwarah*" (the dialogue) that depicts the poet's persona as segregated and standing outside human habitat. When the necessity of re-incorporating into social life was suggested to him by inquiry he instantly referred us to the nature of his present state of segregation and marginalization.

54. I said to him: "Can you not see what has occurred?
All abodes have become unsettling for us."

55. Nay, our entire world is not habitable;
It has been rocked, and what was built is destroyed.

56. And I am confused about the situation;
And I am at a loss about what to do in this world.

57. I cannot say: "Here I would reside,
Or over there either, I would go."

The world in which he now stands has been turned upside down and has ceased to be a habitable place. Nature has reclaimed culture and "what has been built is destroyed." It is not only this external change reflected in his environment that points to his state of exile and alienation but his psychic state too has undergone transformation. He has become "confused" and "at a loss about what to do in this world." At the moment he is neither here nor there. Until he undergoes the necessary rituals to prepare him for social re-integration, he shall remain in this suspended state of nowhere. In fact the old has already ceased to be an alternative place of return, as he now totally rejects it with all its potential attractions. It is a total death that awaits rejuvenation. But if he has turned his back on society, he has in the

same vein been rejected by society because of his pollution and the danger that he might pose to its members.

The poet's segregation and pre-liminality, at the micro-level, is a representation of Africa's pre-liminal condition at a macro-level. The pre-colonial African systems of cultural existence have become incompatible with the historically more advanced alternative civilizations of Europe, beyond its borders. And just as the poet's micro-world has been "rocked" and "destroyed," Africa's world was already crumbling under internal conflicts as well as external destructive human interference that rocked its stability. Indeed the toll of centuries of slavery and wars, exacted by both Eastern and Western worlds, has virtually decimated the continent of its human and material resources. At this stage Africa's world has become akin to Yeast's imagined world where:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;¹²³

From another angle, when we re-examine the poem within the context of its historical genesis, as representing the historical contact between Europe and Africa, it becomes evident that we are in the view of two distinct territorial zones that are marked out as completely unequal and standing antinomically apart from each other. According to van Gennep (2010, 26), in reference to the distinct symbolic territorial delimitation of non-European societies:

In a semicivilized society, [...], sections are carefully isolated, and passage from one to another must be made through formalities and ceremonies which show extensive parallels to the rites of territorial passage discussed

¹²³ William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming" (<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/172062>; accessed 6/1/2012).

[previously]. An individual or group that does not have an immediate right, by birth or through specially acquired attributes, to enter a particular house and to become established in one of its sections is in a state of isolation. This isolation has two aspects, which may be found separately or in combination: such a person is weak, because he is outside a given group or society, but he is also strong, since he is in the sacred realm with respect to the group's members, for whom their society constitutes the secular world. In consequence, some peoples kill, strip, and mistreat a stranger without ceremony, while others fear him, take great care of him, treat him as a powerful being, or take magico-religious protective measures against him.

In the context of our historical encounter, Europeans lacked “those special acquired attributes” such as color and cultural identity, to qualify their entry into African territory. They therefore stand in respect to African inhabitants “in a state of isolation” or according to van Gennep’s ritual description, in pre-liminality. Their status of “stranger” or the unknown has further alienated them from Africans, who might consider them polluted and dangerous. Throughout the poem ‘Umar does not conceal their fear and dread of these “strangers.” Furthermore, he does not dissimulate their powerful capacity for destruction and savagery, which underlies their dangerous *pre-liminal* status.

What is more, Umar’s narrative reveals a further categorization between Africans and Europeans that reflects this symbolic boundary zone by which he identifies them. Europe, beyond the boundaries of Africa, stands, from ‘Umar’s religious perspective, separated from the latter as the ultimate territory of the profane. Africa represents the sacred sphere of *dār al-Islam* while Europe represents the profane *dār al-ḥarb*. Within religious purviews the boundaries separating the sacred from the profane are rigidly demarcated and sustained by rituals and symbolic behavior. In the context of the present analysis, it is crucial to keep this constantly in mind. The presence of Christian Europeans before ‘Umar’s *dar al-Islam* (Africa) is tantamount to the status of polluted initiates standing outside societal realm. The segregated

sphere of the initiate, as described by van Gennep, Turner and even Douglas, is (as we have pointed above) characterized by danger and impurity. He poses danger to both himself as well as others. And this is obvious as both Christians and Muslims consider each other's ideology dangerous and threatening and endeavor always to guard against becoming contaminated from it.

'Umar composed "*Mashra'*," his first colonial narrative account around 1899, that is about four years after the historic Berlin Conference that officially initiated Africa into the new world order of Western capitalist dominance. At the threshold of this historic moment Africa was poised, like the cultural initiate who is about to undergo his ritual ceremony of regeneration, in the *pre-liminal* zone of historic transformation, suspended, detached and solitary. The Europeans described it as *terra nullius*. It was for them the land of savages and uncivilized. Indeed it has often been argued that European 19th-century colonization of the African continent had in a large part been motivated by the ideology of racial superiority. By the end of that century, all sorts of scientific justifications were advanced to establish racial hierarchies, with European whites ranked highest on the racial ladder with Black Africans relegated to its lowest level of human development.¹²⁴ Thus the project of Europe's colonial transformation of Africa functionally began as a tripartite ritual process where Africa became scientifically posited as uncivilized, engrossed in a historic magico-religious sphere of barbarity.

3.3. Mashra' u Examined as Tripartite Poetic Structure Reflecting Poet's

Temporary Psychological Ritual Transformation

3.3.1 Separation Phase

¹²⁴ See A. Adu Boahen, 2000, chapter 2.

In line with the poetics of the classical qaṣīda, we can divide this poem thematically into three structural parts: *nasib*, *rahil* and *aggregation*. These structural three parts functionally correspond to the three parts of the ritual process of transformation and change discovered by van Gennep. The *nasib* or prelude begins from verse one to verse 8, only to be discontinued and resumed in the second part of the poem from verse 46 to the end. The *rahil* or transitional section extends from verse 9 to verse 31; and the *aggregation*, stretches from verse 32 to verse 45 of the poem. The structure of this poem evidently deviates from standard structure of the classical qaṣīdah. This structural irregularity can be attributed, in my view, to the poet's psychological state that has become shattered from the sudden impact of European military intrusion in the lives of Africans. In verse 16, he declares:

16. Pay close heed, you will never find escape
From this world, nor a stable home

From all indications that we can discern from the poem, the initial impact of colonial military operations across the northern and western part of Africa has thrown people into a state of trepidation mixed with horror. The sight of war devastation and the sound (reports) of defeats and humiliation might have been something that proved too frightful for proud folks never accustomed to indomitable enemies such as these Europeans. The poet's moral discomfiture is reflected in the structural development of his narrative. After the prefatory prelude that introduces us to the narrative, there is a sudden break that forces the drama of the conquered lands into the foreground of the poet's mind. This image becomes so dominant in his mind that it takes him quite some time before he regains his composure. It is at this stage that he develops into something similar to a delirium, and he adopts a soliloquizing mood as his mind oscillates between psychological ambivalence and disorientation. This prevailing mood

that pervades the whole poem, however, is also a reflection of the general situation of displacement into which the invasion has thrown everyone. The entire continent becomes disoriented at this stage of its encounter with Europe and the crisis is structurally mirrored in the poet's mind.

The poem's prelude corresponds to the phase of separation within the rite of passage. It is the moment of "awakening," the onset of crisis. The mood of the poetic persona is introspective. This poem is also distinguished by its unconventional *nasīb*, because of its doxological character. Doxology in Islamic literature serves to introduce discourse and signifies beginning. It is a model sanctioned by prophetic injunction and Islamic convention.¹²⁵ It begins with praise to God, emphasizing His authority over the evolution of Time and Space. An apt introduction to the overall theme of the poem! The first two lines already signal change and evoke one of Islam's absolute creeds of faith: belief in God's omnipotence. In Islam, whatever occurs, big or small, is believed to be governed by divine destiny. Indeed change is the ultimate law that governs life. "Change alone," as Arthur Schopenhauer, the German Philosopher, is claimed to have said, "is eternal, perpetual, immortal."¹²⁶ It is essential for us to understand the significance of this philosophy as contained in these two lines of the doxology because it ultimately anticipates the general thematic focus of the poem: that of Africa's transformation.

The doxology continues in line three evoking God's salutation (blessing) upon the prophet Muhammad, his kin and companions. This formulaic expression also consists of epithets which project the prophet as leader of "epic battle and builder of the indestructible

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كل أمر ذي بال لا يبدأ فيه بـ"بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم" فهو أبتَر

(رواه الخطيب في الجامع ، ومن طريقه الرهاوي في الأربعين ، والسبكي في طبقاته أيضًا ، عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه به)

¹²⁶ Suzy Platt, ed., *Respectfully Quoted: A dictionary of Quotations* (Library of Congress, 1993, p. 39).

edifice of Islam.” The trope of battle refers to wars waged by the prophet (and his disciples after him) to establish Islam on sound “pillars” on earth. These wars have become archetypal to all subsequent *jihād fi sabīl Allāh* and a way of legitimizing Muslim military action. The dual images of the prophet (as warrior and builder) prepare us directly for the principal theme of the poem, a confrontation between the realm of Islam and Christian Europe.

Let us just note in passing the poet’s use of rhetorical devices to convey opposition and confrontation, reflected in the underlying motifs of the poem. Observe for instance the series of puns in the first two lines: مشطور/دهور; الأحوال/يحول; أحوال/أحوال; in addition to the antithesis in أحوال/سرور. The same devices are also invoked in the next lines: يهدم/بناء (antithesis), للمالي/للألي (pun). These devices conjoin to convey varying degrees of underlying rhetorical effects, by simulating the observed actions of confrontation between Islam and Christianity or Africa and Europe. While the antithesis suggests opposition and conflict, on the one hand, the puns insinuate co-operation, solidarity, and commonality of origin, on the other. In other words, the poet fuses two dissimilar identities into one - Islam and African - while at the same moment he tries to portray Europeans as different and opposing.¹²⁷ It also anticipates a dialectical enfolding, since as the poet has hinted, this is above all about change and transformation. The thesis (Africa/Islam) confronts the antithesis (Europe/Christianity) and the ultimate result is the synthesis (change ushered or produced by colonialism).

The next four lines form the traditional *takhalluṣ*, commonly used as structural transition by classical Arab poets. It enables the poet to shift from the amatory prelude to his غرض (or purpose). Psychologically it serves to alert us to a significant shift in discourse and stirs expectation. Dramatically it helps to build suspense and create anxiety for an inner desire to

¹²⁷ This imagined confrontation reminds one of Samuel Huntington’s famous thesis in his *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc. 1996); or Bernard Lewis’s arguments in *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Random House, 2003).

know. Note, at this juncture, how the poet suddenly introduces a second persona with whom he begins to engage in dialogue: يا سائلني عما أرى في قلبي (O inquirer about what I see in my heart). Parenthetically this dramatic shift serves to endow the speaker with authority by asserting his role as narrator, the one who wields information. The inquirer here represents the audience at large who would like to know. Foucault has asserted that knowledge endows persons with power and authority. Knowledge privileges the possessor over others who lack it. Thus he wields power and compels authority. It is significant therefore to note how the poet constructs the power hierarchy between himself and the audience at large in order to assert control over the narrative.

This section also serves to establish the poet's intention to affirm the social or communal nature of his discourse.¹²⁸ Note in verse 5 the play on "أرى" and "رويت." First, there is the double meaning of "أرى:" to see physically with the eyes and to discern abstractly with the heart, which are both suggested here. The first meaning makes the speaker an eyewitness (شاهد عين); the second suggests the emotional effects this had on him. So it becomes more convincing to believe in a narrator (راوي) who has seen "رأى" with own eyes; the two words therefore reinforce each other. There is also the implicit antithesis between "قلب", on one hand and "لب", on the other. In Sufi Islamic theological discourse, these words are significant in conveying the nature of perception. The poet was a Sufi *muqaddam*, and surely, the reference could not be by chance.¹²⁹ Thus in using these terms the poet is invoking very

¹²⁸ It is traditional for Muslim scholars to orient an important treatise (after the doxology), in response to the demands of an interlocutor who could be a patron, disciple, colleague, friend, teacher, or brother. In this case, the interlocutor is anonymous. Whichever be the case however, the treatise addresses an important topic of religious significance that could guide the patron or the general community.

¹²⁹ Abu Abdu Allah Muhammad b. Ali Alhakim al-Tirmizi, a Sufi scholar of the third century hijri wrote a seminal monograph entitled "bayān al-farq bayna al-ṣadr, wa al-qalb, wa al-fu'ād, wa al-lubb" (the distinction between the chest, the heart, the inner heart and the core heart), in which he arranged them in order of exteriority as al-ṣadr (the chest), then within it al-qalb (the heart), then within the heart al-fu'ād (the inner heart) and within the inner heart al-lubb (the intellect, the seat of mystical knowledge).

subtle theological meanings to bolster his claim to spiritual ascendancy in the community. According to al-Tirmidhi (d. ca. 255 AH/869), *qalb* (heart) is the seat of faith, wavering faith, still under the influence of temptations; that is why heart is called *qalb* because it is related to the root meaning of wavering, twisting, and fluctuating. *Lubb*, on the other hand is the seat of consolidation of absolute belief in God's unity. It is the level where the mind ceases to wander, hesitate or doubt about God; it is out of bounds from any sort of temptations.

As a teacher whose words carry weight, the poet therefore exhorts his inquirer to:

6. Learn or know, that when events come to pass
Their occurrence has been fore-ordained long ago.

This assertion echoes the doxological motif that God is the one who decrees the course of all events, and all that occurs happens according to His design. In line 7, the speaker exclaims “ألا ترو”^أ, an utterance that suggests a desire to demonstrate by appealing to visual evidence, evidence that is irrefutable to those who can see the atrocities that were being committed continuously around them. At various stages of his narration, the speaker will appeal to his audience through this entreaty, suggesting his earnestness and desire to convince and gain approval. The internal rhyme between “اليوم” and “قومي” conveys the tone of earnestness and melancholy. The “أوم” sounds like a drone wail that falls on a long “aw”; the sound carries the shrill painful ejection of the bereft. Furthermore, the word “*ḥulūl*,” which is the verbal noun of the verb “*ḥalla*,” conveys a stronger connotation than “*waqa'a*” which also means to descend or happen. In addition, however, “*ḥalla*” conveys the sense of dismounting and settling down, to take up residence, to overcome and overwhelm, to befall as a punishment or suffering; it also conveys the meaning of dissolution; to be allowed or permitted, to take over, or to replace, to supersede someone or something (Wehr, 1976:198). We find all these

nuances of meaning resonating in the theme of the poem. Colonialism is perceived by the poet as punishment sent by God, as a trial to His faithful adherents like the speaker.

Furthermore, the colonial did not just come to invade and turn his back and go away; he came to settle and dissolve the existing African social and cultural systems of life and also claim sovereignty over them. In order to stress the significance of the daunting forces that have descended upon them the speaker goes on to say:

8. It has engulfed the Sudan from every side
And stretched across the lands till the farthest end.

Remark his desire to underline the wide spatial realm under conquest. And note further in this context, 'Umar's use of rhetorical device to convey his message. The two verbs "أحاط" and "عمّ" convey specific meanings that suit perfectly the context of the discourse. "Aḥāṭa" signifies among other meanings to surround, enclose, and contain; to close in from all sides; to know thoroughly.¹³⁰ The second verb "Amma"¹³¹ complements this meaning by suggesting the sense of diffusion, expansion, stretching, encompassing, spreading; to pervade and prevail. Thus, European occupation not only encompassed the lands, it also spread across and pervaded through every niche and corner of the geographical area as well as dominating lives and cultures of the people. It is also worth noting that the pun on the words "nāḥiyya" and "nā'iyya," far and near, reinforces the far distance covered by the occupation.

It is here, that we come to the end of our prelude, which serves as the phase of separation subsequent to the transition into the liminal phase. The poet has drawn the layout of his narrative, indicating, inter alia, the setting (al-Sūdān=Africa, Africans); the agents (God, the prophet etc.); the conflict (imminent threat to the prophet's edifice from source not yet

¹³⁰ Hans Wehr, *h.w.f.*, 214.

¹³¹ Hans Wehr, *'m.m.*, (640)

mentioned, but which has cast its looming shadow nonetheless over the land); the motif (*al-Umūr*, human events, subject to the eternal evolution of time that usher change); and the speaker and his audience. Note that this stage is by default devoid of activity. It is just the preparatory stage. We shall soon enter into the action that will herald change and transformation. Victor Turner has described the liminal stage as “a betwixt and between.” It is a space characterized by danger, chaos, darkness and death. The section of the poem that we are moving into now consists of descriptions of towns and people conquered by the European forces. Underlying these conquests are stories of people who have lost their lives, and properties and lands occupied and claimed by the colonialists.

3.3.2 Margin Phase (the Conquest)

Beginning from line 9, we are introduced to a spatial description of the landscape that has fallen under colonial occupation. Quite significantly, the word “مبدأ” signals not only beginning, but also the place of beginning. In Arabic words that correspond to the pattern *مفعّل* (*maf'alun*) often denote place name. Thus, the poet directs us to focus our gaze on this spot where the conquest began. But why, we may ask, did the poet choose to start citing these cities? It is important to point out the symbolic significance of these starting zones of narration. These cities are symbols of Muslim resistance and cultural reformation that took place shortly before the arrival of the Europeans. They had also served as hot spots of resistance against colonialism. Bondu, the smallest was the place where the Fulani, in the second half of the 18th century wrested power from the Mandinke and succeeded in establishing an Islamic state. Inspired by the success other Fulani also rallied to take control of Fūta Jallon where they established another Muslim state, which lasted until 1898, when it would subsequently fall under attack of French colonial troops. It would later become

integrated into part of present day Republic of Guinea. Fūta Toro, on the other hand, was the locality where Alhajj Umar Tall, a Sufi jihadist, had launched his jihad against infidels both local and foreign.¹³² Although he did not die at the hands of colonial assault, his resistance remained an inspiration for Muslims like Umar, who saw European invasion as assault against Islam, Muslims and their culture. But even before his death Umar Tall had succeeded in integrating the cities of Fūta Jallon, Māsina and other small principalities into an Islamic empire that finally succumbed in its turn to French assault against his heirs.

Furthermore, 'Umar's narrative points to an underlying religious significance. The Northern regions of Africa, before colonialism, had represented centers of Islamic culture and learning. Marrakesh, Fez, Shinguit and Timbuktu were well known as channels through which scholars and books emanated, from the North to Southern regions. Regular correspondence had been carried out for centuries between scholars of the two regions, South and North. What 'Umar is portraying here is his awareness of the grave consequences colonial assaults on these centers would pose to the general spiritual inspiration drawn from there. Furthermore, it is worth noting that all the localities mentioned from verse 9 up to verse 14 were areas that were mostly inhabited by Muslims. Fez, Marrakesh and Shinguit, especially represented the cradle of Sufi dissemination as well as advanced study of Islamic law. Regarding Māsina, he exhorts,

14. Forget not Māsina, it has signs
And its people were standard bearers.

Māsina, like the above-mentioned cities, had also been a bastion of Muslim resistance against infidels and the colonials under Alḥājj 'Umar Tall and his heirs. This is therefore an evocation of that glory and religious pride in the face of colonial attacks. Or is it a dirge for

¹³² Cf. James Stuart Olson, Robert Shadle (ed.) *The Historical Dictionary of European Imperialism* (Santa Barbara (C.A.): Greenwood Publishing Group, 1991).

the defeat of these isolated localities as well as a foreboding of the collapse of an Islamic influence in the region? In the next two verses, the speaker's despair almost reaches a climax and he expresses it with resignation:

15. It was afflicted by what afflicted all people
Pertaining to the scourge, and by that I mean the cataclysm.

16. Ponder it well and you will find no dwelling place
In this world and no escape.

The verb “أصاب” connotes calamity or catastrophe when used especially in the passive, and the form “مصيبة” considered as a “صفة مشبهة” (pseudo-attribute) conveys the sense of permanence and perpetuity. Thus if “*aṣāba*” connotes affliction, the “*ṣifah mushabbahah*” will mean something like a lasting catastrophe, a destructive blow that will be transformative. The poet therefore wants to convey the enormity of the damage caused by the colonial assault upon African communities, by the use of that special verb which in Arabic conveys the appropriate meaning of *bouleversement* and the stirring of emotions of awe and despair. For colonialism, as has been suggested above, came as a complete force of transformation. Let us recall that we are in the thick of liminality. The towns and places mentioned by the poet throughout this section serve as metonymy for all the inhabitants and regions conquered and occupied by Europeans. It is therefore a territory surrounded with danger, trials and sorrow from every side.

In further depiction of this phase of liminality, the word “*baliyyāt*” is most appropriate and relevant in this context, especially as regards its connotation in Islamic theological discourse. *Balā'un*, *balwā*, *baliyyah* (pl. *baliyyāt*), convey distinctive significances regarding tribulation, ordeal and divine retribution. The diction presented in this verse amplifies the general theme hinted at in the doxology: change, accompanied by catastrophe and upheaval

wrought upon the region. This has caused trials and tribulations to the people. *Baliyyah* (pl. *baliyyāt*,) *balwā*, *balā'*, are words derived from the same root and are grounded in theological discourse denoting trials or test as well as “particularly ... trouble or ... affliction of any kind by which one’s patience or any other grace or virtue is tried and tested” (Lane, 1.256). Lane adds that “*balā’un* is the greater of the two because [it is] more dangerous to the soul.” According to Muslim belief, the faith of the believer is being constantly tested through calamity, adversity or hardship to insure his steadfastness and resolve. The Quran provides ample examples of how God tested His faithful and devout servants throughout history, especially the prophets and messengers. The believer is invited to adopt these as exemplary models of right conduct (*uswa*,) endurance, fortitude and steadfastness in the face of all adversity and oppression. Let us point out in passing the consequential spiritual transformation of the believer/unbeliever, which is implied here. The description also points to the stage of liminality in the spiritual development of the individual. He must successfully pass through these ordeals in order to be worthy of God’s grace. It is the Islamic equivalence of “baptism by fire.”

In a desire to fully articulate the magnitude of the scourge that colonial assault has afflicted upon African society, the poet elaborates upon the word “*baliyyāt*” by further insisting that what he meant by *baliyyah* is the “*ba’s*” (punishment). In fact, the word *baliyyah* (pl. *baliyyāt*) does not appear explicitly in the Quran. Its cognate form *balā’un/an*, however, appears several times; and in four of these cases God was referring to the Israelites and reminding them of the tribulations through which he had made them pass. The word “*ba’s*,” however, is mentioned several times, and it is in most cases in connection with some punishment, which God either threatens or reminds people that He is capable of unleashing.

Note also the poet's use of the definite article when citing "*ba's*." In Arabic the definite article is used for other connotations besides its defining function. In this regard, grammarians categorize it as *al-'ahdiyya* and *al-jinsiyya*. The former specifies the explicitly alluded to, a fact understood internally within context; the latter distinguishes the genera, specifically its absolute qualities. The poet's meaning seems to encompass all these specifications. On one hand, "the punishment" points to that punishment well known to be unleashed by God on those who disobey His commandments as specified in Quranic discourse (Quran: 7:14, 18, 97; 40:84). On the other hand, that punishment also includes all forms of pain and sorrow that would compel the believer to show penitence for his transgressions. In the face of such divine retribution, where can the creature turn? He has nowhere to go to in order to escape God's omniscience, and he has no other human strategy he can use to avoid it. He is caught in an impossible situation in which he has no other recourse but repentance and seeking God's grace. This is emphasized by the double rhetoricity in the words "*maqarr* and *mafarr*." As antithetical they underline the impossibility of any action because they cancel each other out; and as a pun, they accentuate God's powerful presence dominant at every angle. Furthermore, the emphatic "*rr*" evokes God's epithets *dārr*, "*rabb*" or "*qahhar*." The first emphasizes God's power to cause harm and bring pain, the second, His absolute control over all creation, and the third His crushing power. In 'Umar's theological perspective, therefore, the colonial assault is interpreted as retribution from God. God has indicated in the Quran that he would send other human forces as retribution on those who transgress from His path; and when He does so, their repentance that day might not avail them (Q 40:85).

Implicit within the context of the poet's message at this stage is also the evocation of history as lesson to be kept in memory for the guidance of the believer. The life lived by people is but a mirror of the past in different guises. The Quran cites several nations from the past, representing people who have likewise met God's wrath for their transgressions. The story of the Israelites is a prevalent one across Quranic discourse. This is where the word "*fa'tabiran*" becomes critically significant. The word is derived from the root "*'abr*" which among other meanings conveys the sense of crossing, wading through, passing over, elapsing, to fade, dwindle, die and also to shed tears. Life is thus a transitory phenomenon, a stage of a journey through which man passes and dies. But oblivious of this fact, man becomes attached to the world and forgets his responsibilities. When it is time for his departure all is sorrowful. As result, history becomes an "*'ibrah*," another derivative from the root that also signifies warning or deterring example, lesson, that has to be considered.¹³³ This is one of the reasons why Ibn Khaldun probably entitled his seminal work as "*Kitāb al-Ibar*" (The Book of Historical Lessons). The word *'ibrah* is used in a number of places in the Quran to designate lesson; for instance in Quran 79:26, after Musa's exhortations had failed to get Pharaoh's repentance, God said that he had decreed His retribution upon him in this world and the hereafter and that it was a lesson for the reverent. Thus at one point this poem is meant to be an *'ibrah* by itself for those who would care to heed it, and as such it could possibly be one of God's admonitions in the Quran. In this context, the poet perceives European intervention as a natural phase in the cyclic historical process of the world. Just as many generations had lived and passed away (most of them destroyed after God's retribution was unleashed upon them), so the poet thinks, their turn has also come to be tested.

¹³³ Hans Wehr, *'b.r.*, 587.

After describing the European invasion and its impact in the Northern part of the region, which as we have pointed out consists mostly of territories inhabited by Muslims in the majority, the poet now turns towards other regions, starting with the south. The quick description covers a large geographical space encompassing the whole of the south up to the Guinea Coast, then moving towards the east up to Cameroon. Most of these coastal lands were populated, at this particular colonial moment, by people who the poet would perceive as *kuffār* (disbelievers). These were the Ashante, the Fanti, the Mosi, the Gurunshi (all who are living in present day Ghana); the Ewe (Awuna), the Yoruba (Ajashi, Ikko), and the Barago, in present day Togo. In effect, 'Umar vividly describes these spatial areas that have been subjected to colonial onslaught.

As pointed out above, his perspective on the European invasion is grounded in Islamic theology. His description of colonial conquest across the rest of the region also, however, suggests another motif closely related to his religious sensitivity. The colonial impact on Africa has attracted various reactions and much ink has been spilt in discussing its consequences and repercussions upon the socio-cultural system of African communities, especially in the Post-colonial period. It is to 'Umar's credit, however, that he graphically captures this momentous overwhelming transformation through his narrative verses. Colonialism not only appropriated lands and occupied them, it also subjected people and their cultures to its economic, social, political and cultural transformation. 'Umar depicts the catastrophic nature of this situation as an overturning of the natural order of things. Note first how he portrays the diffusion of the conquest into every corner of the lands:

19. The Gurinshi deserts were not spared
Neither the inhabited lands of Moshi.

20. What is worse, the Fanti lands were fully occupied;

- Its chiefs have become dishonored slaves.
21. Their rule has reached the lands of Awana
Up to Agashi, Dahomey, Ikko and Dina
 22. Have you not seen how they have occupied the lands from Mango
And beyond Barba Tashi and Sagu?
 23. The *Kuffar* of Bargo have all been conquered
Their leaders either took to their heels or were killed
 24. Forget not their destruction of Abeokuta
They have subdued all who said a word or was silent
 25. Indeed they have occupied all of it up to Illori
Oh God! Illuminate our hearts with light.

What we perceive from these descriptions is the aggressive cultural dislocation being wrought on African societies and the reversal of social hierarchies and orders. Kings of yesterday have become slaves and subjected to ridicule before their subjects. Everything has been levelled to the ground. The same idea is reiterated a little further in verse 23. When lions are forced to turn their back in flight, then that portends a truly unnatural situation. The imagery conveys the anti-climax of Africa's fall in the aftermath of colonial occupation. In verse 25 when he entreats himself not to leave out the story of the people of Abeokuta, where everything, people and animals have been destroyed, he is expressing a sentiment of despair and total horror at such acts of vandalism. Colonial history affirms the truth of this particular colonial insensitive conduct when the town of Abeokuta was ransacked and everything ravaged. The use of "*qahara*" is significant here, as it invokes the powerful force, which normally only God could wield. One of His attributes is "*al-Qahhār*": the vanquisher, the conqueror, the oppressor; the avenger; the irresistible, powerful; Almighty.¹³⁴ Thus

¹³⁴ F. Steingrass, *Arabic-English Dictionary* (London: Crosby Lockwood and Son) 860, (<https://ia700404.us.archive.org/2/items/cu31924026873194/cu31924026873194.pdf>; accessed: 3/4/2009).

colonialism is depicted as a non-human force that could only have been an instrument of God Himself. This interpretation is echoed in verse 28 when the poet proclaims:

28. And it was all according to God's will
He does what He wishes without a doubt

The pun in the words “*rabb*” and “*rayb*” conveys the immense feeling of confusion and perplexity in the poet’s mind. Could God (*rabb*) have really allowed this? The very interrogation of God’s action connotes a doubt (*rayb*) in the poet’s mind. For it is incomprehensible how God could allow this kind of atrocities to be perpetrated upon His believing servants through unbelievers. This is connoted in spite of his assertion of faith that God decrees His acts as He wishes, whenever and however it pleases Him. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the doubt is a feeling which is hardly allowed the force of expression. For note that the “y” which intervenes as insinuation, is what in Arabic linguistics considered a “weak” letter. It is one of the three letters that are subject to morphological mutation. They are not constant like the other consonants and vowels. Thus the doubt was only a momentary temptation that was immediately dominated by the emphatic sound of “*rabb*”: a double assurance, i.e., *b.b*. This consolidates his previous statement that there is no possible way out of the dilemma.

Verse 30 suggests that the information conveyed by the poet in previous verses were eyewitness accounts, while what he is now expressing were hearsays from sources he does not cite. But in spite of that, these accounts portended no good. Nupe, Busa, Gumbe and Yauri are localities in Nigeria, from which the poet originally hails. His feeling of alarm can therefore not be hidden as he questions further directions that the colonial campaign would

take. Let us note that this very tone of confusion appropriately reflects the liminal stage that the poet's narrative is describing.

3.3.3 Failed Re-aggregation as Frozen Liminality

Verses 33-38 have been sub-titled "The act of entrusting (himself to God's decree)" by the poet. This sub-title comes as an expression of resignation, surrender and submission. After his first acquaintance with the terrible impact of the colonial offensive and his realization of ineffectiveness of African resistance, the poet retreats into the only safe resort available to religious-faithful in time of affliction: God. I am sure the quranic verse stating,

وإذا أراد الله بقوم سوء فلا مرد له وما لهم من دونه من وال

But when (once) Allah willeth a people's punishment, there can be no turning it back, nor will they find, besides Him, any to protect.¹³⁵

was resonating in his mind at this stage of his anguish. How could he reason otherwise, considering the fact that his whole attitude seemed to be defined by religious ethics? Let us note that resignation is an act of renunciation; it is the assumption of a dissatisfactory stability. It is the homecoming of the defeated, a sort of dispirited aggregation. What the situation requires at this moment is self-reappraisal and redefinition of its own degenerate position. What does fate have in store for these conquered African communities? In defeat, social groups are inclined to soul searching criticism to find the causes of failure and defeat. But most importantly the morale of the people needs to be kept alive, courageous and forward-looking, hopeful for better days ahead. 'Umar here assumes the role of social leader, infusing the sentiment of optimism once again in the mind of his audience at large.

This section is hortatory. It is the typical sermonizing upon the pulpit. The poet begins by inviting his audience to reflect upon his narration.

32. When you ponder upon all that I have said

¹³⁵ Quran 13:11, transl. Yusuf Ali.

Just say, “God is our lord” and add no more.

The verse succinctly depicts the poet’s psychological anguish and pain. He seems to draw the attention of his audience to the gravity of their plight and the need for its reasoned appraisal to understand the magnitude of this predicament in which colonial conquest has thrown them. In the face of daunting force and its horror (that seems almost inhuman), the effect could become numbing and stupefying on people’s mind; the self could be forced to withdraw into a sort of coma by the stultifying events. This seems to be the significance of his pronouncement, “Say God and add no more.” It is the cry of surrender, when all hope is lost and efforts would lead to nowhere. You become transfixed within a circle that leads you to only one thing; you hold your breath, or if you still have strength, call out “God!” Because discourse is frozen, you can only surrender. Religious devotees view misfortunes as trials and tribulations that essentially lead to self-transformation. For at times calamities lead believers to an impasse that reinvigorates their faith in God and results in submission and repentance. In other words they become “born again.”

The poet argues persistently,

33. For this is all from His decree
And power, and wisdom and knowledge
34. Seek no way-out from your own power
Resign yourself, rather, to your creator.

Fatalistic this may be, but still reasoned theological argumentation in the context of Islamic theological discourse argues that God’s omnipotence and omniscience does not exclude human freedom of choice. Note the ingenious employment of pun by the poet regarding the phrasal words “*ḥukmihi and ḥikamihi.*” These two constructions contain the words “*ḥukum*” and “*ḥikam*” derived from root “*H.K.M.*” But it is worth noting here the way they coalesce

and reinforce each other. On the one hand, European force is being perceived as fulfilling God's decree and command; they are acting only with His divine jurisdiction. Would that not seem unjust? For how could God employ unbelievers to punish His servants? On the other hand, God is the All-Knowing (*Al-'Alīm*) and therefore whatever He does is dictated by His wisdom and sagacity. In a way this is justified, however, by God in Quran 2:216 which says:

But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth and ye know not.¹³⁶

'Umar's moral injunction therefore derives absolutely from a divine moral categorical imperative which however depends functionally on human choice. Did he not counsel "Seek no way-out from your own power", which presupposes some human independent agency? Furthermore, these words invoke God's absolute attributes of *Al-ḥakam* (the arbitrator); *Al-Qādir* (the powerful); *Al-'Alīm* (the all-Knowing); *Al-ḥakīm* (the judicious); they emphasize the poet's argument that the misfortune that has befallen them was a just retribution from God, who could only decree it; and it could happen only with His absolute knowledge.

This leads ultimately into the next verse where the poet warns the believer from self-conceit:

34. Seek no way-out from your own power
Resign yourself, rather, to your creator

This warning harks back to the dominant idea contained in the previous verse 34. The word "qūwah" here contextually alludes to mental and physical capabilities with which man is endowed. Indeed, on the part of Africans, what effective weaponry did they possess that could counteract European advanced technological machinery? This argument is more eloquently expressed by the poet in subsequent variants of this poem, where he would derisively describe the ineffectiveness of African arms, arrows, machetes, spears, sticks and

¹³⁶ *The Holy Qur'an*, (http://wikilivres.ca/wiki/The_Holy_Qur%27an/Baqara; accessed: 7/7/2013).

potions, against Europeans weaponry. His evocation of the divine attribute of creator goes to emphasize the ineffectiveness of human agency and thereby negates the possibility of his independence and power in the face of this indomitable force. The Creator reminds us of man's contingent existence. Whatever power man thinks he has derives from the very act of his creation and therefore depends on the creator. It is furthermore underlined by one of Islam's credos that states, "*Lā ḥawla wa lā qūwata Illā bi Allahi*" (there is no power or strength except with God). In the final analysis, this takes us back to the attitude of "tafwīd" (surrender or resignation) by which the poet sub-titled this section.

In order to present a convincing argument to his audience, the poet has so far appealed mainly to theological discourse clothed in rhetoric and common sense. Now he moves to make rational arguments by appealing to logic and reason.

35. Think about it. Do you see it better
For us to try to run away or to stay put?

36. You would find no better choice between the two
Either of them would lead to shame

"*Al-ra'y*" here suggests the use of reasoned opinion. The poet is appealing to his audience to use their reasoning and determine whether it was more prudent to try to escape from colonial onslaught, or to make a stand and fight it out "like men"? He has, however, already pointed out the futility of adopting either of these attitudes in verse 16 when he declared:

16. Ponder it well and you will find no dwelling place
In this world and no escape.

Over there it was simply a self-assured statement that he was making without any sense of arguing it out. Under the present circumstances (when African defeat is a certainty and colonial occupation seemed inevitable), however, a sober evaluation and decision is urgently required. And in order to win the hearts of his audience, common sense and theological

appeals did not seem adequate for the poet; he must appeal to reason. In the course of his narrative account within this poem, he had previously appealed to his audience by saying, “*i’tabiran*,” which as we have pointed out suggests the use of *’ibrah* (lesson). His argument is adopting a more experimental analytic style of demonstration. Finding themselves at a historic crossroad it has become imperative that they carefully deliberate, making analytic use of historical experience to understand their situation and charter the way forward. Note how this verse mirrors verse 16. A variant reading of this verse occurs in AIA/AR.417, as:

فاعتبرن ولن ترى مقرا في هذه الدنيا ولا مقرا

(*Fa’tabiran wa lan tarā maqarrā Fī hadhihi al-dunyā wa lā mafarrā*)

In the same copy verse 36 appears as:

فاعتبرن بالرأي هل فرار أنفع عندنا أو القرار

(*Fa’tabiran bi al-ra’yi hal al-firāru Anfa’u ’indanā ’aw al-qarāru*)

Thus we note a rhetorical inversion in verse 16, where “*maqarrā*” shifts from the end of first hemistich to the end of last hemistich while “*mafarrā*” simultaneously shifts in the opposite direction. I find this rhetorically expressive of the alternative shifts in the poet’s emphases. In verse 16 the poet seems to be consider first the possibility of remaining. This makes logical sense since, when Africans were confronted by Europeans, their immediate response was to stand and fight. They had not understood the advanced capacity of European weaponry vis-à-vis theirs. Running away then becomes only a second alternative when their efforts proved futile. On the other hand, the argument in verse 37 is being made after the act of defeat. Logic at this moment demands escape in order to stay clear of the field of danger. The alternative of staying to absorb further humiliation could only be secondary. This is because (at least at the human level) when confronted by greater forces and at a disadvantage, running away (or retreat for that matter) can preserve lives. Moreover, unlike the first situation of

verse 16, where the idea of European invasion was (perhaps) perceived by the poet, merely from the human level, his argument in verse 37 acknowledges that the invasion was after all divinely sanctioned as retribution. There is the possibility of human action in the first instance, but this is impossible in the second instance because there is no escape from God's wrath, staying or fleeing. This is elaborated in the next verse,

36. You will never find preference between the two
Nay, either one of them is burdensome

Note further the use of the absolute future to underline impossibility of choice between the two alternatives. It is also worth pointing out how this dual preferentiality becomes rhetorically enacted within the structures of the two hemstitches; "*lan, min, humā,*" in the first hemistich contrasts with "*lan (in kullan), min, humā*" in the second hemistich. The rhyme in "*rājihin*" and "*fādihin*" also reinforces the countervailing symmetry and asymmetry established between the two contending alternatives. In the end they both lead to the same conclusion, burden.

After presenting his arguments and appealing to the rationality of the audience to examine the visible evidence of colonial conquest, the poet concludes with a strong exhortation.

37. I bid you Oh my people
To stop the idle talk and be silent or hold your peace.

The argumentation is over! He is now assumes a theological authority as leader of the community. His tone therefore becomes commanding and authoritative. His more advisory attitude becomes autocratic and proscriptive. His discourse seems to have taken possession of him here, and the voice of God in the end resonates in him. Has Umar been convinced that fighting the Europeans is futile and suicidal and therefore advising (commanding) a non-committal stance?

From this section, the excited mood of the poet appears to have calmed down. This fully reflects the dominant mood of a failed aggregation. There is no celebration and no statuses to confer. Already in the previous verses, the shift was becoming apparent, but the turning point is really here where the sense of a defeated community is announced by the poet's attitude of sermonizing. He is addressing himself directly to the community at large and directing them towards appropriate conduct in face of the difficult situation. The section is subtitled "*al-tawṣiya*" (the exhortation, advice, instruction, command, etc). Judging from his tone at the end of the previous section, one would conclude that the appropriate translation of the word would be "instructions or command," because this could not have been advice (which would imply choice from his audience) if previously his tone was commanding. It is a brief address consisting of only two verses. But the Arabs say, "*Khayr al-kalām mā qalla wa dalla*": the most eloquent speech is that which is brief and proves the point. He specifies his audience at the onset and appears truly to be acting here as chief or leader of the community. His words seem therefore instructive, for the assumption of appropriate conduct before Europeans:

38. Oh Muslims, show submission outwardly
Then conceal your intentions and conspire
39. I advise you to show thankfulness when they come
And endure with your hearts when they show you prejudice

Within the context of colonial discourse, power relations between colonizer and colonized have always been understood as complex and ambivalent. While orthodox conception of power perceives this relations as dominated by the powerful colonizer through his manifest material and symbolic forces, studies derived mostly from poststructuralist discourse analyses have proved this perception too simplistic and failing to acknowledge the capacity of colonized's agency and the potency of its subversiveness. Power by its very nature is

latent in discursive structures. It does not inhere specifically in individual or group agencies, but manifest itself in active praxis of discursive structures and relations. This is succinctly encapsulated in the following citation from Foucault's work *History of Sexuality*. According to Michel Foucault (1981, 121-2),

By power ... I do not understand a general system of domination exercised by one element or one group over another, whose effects... traverse the entire body social... It seems to me that first what needs to be understood is the multiplicity of relations of force that are immanent to the domain wherein they are exercised, and that are constitutive of its organization; the game that through incessant struggle and confrontation transforms them, reinforces them, inverts them; the supports these relations of force find in each other, so as to form a chain or system, or, on the other hand, the gaps, the contradictions that isolate them from each other; in the end, the strategies in which they take effect, and whose general pattern or institutional crystallization is embodied in the mechanisms of the state, in the formulation of the law, in social hegemonies. The condition of possibility of power... should not be sought in the primary existence of a central point, in a unique space of sovereignty whence would radiate derivative and descendent forms; it is the moving base of relations of force that incessantly induce, by their inequality, states of power, but always local and unstable. Omnipresence of power: not at all because it regroups everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced at every instant, at every point, or moreover in every relation between one point and another. Power is everywhere: not that it engulfs everything, but that it comes from everywhere. (1981: 121-2)¹³⁷

In the complex colonial situation, power is portrayed ostentatiously by the conquerors through the wielding and use of weaponry and through abuse and humiliation towards the conquered. The latter, however, does not fully succumb to the threat of the former. Through subtle stratagems at his disposal (which he manipulates at the blind side of his adversary), the conquered colonized is able to constantly contest and extenuate the authority of the conqueror. This depicts the complexity of power which, as theorized by Michel Foucault throughout his works, is not, as presumed by many people, diffused from top to bottom. Power relations are precarious; they are perpetually being renegotiated by parties involved (at

¹³⁷ Quoted in David Inglis et al, 2012.

times oblivious to them) across various discursive strategies that can be both transparent and opaque. In the situation of dominance, the dominated express their power in concealment, dissimulation, masquerade and mimicry. It occurs at the blind side of officialdom that often sees it as in accord with normal behavior, the significance of which is only comprehended by actors themselves. That is why Homi Bhabha calls it mimicry, because it mimics official behavior while serving to empower the dominated. Colonialism exhibited its power through administrative, military, political and even cultural control over the colonized. It is the only way of maintaining their control over subjects. But as 'Umar strategically demonstrates here, the show of submission could be misleading; it could serve as only camouflage for the satisfaction of the colonizer. Internally, the colonized is advised to maintain a constant attitude of vigilance while looking for opportunity to scheme, plot and conspire against the colonizer. Like dogs, they could publicly show approval and delight at least at acts of patronizing from masters; and when kicked and abused, they would shuffle away to the corner, inwardly lamenting but resilient in endeavor to outmaneuver the opponent at his own game of power struggle. It is important to point out, however, that in the present context, 'Umar's advocacy of strategic passivity vis-à-vis colonial officialdom is not really something total strange in Islamic theological doctrine. Although Sunni schools tend to downplay its use and importance, in Shi'ism it is considered a crucial strategic dogma. Its legal possibility is often derived from Quran 3:28 which states thus:

Let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers rather than believers: if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah: except by way of precaution, that ye may guard yourselves from them. But Allah cautions you (To remember) Himself; for the final goal is to Allah.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ (Yusuf Ali, <http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=3&verse=28>)

Within the West African region it was a practice that had been determined Muslims co-existence within alien communities for several centuries before ‘Umar. Its sanctioning has been historically ascribed to one of the region’s previous pre-eminent scholars and religious leaders, Al-Hajj Sālim Sūwāri (c. 15th century). Known by the term *Suwārian Tradition*, it advocates adoption of a pacifist attitude towards non-Muslims and discourages even proselytization.¹³⁹ It is however, difficult to speculate ‘Umar’s real purpose in promoting the adoption of this *Suwārian* demeanor vis-à-vis Europeans at this stage of colonial occupation.

The passive resistance strategies advocated by ‘Umar in the preceding section get further elaboration in this following section of the poem. Indeed, realizing the futility of active resistance to colonial onslaught, we perceive ‘Umar progressively reassessing African survival strategy within the developing deteriorating situation. He had desperately tried to comprehend their defeat as a divine act of retribution and endeavored to mitigate its effect upon the community of believers at large by counseling appropriate conduct that would preserve faith and religious duty. Here it is significant to note how he subtitled the section as *al-Tanbīh*, which signifies among other things, warning, cautioning, alerting, incitement. In effect, the title echoes such famous theological treatises as *Tanbīh al-ghāfilīn* (Warning to the Negligent) and *Tanbīh al-ikhwān* (Warning to the Brotherhood), which enjoyed wide reading public among Sub-Saharan Africans at that time. Here as we shall see, ‘Umar’s concern is twofold: to alert his compatriots about the potential social and religious menace that the

¹³⁹ See Holger Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism: Muslims, the State and Society in Ghana from the Precolonial to the Postcolonial Era* (Helsinki: Finish Oriental Society, 2008) 58 – 60; and Robert Launey, “La Trahision des Clercs? The Collaboration of a Suwārian ‘Ālim” in Hunwick and Nancy Lawler eds., *The Cloth of Many Colored Silks: Papers on History and Society Ghanaian and Islamic in Honor of Ivor Wilks* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996); Ivor Wilks, “‘Mallams Do Not Fight with the Heathen:’ A Note on Suwarian Attitudes to Jihad.” (*Ghana Studies* 5, 2002), 215-30.

colonial presence poses to their lives as well as to reassure them that God has not forsaken them. He says,

40. Have no doubt that the religion of God
Shall not be destroyed by them; they are like jokers.
41. The Islamic edifice shall never be destroyed;
Any apostate shall come to regret.
42. God knew what they wanted
And what they desired and what they stood against.
43. The prophet has foretold what will overtake them.
And they shall not compare to us however tall they stand.
44. No one can be wise about what has come to pass;
The Lord has power over what has befallen (us).

As we have already remarked before, 'Umar's concern in the phase of this false aggregation consists principally in preserving the morale of his community. The powerful colonial assault and defeat of Africans within God's *dār al-Islam* could plant the seeds of uncertainty and doubts in the hearts of weaker folks and believers. The successful European campaign could be interpreted by those weaker-hearted faithful as the greater potency of their God. In religious conflicts, there is always tendency to ascribe efficiency to the deity of conquerors and inefficiency to that of the conquered, for during such contests, the deities are believed to be more in control of action than humans themselves. No doubt the morale of many of would sink low and questions would begin to beset their minds as to the truth of their belief. It is therefore within order that a spiritual leader of such capacity as 'Umar, who is highly revered within the community, should rise up to reassert confidence in people's hearts for fear of losing his own legitimacy in the eyes of the people. He begins by reassuring them of the invincibility of the Islamic religion against human challenge, a theme he alluded to earlier in the doxology. As a skillful orator, he goes on to present the European forces as

insignificant, describing them as hoaxers, and therefore of little consequence before the indomitable power of God. It is a strategy to assuage his audience's fears and shock by raising their trust and confidence in him as a leader and in Islam as powerful and therefore true religion. He takes a moment to warn them of the consequences of deflection; "the renegades shall come to regret." What is more effective than this subtle intimidation that could expose them to psychological insecurity? He continues to assure his audience that as he had said already it is all in God's design; He has full knowledge of the enemies' intentions as well as the plight of His servants. To buttress his point he appeals to prophetic authority and prescience. If the prophet had had foreknowledge of these historical events, then surely, he also had knowledge of their predicament and foresaw its favorable end for them. It is significant to underline that in Islam, prophetic authority complements Quranic authority and together they form the basis of Islamic sharia (law) that sanctions and governs the conduct of believers. Appeal to prophetic authority is therefore tantamount to appeal to divine authority. The true believer is equally sensitive to both, and doubt in them could ultimately attract excommunication, for they form the foundation of the creed. The fact that the Europeans, in spite of all their powerful intimidating force, would never measure up to Islamic power is a delicate argument to make before folks who have just been practically humbled and humiliated by them. (It is like the Israelites under the oppression of the Pharaoh. When Moses intervened on their behalf seeking their release, the Pharaoh became adamant and more aggressive towards the Israelites. When their morale began to decline, they lost faith in Moses and then turned and said to him, "We have been harmed before you came to us and after you have come to us."¹⁴⁰ All he could do was to assure them, "Perhaps your Lord will

¹⁴⁰ Quran 7:129, transl. Sahih International, (<http://quran.com/7>).

destroy your enemy and grant you succession in the land and see what you will do.”¹⁴¹) The effective way out of such dilemmas has always been to raise the audience’s hope and expectation of future success that can justify immediate sacrifice and endurance.

‘Umar would like to vindicate his own spiritual powerlessness in the face of the powerful European attacks. No human maneuvers, he claims, could be effective against a force that is only acting as an instrument of God. As he had already stressed above, he reminds again that the European conquest and defeat was nothing but retribution from God unleashed to test their resolve and faith. Their patience and appropriate conduct towards the Europeans will pay off as long as they continue to keep faith in God and indirectly maintain their trust in his personal spiritual authority.

As if it was an afterthought in his deliberations, at this stage, ‘Umar comes back to the description of the landscape occupied or being raided by the Europeans. Or, was it information received after composing the above verses? He subtitles it, “*al-Tatimmah*,” or what we might call “addendum.” The word is the verbal noun of the second form verb “تَمَّمَ”, which signifies to complete, supplement, etc. It will be therefore appropriate to consider this as addition or supplementation, which ‘Umar composed to complete his descriptions. The information might equally also have been acquired after the above part of poem had already been concluded. He continues,

45. Keep listing and go, up to Adamāwa
As well as Kafī, Lāfiya and Nassarāwa
46. Did you hear what they perpetrated at Jaga?
Who else other than them (Europeans) could have burned it, even were they to have rebelled?
47. He who is wise will understand
My words, pondering over them he will understand

¹⁴¹ Qurr’an 7:130, transl. Sahih International, (<http://quran.com/7>).

48. We ask Almighty God for relief
And a way out from any difficulties

Far away from his native home, 'Umar's mind has suddenly become preoccupied with the safety of his native people under perilous circumstances of the day. He might have thought (and hoped) that they would be spared. But he received alarming news of his folks' plight. Adamawa has had a rich and distinguished history. It was a satellite kingdom of the Sokoto caliphate until internal and external aggression culminated in the Germans intervening in 1901 to "liberate" them. That ushered in colonial occupation that passed from the Germans on to French and then English after German defeat in the First World War. The rhetorical question in verse 46 is really an interjection of pain and grief. Jega is located within Kebbi, a region of Nigeria, and Umar is a native of this region. It is a cry of grief and agony. The violence perpetrated by the colonial army seemed incomprehensible to him. And it seemed impossible for him to find any sensible excuse that could warrant such act. Who other than the colonizers would do that? He asks. It distinguishes the act as exceptional and the perpetrators as atypical, nay, eccentric. It is the very essence of western values that 'Umar questions here. And it is also interesting to observe, in contrast to this, how Europeans had given themselves the right to depict Africans as savages and barbaric, devoid of any standard moral values. We find this indictment of western morality acclaimed as the fruits of its civilization vocatively expressed by the Martinican poet, scholar and politician in the following powerful denouncement:

For my part, if I have recalled a few details of these hideous butcheries, it is by no means because I take a morbid delight in them, but because I think that these heads of men, these collections of ears, these burned houses, these Gothic invasions, this steaming blood, these cities that evaporate at the edge of the sword, are not to be so easily disposed of. They prove that colonization, I repeat, dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity,

colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal. It is this result, this boomerang effect of colonization that I wanted to point out. (Cesaire, 1962, 5)

Common cultural denominator besides, these two poets of African descent also share feelings of horror and disgust at colonial atrocities perpetrated against Africans in the course of their imperial conquests. In addition, one senses also their mutual contempt stirred by European self-conceit of cultural ascendancy and moral superiority. 'Umar's rhetorical question is a categorical expression of repugnance and indignation at an act he views as worse human self-degradation. Pertly perhaps, he retorts, "He who is wise would understand my words..." The invitation to examine and understand is an appeal to objective human universal conscience and judgment. Perhaps Aimee Cesaire, born in 1913 (fourteen years after 'Umar's words were composed) was but the echo-wave of 'Umar's cry.

'Umar's voice failed to continue, so it fell silent, but not without a final plea to his Lord for an expedient relief. A few lines before he had entreated God to fill his heart with light, as he had found himself engulfed in an intellectual and spiritual gloom. "O Our Lord, shed light into our hearts." In the face of this overwhelming calamity, 'Umar's hope is to be able to transcend its pain and be capable of understanding it objectively as one of human frailties before God's omnipotence. This is why perhaps he yearned for His light, for as God declared He "is the light of the heavens and earth."¹⁴² In the dark hours of believers' gloomy lives only God's guiding light could salvage them from despair. So in the end 'Umar lifted up his

¹⁴² Quran, 30:35.

eyes again towards God and implored him for comfort and deliverance from his agony and that of his community.

This poem is a historical testimony of colonial disruption of the harmony of African social order. Grounded in Islamic religious discourse, the poet perceives this colonial conquest as divine punishment descended upon humankind. Partly by appealing to Quranic and historical references, embedded within his discourse, the poet contrasts their situation with several generations of nations who had also attracted God's wrath through transgressions and were subsequently visited by His retribution. From his perspective, the only way out for them is to turn to God for His mercy and clemency.

3.4. The Monologue

As pointed out above the second part of 'Umar's *qaṣīdah*, subtitled "*al-muḥāwarah*" is structurally an extension of the aborted *naṣīb* (prelude) as result of the poet's mental disquietude occasioned by sudden impact of colonial conquest. In spite of the stylistic disjunction between the previous narrative and this part of the poem, however, their structural cohesion is preserved by the general mood of anxiety and sorrow that dominates their common poetic discourse. Its affinity with the prelude and therefore the phase of separation has already been alluded to above. The poet introduces an imaginary interlocutor as he had previously done in the first part of the prelude in verse five where he intimated:

5. Oh inquirer about what I discern within my heart,
Listen to what I recount from my mind.

49. And an inquirer inquired about my situation.
Inwardly and outwardly, say to him, I will give a hint

The two verses are stylistically similar and play structurally the same role which is akin to dramatic asides. They serve as a rhetoric device that allows the poet to express his feelings to

the audience. Let us point out that this dramatic strategy is an ingenious rhetoric element of classical Arabic poetry. It allows the poet (in his moment of solitude) to “break the silence” by interpolating mute shadows in his psychic space and satisfying his human need of communication. In the classical *qaṣīdah*, the poet accosts imaginary companions (usually twain) and invites them to share his nostalgia for bygone days stirred by the sight of *aṭlāl* (camp ruins). I believe ‘Umar is employing a similar device here to be able to express his inner emotions. The perlocutionary force of this imaginary interlocution is really an expression of the state of displacement that the European conquest has caused among the African populace, for the interlocutor’s general question does nothing but state the fact that they have nowhere to turn to, the whole land being encompassed by the Europeans from all sides.

51. Where would you like to settle, O our learned one?
For wherever you choose to settle is our home too.

There is no doubt about it, ‘Umar finds himself in a dilemma. He could not decide where to go following the general suspense in which everybody was left, wondering what was going to happen. The four localities he cites, Salaga, Hausa, Ikko, Macina represent virtually the entire region of West Africa. Ikko, which is another name for present day Lagos, lies in the farthest corner to the southeast; Hausa lies in the east, Macina in the west and Salaga, his place of actual residence being in the middle, in the northern part of present day Ghana. He goes on then to reveal his state of mind to this interlocutor, saying,

52. I said to him, “Don’t you observe what has befallen us?
There is no settling place for us
53. Nay there is no safe home in the whole world
All that has been built is either shaken from the foundation or demolished
54. I am at a loss regarding this situation

I do not know what to do in these difficult times

55. I can't say I would settle here
Or I would go somewhere else"

The description does not only outline the phase of separation as we indicated above, but it is also partly an expression of the transitional state of liminality, that state of crisis, in which participants completely lose their bearings and stability of mind. The whole situation is marked by danger and desperation. This is exactly how 'Umar depicts their common plight. The beginnings of European invasion of Africa were perhaps fiercest in the history of colonialism. Two main factors could account for this. First after the Berlin conference of 1884-5, when ground rules for the "Scramble" were discussed, and officially endorsed by major stakeholders, it would be imagined that each of them rushed to claim as much area as was possible; and then the literal scramble really began. From everywhere the relative peace enjoyed by Africans was shaken and a state of panic and alarm was sounded across the land. Secondly, the immediate reaction from the side of Africans was resistance.¹⁴³ And in the West African region it was at its worst as groups and individuals took arms to try to defend themselves. It was around this time that 'Umar composed this poem.

After expressing his bewilderment and disorientation regarding the confusion infolding around him, 'Umar focuses on a sore spot in his heart: the town of Salaga, his old place of residence. This was where he settled when he first came from Hausa land in 1874. Salaga had been famous then for its market, which became the crossroad of trade all over the region. Here he thought he could both carry on with trade and exercise his scholarly and religious profession. But what made Salaga so famous a trading center was most of all the safe transit routes made secure by Ashanti control of the lands both south and north, including the lands

¹⁴³ See A. Adu Boahen, 2000, chapters 1 and 2.

of Gonja (Salaga serving as royal town) and those of Dagomba; both peoples had been vassals of the Ashanti kingdom for a long time. When the Ashanti were defeated by the British in 1873-74, however, its vassal lands of the north took the opportunity not only to assume their independence, but to seek out Ashanti officials and merchants to exact retribution on them. This resulted into a situation of anarchy and disorder. To make matters worse, in 1892, a civil war erupted in Salaga, involving both locals and strangers. The town was ransacked, and properties of strangers were looted, and some of them killed and exiled. Jack Goody and T. M. Mustapha (1966, 23) sum it all up as:

Such factors led to the gradual decline of Salaga, the greatest market town in Northern Ghana, and to the dispersal of its Moslem population throughout the forest region. But two local events hastened the process, the Salaga civil war of 1892, when the town emptied overnight, and the slaughter of Ashanti traders in 1874, which inhibited any attempt on the part of the Ashanti to re-establish the trade on its former basis, when Salaga was described as the market of Kumasi.

The series of misfortunes, unleashed by these unhappy events, had disorganized 'Umar and Muslim residents of Salaga. The town had become virtually unsafe for them to stay and continue with their trade. After going into exile for a time, during which 'Umar remained uncertain where else to go and where to settle, he finally determined to reside in a neighboring town of Salaga called Kete. It was here that he would live and spend his last days.

As we stated above, these moments formed part of a liminal phase in 'Umar's personal life. In the midst of this upheaval, the colonial forces were also exacting their share of damage around the land. British and German officials vied in turn to claim the territory. It was the Germans, who had the upper hand then, and when the civil unrest became intolerable, they burned down the town, and then intervened too by placing one of the

contestants on the throne. 'Umar refers to this incident in his poem. In verse 78, after expressing his refusal to re-settle in Salaga, he turns to Muslims and enjoins them,

78. O Muslims, do not behave irrationally
Among them, and conduct yourself not as savages.

79. But hold fast to the noble tradition,
And incline not towards seeking delights.

80. Fasten your grip upon the covenant of the Merciful,
From the prophet's tradition and the Quran.

81. Bear stoutly all calamities,
That God might purify you through it.

82. God would examine your situation,
Whether you would endure it or despair

The key phrase here is “among them.” Who is he referring to? The Europeans? The local unfriendly Gonja factions? He may be referring to both of them. Just as we have seen above (when he was admonishing Muslims to behave cautiously and hold steadfast to their religion), he is coming back here to enjoin them to adopt the same attitude of strong faith in their religion and not to become shaken by the ordeal they are confronting. Thus the section ends in a tone that manifests the phase of aggregation, the phase of communal life as 'Umar closes the whole poem on a hortatory note.

Chapter IV

*Nazmu al-la'ālī*¹⁴⁴ or Tales of African colonial conquests

4.1. Introduction

This is the second of 'Umar's triadic poetic composition on colonial conquest of Africa. It was composed around 1318 AH (≈ 1900), a year after the first poem was composed. It was the moment when the complete colonial annexation of the region was drawing to its decisive stage. The major colonial powers which dominated the territories that formed the locus of 'Umar's poems – England, France and Germany – were on the verge of consolidating their colonial possessions. All resistance against European colonialism was being contained, and colonial administrators were laying the foundational structures of a new Africa. Relatively this is the second longest poem among the triad. It provides a more detailed description of areas, towns, ethnicities and leading warriors involved in resistance to colonial forces across the region. In addition, the account provides an appraisal of African individual warriors and groups' performance vis-à-vis Europeans as well as critical evaluation of European conduct. In line with my structural frame of analysis, I will begin by looking at the poem from a horizontal perspective, representing (as a whole) the liminal phase of Africa's ritual process of colonial transformation. I will then follow this by a vertical examination of the tripartite structure of the qaṣīdah as a reflection of an integral transient process involving the three phases of *separation, liminality and aggregation*.

4.2 *Nazmu al-la'ālī* as Liminal Phase in Africa's Colonial Experience.

The phase of liminality in the ceremonial process of the rite of passage functionally and structurally follows and continues from the phase of *separation* as propounded by van

¹⁴⁴ Based on MSS. IAS.AR/3; 8; 139. The title to this qaṣīdah is mentioned by 'Umar in verse 10 where he declares: *وبعد فقصدنا نظم اللّالي *** بإخبار وتنبيه الكرام*. See full translation of the poem in appendix IV.

Genep, Victor Turner and others. This liminal phase is crucial and determinative in the ritual process as being the stage when and where the symbolic acts and attitudes of metastatic transfers are executed. Turner describes it as “betwixt and between” neither here nor there. The initiate is divested of any particularity, social, economic, cultural, political, and becomes simply innominate: “Particular form here becomes general matter; often their very names are taken from them and each is called solely by the generic term for ‘neophyte’ or ‘initiant.’”¹⁴⁵ Turner goes further to state that the status of these “initands” is rendered so anomalous that they symbolically lose their very biological identity and become “symbolically either sexless or bisexual and may be regarded as a kind of human prima materia-as undifferentiated raw material.”¹⁴⁶ All these symbolic actions and attitudes are meant to establish the state of liminality “as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise.”¹⁴⁷ In other words the state of the neophyte is symbolically rendered *tabula rasa* in a way so as to accomplish his symbolic transformation of status. But what is more relevant, in Turner’s description of this phase, to our analysis of Africa’s colonial experience, is the following remarks:

A further structurally negative characteristic of transitional beings is that they have nothing. They have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows. Their condition is indeed the very prototype of sacred poverty. *Rights over property, goods, and services inhere in positions in the politico-jural structure. Since they do not occupy such positions, neophytes exercise no such rights.* In the words of King Lear they represent “naked unaccommodated man.”¹⁴⁸ [Emphasis added]

¹⁴⁵ William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979) 236.

¹⁴⁶ William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, 236.

¹⁴⁷ William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, 237.

¹⁴⁸ William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, 237.

Before colonization, Africa like the “orient” of Said’s *Orientalism*, was primordially an existential phenomenon created by Europe, in part as result of long tradition of imaginative and academic scholarship sustained by a powerful “corporate institution” that warranted,

making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, ... a Western style for dominating restructuring, and having authority over [it]. (11)

“Africa” and Africans became subjects for a dominant scientific discourse in which their very existential conception became a matter of philosophical, scientific, religious, ethical, economic and cultural debate. By the middle of the 19th century, Africa was variously described geographically as *terra nullius*, “dark continent” and European voyages of exploration as “discovering” Africa; its inhabitants were the savage race, whose enslavement was religiously and scientifically (to some extent) justifiable, because they were sub-humans. At this stage and for the sake of brevity I would like to cite only one intellectual contribution to this pre-colonial discourse on Africa and Africans that became authoritative in Europe.

Hegel (1956, 93) has this to say in respect to Africa:

The peculiarly African character is difficult to comprehend, for the very reason that in reference to it, we must quite give up the principle which naturally accompanies all *our* ideas-the category of Universality. In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence-as for example, God, or Law-in which the interest of man's volition is involved and in which he realizes his own being. This distinction between himself as an individual and the universality of his essential being, the African in the uniform, undeveloped oneness of his existence has not yet attained; so that the Knowledge of an absolute Being, an Other and a Higher than his individual self, is entirely wanting. The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality-all that we call feeling-if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character.

He further points out that,

What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History.¹⁴⁹

Now when we examine Europe's general discourse on Africa and Africans, prior to Colonialism, in the light of Turner's description of the liminal symbolic phase of the neophyte, the similarities are more striking. Because they have been denied *politico-jural* status, their tenancy and right to the land has also been denied. The African, as Hegel declared, has not yet evolved out of nature. He is "on the *threshold* of the World's History" [Emphasis added]. Note that "threshold" is one of the words Turner uses to describe the liminal phase of the symbolic transformational process of the rite of passage.

My purpose in the preceding reflections is to allow us examine 'Umar's poem *Nazmu al-la'ali* as portraying symbolic literary characteristics of liminality. As I have pointed out, its composition comes exactly at that moment when the struggle between Africans and Europeans has reached its climax. While the first poem symbolically represented the phase of *separation* in the process of Africa's colonization due to its lack of descriptive activity,¹⁵⁰ the second poem, on the other hand, corresponds symbolically to the phase of liminality because of its dominant imageries and symbols that vividly enact scenes of encounter between Europeans and Africans. Descriptions of actions are foregrounded in the poet's diction. The poet even succeeds at moments in articulating the voices of *dramatis personae*; although we are aware of the poet's narrative third-person mode, we also at the same time sense it is a stream-of-consciousness narrative, especially as the poet makes no effort to disassociate himself from the general emotion of the victims of colonial power. In addition to these

¹⁴⁹ Hegel, 1956, 99.

¹⁵⁰ The verbal expression of the poem is relatively dominated by equational sentences (*jumal 'ismiyyah*) which characterize descriptive discourses. The presentation of the lands and regions is what is foregrounded. Actions are hardly expressed; in fact as the poem progressed it is the mental state and feelings of the poet (and Africans) more than anything else that become dominant.

general points that indicate the poem's liminality, we must also remember that colonialism is in fact an aggressive act of dispossession. Europeans conquered, defeated Africans and annexed their lands. Status and property rights were taken away from them, and they were literally disinherited and divested of their possessions and freedom. Now let us examine the poem further and identify some of these references to its liminality.

Literal reference to liminality occurs in verse 2 of the poem where the poet evokes God's attribute of "Resurrector of bones." The evocation of death and resurrection intimates transformation from one state to the other and connotes Africa's symbolic death and rebirth under colonialism. This image of resurrection is complemented by the reference to battle evoked in verse 7. Thus Africa's pending transformation was not going to be through peaceful process, but it would be accompanied by war and tribulation. These two eloquent images clearly ground the poem within the cataclysmic colonial eruption of late 19th century that would usher Africa and Africans into a new world order.

But the most eloquent imagery of liminality expressive of Africa's colonial situation within this poem is vividly presented in verses 14 and 15 where the poet announces,

14. The sun of calamity has risen from the west
Aiming for the inhabited lands and desert.

European colonial invasion is presented here as an upheaval of cosmic order. The Copernican revolution that had paradigmatically changed our cosmic understanding of the universe could not have been more extraordinary an idea than this imagery in its rhetorical portrayal of how Africans imagined the unforeseen powerful European invasion and conquest of Africans in the late 19th century. This powerful imagery conveys multiple significances relevant to the general theme of the poem. First of all, it is significant to note how literally Europeans hail from the West vis-a-vis 'Umar's geographical bearing. In addition in contrast to the dark skin

color of Africans, Europeans are white, the color of the sun's light. Furthermore, the sun, being source of light, symbolizes illumination, knowledge. The natural rise of the sun from the East dissipates darkness of night and day is born. Interpreted in its normal symbolism knowledge comes to dissipate ignorance and illuminate the mind of men. But note that 'Umar's sun rises not from East, which is the normal planetary trajectory, but from West. (With his literary magical wand 'Umar reshapes our world, and what is "impossible becomes possible." Of course we are not bought into his subterfuge, since God reminds us in Quran 26: 224-26,¹⁵¹ to be wary of what the poets say.) When we interpret this literal imagery of solar reversal, it signifies that knowledge is no more the source of light and illumination, but transmits darkness and falsehood. Understood from the perspective of the poet's theological discourse, the only source of light is Islam; the source of which from the geographical perspective of 'Umar's point of reference, is situated in the East (compare the binary pair, شرق\غرب). The new light brought by Europe to Africa could only therefore signify falsehood in contrast to the light of Islam. Having conveyed his purpose metaphorically thus, 'Umar goes on to translate it literally by saying:

15. It is of Christian's calamity I mean to poeteize.
 Their calamity has descended upon us like dark clouds.

'Umar's discursive depiction of colonialism as a Christian calamity derives understandably from his theological ideology antagonistic to Christianity. It is, as I have pointed out above, his interpretation of the historical religious conflict between the two dominant monotheistic world religions. It further reflects how Muslim theology interprets Muslim existential life on earth. Final salvation for Muslim individual adherent depends primarily on personal conduct that would be judged (literarily weighed) on resurrection day to determine his fate. Unlike

¹⁵¹ Quran 26 – 224: And the Poets, it is those straying in Evil, who follow them; 225: Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every valley? 226: And that they say what they practise not?

Christianity where grace comes first, in Islam it comes only after fates are determined and the worthy might then earn God's grace through intercession. Life is correlated to an earthly journey accompanied by trials and tribulations in order to test the mettle of the truly faithful and pious.¹⁵² It is from this contextual background that 'Umar's depiction of Christian calamity should be understood. It is the universal law to which all nations had to be subjected, from Adam up to our era. The Quran categorically affirms throughout its narrative. Furthermore, the imagery of rainy clouds employed to describe this calamity is significant. Clouds can augur life-giving rain or threaten calamitous storms that might end up in unforgettable devastation of life and property (like the occurrence of Katrina in America in 2005). Thus the clouds imagery should be appropriately taken in reference to the word calamity as well as subsequent imageries that portend calamity.

Furthermore, the imagery of cosmic upheaval the poet employs to express the enormity of colonial invasion is also an evocation of the apocalypse believed to be ushered by cosmic upheaval of the utmost proportion. Thus apocalypse also denotes characteristics of liminality translated as unstable and tumultuous. This motif of upheaval is further alluded to by the poet in verses 25 to 30. This time it is in reference to reversal of social hierarchy engendered by colonial abolition of slavery. In effect colonialism had come to level down African social hierarchies between nobility, commonality and slave. This erasure of social hierarchies reduced Africans once more to the liminal stage of anomalous existence. As Turner has indicated in the preceding citation related to the status of neophytes in the liminal phase, "they have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, nothing to

¹⁵² This Muslim eschatological image of resurrection is severally referenced in the Qurann, the Ḥadith and the 'Ijmā'; the three major sources of Islamic law or Sharī'a.

demarcate them structurally from their fellows.” This description also correlates with the situation of Africans under colonial conquests.

In order to buttress the preceding depiction of Africans in this state of liminality, in the remaining part of the poem, the poet describes in poignant images scenes of defeated African warriors and warlords who were either killed, humiliated or lost their past glories to become one with their subjects. It is interesting to note at this stage how this poem clearly depicts the liminal phase through the descriptions of these battle scenes between Africans and Europeans. The sequentiality in the presentation of these scenes evokes features of the *rahīl* section of the classical qaṣīdah in which the poet describes the arduous journey he had to endure on the back of his camel in order to arrive at his destination. The *rahīl* section also includes hunting scenes that significantly resemble the encounter between Africans and Europeans. Indeed as we shall point out, ‘Umar clearly depicts these encounters in images that evoke hunting. The Europeans chasing after their prey with ferocity and bloodthirstiness kill and feed scavengers.

Among these tragic encounters ‘Umar mentions some with praise and others with derision. Garju, a prince of Gurma land, whose pride and nobility prevented him from surrendering to Europeans, was shot down while confronting them; ‘Umar concluded by lamenting his fall in the following melancholic tone:

65. We loved Garju truly, and truly we mourn him,
 But those he left behind shall live in regret.

It is interesting to observe how the poet depicts the impact of European defeat upon African warriors as a transmogrification from manhood to childhood. The Gurma people were treated like slaves (v. 59); the chief in Bankatatougou fled away like a child (v. 66); the people in Nikki met them without any resistance and the chief was described like a dove (v. 75). When

Rabeh, the notorious slaver, who terrorized the land of Borno was captured, “he was tied like a child” (v. 100). On the other hand, there are instances where ‘Umar employs animal images to depict the debasement of defeated Africans. Any warlord in Gurma and Tamu was slaughtered by their enemy, and

79. They were thrown naked on the garbage dump
To become food for birds and scavengers.

The European forces were ready to kill anyone who stood in their way because as ‘Umar declared, people were just like wild animals to them.

82. They did not care about killing anyone;
It was for them like killing a wild ass.

Furthermore, in verses 83 to 87 ‘Umar describes how the people of Borgou, who prided themselves in the potency and effectiveness of their “weapons, medicine and poisonous” arrows, threw them away and fled before the Europeans like “wild donkeys and foxes.” We must add to these literal depictions of liminality inherent in the poem other literary tropes employed by the poet. He refers to the commanding colonial officer for instance as “*Jahannama*” (hell, hellish or evil). This imager underlines the dangerous apocalyptic nature of the liminal which is personified in the colonial warlord. ‘Umar also often refers to dark color, dark clouds, swallows, that significantly convey the sense of gloom and maleficence and functionally emphasize the state of liminality. Note, for example, ‘Umar’s depiction of colonial assault when he declares:

160. That is their way of scorning us,
And they swooped upon us like dark swallows.

‘Umar was carried away by these rampant disparage of African social norms and statuses that he momentarily fell into a philosophical mood and sang out:

102. That day their project was a great success
And that is the nature of the world with humankind.
103. Vicissitudes of time from this to that
And then from that to this do not last.
104. There is no condition which will not pass away
As soon as it reaches its appointed end.
105. And all crises, however long they last,
Will pass away just as it came like arrow-shot,

In this aphoristic outburst 'Umar captures the transitory liminal nature of human existence caught in its own tragic, causal dialectic that 'Umar calls "the world" and "fate," but which in real existential terms is nothing but the experiential manifestation of men's own volition. Note how 'Umar eloquently articulates this ritualistic dialectics of transience and impermanence of the human condition. It is also obvious how this philosophical enunciation thematically harks back to the poet's prelude in which he associates the human transitory drama to divine volition.

To round off this descriptive presentation of the liminal in this poem, let us note another transformational manifestation that 'Umar alludes to in portraying the general impact of the colonial invasion upon the behavior of Africans. The sheer magnitude of colonial brutalities during European campaigns had instilled general fear and angst in the mind of Africans. The crisis had induced a sort of psychopathic state in people and their behavior verged on mania. Fear has divested people of the ability to speak, and speak the truth. They preferred to withdraw into the anonymity and the security of dissimulation and masquerade. As 'Umar declares,

171. Silence, we have to keep in these our days,
And patience from oppression and abuse.

172. He who would dare to speak the truth aloud
Will live in grief and woe.
173. People bemask themselves in idiocy and lies,
Deception, and retail in calumnies.
174. Truth in these our days is not approved,
And he who says the truth will be reviled.

It was no more possible to live a life of freedom and choice. This volition has now been withdrawn by force of colonial power. Truth and rationality can only be manifested under conditions of freedom and choice where people live free encumbered by fear of punishment and unjust abuse. Indeed this state of apprehension results in a symbolic transmogrification in people's nature as 'Umar depicts in verses 178 to 181. It is a true depiction of the liminal.

4.3. *Nazmu al-la'ali*, Examined as Tripartite Poetic Structure Reflecting the Poet's Temporary Psychological Ritual Transformation

Organically we can distinguish three parts of the poem that thematically correspond to the three phases of the rites of passage as follows:

- a. The prelude which begins from verse one to verse fifteen, represents the phase of separation.
- b. The transition begins from verse sixteen to verse one hundred and seventy and corresponds to the liminal phase.
- c. The coda begins from verse one hundred and seventy one to the end of the poem and corresponds to the phase of aggregation.

4.3.1. The Separation Phase

The prelude begins with a conventional doxology (as do all of 'Umar's poems) and extends to verse nine of the poem. The doxological opening is a conventional feature peculiar to Islamic discursive writings. The principal motives of the poem can already be clearly

apprehended from these few lines. 'Umar fixes the European invasion of Africa within a divine theological grand plan where all existence is grounded in a temporal teleological cyclic movement controlled by God. The occurrence of actions and events can thus be viewed within a fixed pre-determined chain of cause and effect. This is expressed in the first three verses of the poem. The poet begins by evoking the "one God and Lord of humankind" as the one who determines the course of temporal evolution according to His will. The phrase *مصرف كل دهر* conveys the significance of one who causes time to flow or circulate eternally.¹⁵³ Thus God is presented as the one who ordains the eternal flow of time. At the end of verse two there is also an underlying connotation of the day of resurrection and apocalypse. According to Islamic creed God would resurrect the dead bones into life at the end of the world to face His judgment.¹⁵⁴ Indeed the whole doxology summarizes Islamic first dogma:¹⁵⁵ God being one, the creator and resurrector, he has absolute free will; he sends a sequence of messengers of whom Muhammad was the seal. Note the allusion to Muhammad as having waged war against infidels to re-establish God's religion became firmly on earth.

The poet rhetorically establishes a shift in his discourse by means of a conventional metastasis in verse 10: *و بعد* (and then). It also underlines a sense of beginning and prelude.

This links the prefatory doxological enunciation to the next motif: the poet's declaration of

¹⁵³ *Muṣṣarif* is the active participial morphologic pattern derived from second verbal form *ṣarrafa* which signifies, among other meanings, to cause to flow, distribute, change, circulate, dispose freely.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Quran 37: 78 – 79. "And he makes comparisons for Us, and forgets his own (origin and) Creation: He says, 'Who can give life to (dry) bones and decomposed ones (at that)?' Say, 'He will give them life Who created them for the first time! for He is Well-versed in every kind of creation!'" (Translation, Yusuf Ali, <http://quran.com/36>, accessed 05/08/2013).

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Quran 2 : 285 "The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers. 'We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His messengers.' And they say: 'We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys.'" (Translation, Yusuf Ali, <http://quran.com/36>, accessed 05/08/2013).

purpose to inform and warn the pious noblemen about the impending consequences of European colonial invasion. The warning is rhetorically presented as cataclysmic imagery of cosmic disorder, the sun rising from West. The thematic significance of this imagery has already been alluded to in 4.1 where its references to the liminal have been explored. In this prelude to his own psychic development in coming to terms with European invasion of Africa, the imagery reflects also a mental state of shock and perhaps disbelief vis-à-vis the spectacle of defeat and humiliation that the event has engendered in him. The theological connotation of this is evident as 'Umar clearly comes to view this colonial dramatic plot of events within the context of archetypal conflict between *dār al-Islam* and *dār al-ḥarb*, represented here as a confrontation between Islam and Christianity. This spatial delimitation (suggested by the word *dār*, which means abode) becomes extended in 'Umar's imagination as cosmological dualism: two worlds, two suns. And after all, the geopolitical division of the world into West and East is (we should not forget) a European one. 'Umar is poetically expressing only the obvious. It is interesting, however, to note that 'Umar's theologically conception of the dualistic world of Christianity and Islam implies his equal acknowledgement of both Islam and Christianity as "suns" or spiritual sources of illumination. 'Umar's purpose, however, resides in poetically foretelling the immanent and imminent social, cultural, economic and political consequences of the rise and diffusion of these conflicting dual sources of light upon the African landscape. Because he is a Muslim scholar and community leader, we can not doubt his preference between these two lights. He categorically depicts the Western rising sun as the "sun of calamity." Thus we can already sense the portents of schisms, political upheavals and social unrest that he could foresee soon engulfing the continent at the wake of the conflicting rise of these two imposing suns.

Let us, furthermore, note the rhetoric effect of the oxymoron: “طلعت بغرب” “rose from the west.” For while طلعت clearly points to a beginning of a rise, غرب on the other hand is the verbal noun of the root verb غرِبَ and signifies a point of setting. Thus the phrase conveys an oxymoronic sense of rising/setting. This symbolism reinforces the antithesis that Umar is trying to build between an African world of *dār al-Islam* and European *dār al-ḥarb* (Christianity), or between the true sources of light and falsehood. Having conveyed his purpose metaphorically thus, ‘Umar proceeds to translate this literally by saying:

15. It is of Christians' calamity I mean to poeticize.
Their calamity has descended upon us like dark clouds.

The colonial invasion is described by ‘Umar as بليّات النصارى, the scourge of the Naṣārā. The word بليّات (sing. بلوى) not only conveys the meaning of scourge, calamity, but also implies “tribulation, affliction, trial, test.”¹⁵⁶ It is derived from the verb يبلو (بلو). This implies that the descent of Europeans upon Muslims came as test and trial of their faith. These two significances underline ‘Umar’s main motif of viewing European invasion as an affliction sent by God to test their faith. Note that this was the same motif expressed at the end of *Mahsra ‘u* (poem I) where he advised his audience to take heart:

81. *wa iṣṭabirū alā al-balāya kullihā*
liyumaḥiṣa Allāhu bihā ‘Athran lahā
82. *Fa yanẓura Allāhu ilā ‘aḥwālikum*
‘A taṣbirūna ‘aw tajzi ‘ūna min dhālkum

Note also the metaphor in أنتننا كالغمام (it came upon us like rainy clouds). غمام is derived from the root غ.م.م which signifies to cover, to conceal; to fill with sadness, pain, or grief; to pain, grieve, distress; also its passive غُمّ to be obscure, incomprehensible. All these

¹⁵⁶ Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* 4th ed., J M. Cowan (ed.) (Ithaca, N.Y: Spoken Language Services, 1994, 75)

significances contribute in reinforcing the poet's underlying motif of esteeming the colonial invasion as an affliction unleashed by God to cause them grief and pain in order to test the level of their faith.

4.3.2. Margin Phase

After the preliminary presentation of the purpose of his poetic narrative, 'Umar began addressing its main subject by saying: *و مبدأ أمرهم* (And the beginning of their situation was...). The phrase introduces us to the transitional phase of 'Umar's narrative as well as the liminality of his symbolic transformational process. Now let us closely examine this section of the poem which covers verses 16 to 32 and that I would like to describe as 'Umar's thematic denunciation of colonial deception and hypocrisy. He begins by stating what he understood as motifs for European advent into Africa. For the first time 'Umar introduces us into the mental and ethical world of the colonialists. European colonialism, as it has well been argued for decades by scholars, was motivated in part by imperialistic claims of territorial and economic expansionism, ethical claims of diffusing Christian salvation and Judeo-Christian civilization, pursuing justice and equality by abolishing all forms of servitude and abuse, and spreading knowledge and bringing people out of poverty and ignorance.¹⁵⁷ These are claims that 'Umar captures almost entirely in his narrative. Like many others who have expressed reservations to moral sincerity of these colonial claims, 'Umar likewise voices his unequivocal disappointment.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Don Nardo, *The European Colonization of Africa* (Greensboro, NC: Morgan Reynolds Pub, 2010); Trevor Rowel, *The Scramble for Africa (c. 1870-1914)* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1986); Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa, 1876-1912* (New York: Random House, 1991); Gregory Maddox, *Conquest and Resistance to Colonialism in Africa* (New York: Garland, 1993); Balachandra Rajan, Elizabeth Sauer, and Anthony R. Pagden *Imperialisms: Historical and Literary Investigations, 1500-1900* (New-York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

The society 'Umar had known before advent of European colonialists was a class society governed by its own conventions and laws, with hierarchies that distinguished between rich and poor, nobility and commonality, noble and slave. Each of these distinctions was defined by social norms of conducts and behavior, rank and status, and social degrees of deference before authority. Hausa society, especially, was one of the most stratified social systems organized by caste. In addition, although slavery was abolished by Europe before they embarked on their late 19th-century colonization campaigns, some African societies still continued its practice. In fact, one of the notorious slave markets of West Africa was located in Salaga, where 'Umar was residing, and slaves were still being bought and sold. The arrival of Europeans has contributed in erasing some social distinctions that they considered unjust and inhuman; such was the institution of slavery for instance. In his poem 'Umar laments this degradation of nobility which he sees as leading to social decadence. 'Umar could not find congruity between European claim of justice, equality, freedom and good intentions and their blatant disregard for established conventions and distinctions of African social systems. For in his view, by according slaves freedom and social honor, Europeans are debasing and dishonoring nobility.

'Umar alleges that

19. We did not know of their true intents
Until we became like dullards to them.

Either through their own candid nature or ignorance, Africans had welcomed European traders, explorers, missionaries and spies with hospitality and a sense of social obligations. The social deference accorded them was at times even considered by their guest as expressive of their natural "existential servitude." Surely many of the journal entries of these European visitors had revealed their surprise and at times expressions of low esteem for this

African habitat.¹⁵⁸ It is striking that, despite claims of “knowing the other well,” encounters between two social individuals always conceals more than it reveals. “True intents” are hardly ever known. Our attitudes, however, are most often determined from our claims of knowledge of others. This is in my view what ‘Umar clearly demonstrates in the context of the African encounter with Europeans. From the European conception of the “African,” we would not be completely surprised at their treatment of ‘Umar’s African community as “bunch of” dullards implying their level of childhood.

The word *طغام* refers to common people, populace; lowly, insignificant.¹⁵⁹ In ‘Umar’s Hausa society, people are distinguished by their social status, trade and functions, whether free born or slave, noble or common, rich or poor. Strangers ignorant of this fact would treat everyone alike resulting in moral abasement and social degradation. However, ‘Umar could not know that some Europeans, who embarked upon the conquest of Africans, did not consider them even as human beings, much less accord them social status. It is obvious therefore that ‘Umar’s protest about the Europeans’ low esteem of them came from misunderstanding the general mentality of Europeans towards other races and their true conception of racial difference between them and Africans. In the next verse ‘Umar alludes to some of the ruses Europeans took recourse to in order to entice and bring them under their power. Note that in

¹⁵⁸ I am using this word in its Bourdieuien modern sociological conception to mean, as Guy Tapie defines it “La sociologie de l’habitat aborde un élément primordial de la vie des individus et des sociétés. Quasiment sacralisé, médiateur d’un bien-être universel (s’abriter), l’habitat supporte un chez-soi identitaire et incorpore des traits culturels et sociaux majeurs des groupes pour transmettre des références collectives. D’un usage éclectique et sophistiqué dans les sociétés développées, il est un espace de réalisation de soi, une base de mobilités plus fréquentes et intenses, et stimule l’expérience des individus en même temps qu’il témoigne de leur intégration ou de leur exclusion. De l’intime, où l’individu se replie et se libère, au cercle familial, puis au voisinage et à la collectivité, l’habitat enracine une mémoire individuelle et sociale. L’espace résidentiel porte les traces d’évolutions sociétales majeures.” (Guy Tapie, *Sociologie de l’habitat contemporain. Vivre l’architecture* (Marseille, Éditions Parenthèses, series: « Eupalinos », 2014, 5).

¹⁵⁹ *Ṭaghama*, Hans Wehr *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, J. M. Cowan ed. (Modern Languages Services India, 1960, 561).

this section 'Umar makes no reference to physical weapons of empowerment, but to mental maneuvers employed to subject Africans.

20. They beguiled us with their paltry gifts
And gave us candies and sweetmeat.

The verb غرّ (يغر) like most Arabic words is polysemous and connotes various nuances of the sense of “misleading.” Some of these senses include: to deceive, beguile; to delude, gull, dazzle, blind (s. o.)¹⁶⁰ Thus the general sense that 'Umar intends to convey, i.e., the belittling the Africans have suffered from the Europeans, is used to reflect the ruse often employed by older people to entice children by giving them candy. It goes to reinforce the idea of treating them like common people, which he expressed by reference to the word "طغام". If Europeans belittled them by treating them like kids and offering them sweets and candies, what was the purpose?

The intention of colonialism was to take control of other people's lands and exploit it to serve their own interest, and European colonialism was no different. 'Umar declares that

21. We could not know that they came just
To rule like kings in tents.¹⁶¹
22. And to construct barracks across the lands
Designed with colored marble stones.
23. And soon enough they went back upon their words
Just as God has declared in retrospect.
24. They fixed their banners in every town
And the inhabitants were treated like slaves.

The metonymic phrase referring to Arab potentates carries an Islamic cultural significance.

For the history of dynastic rule (which came to displace the rightly guided theocracy

¹⁶⁰ Hans Wehr, *gharra*, 667.

¹⁶¹ Arab tribal chiefs.

instituted by the prophet and by which the rightly guided Caliphs had ruled before their overthrow) had received criticism and condemnation from orthodoxy who regarded it as worldly and contrary to true divine purpose. By declaring that Europeans came to rule like Arab potentates, therefore, 'Umar is underlining their worldliness and immorality. It is, however, the nature of dynastic militaristic imposition on Muslims since the 7th century that 'Umar seems to underline here. This implied ethical criticism is further ratified in verse 22, where 'Umar mentions the construction of barracks which symbolizes instrumentality of colonial force and dominance. Bawārik is Hausa *Ajami* for barracks, coined by 'Umar through Arabic morphological plural formation pattern *fawā'il*, used to express *muntahā al-jumū'i* or maximum plurality.¹⁶² In a sense 'Umar seems to criticize colonial deception in camouflaging their true intents through false claims, rhetoric and gifts in order to entrap and subjugate Africans and impose their domination on them through military power and administration. The realization of this European hypocrisy and deception was so painful a disappointment that 'Umar could only voice through a melancholic anticlimactic tone of a repetitive “*wa lam na'lam*,” we did not know. “Had I known,” they say, “always comes last.” It proceeds regretfully after the realization has proven one has been fooled and fallen unknowingly for the bait.

'Umar now turns his critical attention to the impact of European intervention into the social life system of Africans. As I have pointed out above, pre-colonial African societies, as lived by 'Umar and his co-Africans, were hierarchically structured on rigid class distinctions. To belong to higher social caste was a source of pride and feeling of dignity. Most often one accedes to it through birth and sharing a common heritage. It characterizes one as belonging

¹⁶² The Arabic word for barracks is *thakanah* or *mu'askar*; the neologism *barārīk* occurs (cf. Hans Wehr) only in Moroccan dialect.

to nobility and all others outside it as inferior even indecent. Inter-marriage between castes for instance, was something strongly abhorred and a considered highly abominable. 'Umar's pronouncement regarding Europeans' proscription of trade in human beings or ill-treating them might sound like just stating the fact. His following criticism, however, of degrading the nobility, seems to derive from personal feeling of outrage at this social reversal that devalues honor at the expense of commonality. He considers this act as constituting European deception and renegeing upon their words as he declares in verse 28:

25. They said, "No slave should be sold
Or bought and no human being should be enslaved
26. And no one should be confined by shackles or rope
And no harmful beating causing pain."
27. The freeman is like a slave unto them,
And the slave is treated like a dignified freeman by them.
28. And then we said, "This is not why you claimed you came.
Are you renegeing on your promises?"
29. Truly, I have not seen this sort of rule,
The nobles treated like lowly knaves.
30. The lowly men honored like noblemen.
How odd, alas! And woe to nobility!

In verse 30 it became clear that 'Umar's feeling of indignation and resentment at European violation of African social and cultural spaces besides the geo-political has reached a despairing level. This is what one senses in his emotive interjection of "How odd, alas! And woe to nobility." This emotive outburst gets its full cathartic release in verses 31 and 32.

31. This [sort] of rule is without remedy
Except endurance and holding one's tongue.
32. And I could see nowhere one could escape to
If we were to flee and [seek] safety.

The logical direction of 'Umar's criticism of European intervention in Africa has been leading to this inevitable conclusion. This "sort of rule" that came to fix solid barracks across the land and imposing its power over people like potentates has, in addition, disrupted African cultural and social harmony by violating their traditional social values and norms. Colonial domination has divested Africans of their power and agency. Additionally, by the display of its aggressive military arsenal and acts of tyranny across the lands, it has also spread fear and intimidation in the hearts of Africans. 'Umar sees no remedy to this as African resistance has proved ineffective and damaging. Moreover, colonial occupation having been pervasive, migration to other areas has become practically impossible as safety resided nowhere else. Maintenance of silence and enduring the painful and humiliating situation has become unfortunately inevitable.

4.3.2.1. The *Raḥīl* Section or Tracings of Colonial Conquests¹⁶³

The above criticism of colonial invasion and its impact upon Africans leading to its pessimistic conclusion, presented by the poet, served as an introduction to a narrative sequel of colonial conquests across the northern and western territories of Africa. It is as if 'Umar wanted to present us with empirical evidence to support his criticism and conclusion about colonial occupation and dominion over African lands. The resemblance between the descriptions of colonial conquests in this section and the poet's portrayal of his journey and huntings in the *raḥīl* section of the classical *qaṣīdah* is striking. Furthermore, in the course of his narrative descriptions, 'Umar emotionally appeals to a number of fundamental presumptions which it is necessary to keep constantly in mind in order to fully appreciate the presentation. One of these presumptions is, as I have pointed out above, his grounding of

¹⁶³ See UNESCO's *General History of Africa VI & VII* (London; Bekerly; Paris: Heineman Educational; University of California Press and Unesco, 1985, 1999, 2000.) for historical backgrounds to accounts of colonial conquests of Africa as related by 'Umar in this *qaṣīdah*.

European colonialism in an archetypal theological confrontation between forces of good and evil or in this context between Islam and Christianity. He constructs his narrative upon a parallelism that represents these two confronting sides. The imageries that he constructs reflect this dualism. In referring to colonial forces and influence, he appeals to symbolism of evil doom, dark clouds; the dark color of crows as they swoop down, the commander as Jahannama (hell), etc. Africans, on the other hand, are presented as hapless victims of colonial violence. The brave men have been reduced to cowardice and are described as either child-like, women, animals or herds. This parallelism is applied even in reference to distinctions characterizing Africans as good (mostly Muslims) and bad (non-Muslims). While the former are presented as noble, the latter are depicted as barbarians herds or ignoble masses.

The general description is here introduced by a rhetorical question,

33. Could you not see how they have occupied the lands
From every side and enclosed it like dark clouds?

Remember in the last verse concluding his criticism of colonial deception, he sounded pessimistic and declared that there could be no hope of escape from the colonial domination. Verse 33 seems a logical response to that assertion. It underlines the pervasive spread of colonial military operations and describes it as encompassing the lands from all sides. The symbolism of *jahām* (clouds) is significant. The word root *j.h.m.* conveys the sense of frowning, gloominess, look of displeasure.¹⁶⁴ *Jahām* also refers to clouds which carry no more rain.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the root-word is cognate to the word *jahannama* that is used to

¹⁶⁴ Hans Wehr, 114.

¹⁶⁵ It is cited in *Lisān al-‘Arab* (<http://baheth.info/all.jsp?term=%D8%AC%D9%87%D9%85>) “كعب بن أسدٍ لُحَيِّيَّ“
بن أُحْطَبَ: جَنَّني بجهام أي الذي تُعرضُهُ عَلَيَّ من الدِّينِ لا خير فيه كالجَهم الذي لا ماء فيه i.e. Ka‘b b. ‘Asad Luḥay b. ‘Akḥṭab

mean hell. In consequence ‘Umar’s depiction of colonialism as *jahām* (dark clouds) correlates thematically with his theological inclination. He could not expect any source of spiritual goodness from a religion he considers corruptive of God’s true message. By extension “*ḥāfūhā*”, referring to Europeans heavily enclosing upon African lands, reinforces the underlying image in *malakū al-‘arādī* (occupied or took possession of the lands) that alludes indirectly to the dispossessed, the “*mamlūk*” Africans who have become like entrapped animals in this game of hunting.

In verses 34 to 48 ‘Umar lists towns, territories and ethnicities that have become victims of colonial military violence:

34. From Sansandī, say up to Segu and Jenne
And in Segu they fought the masses.
35. Regarding Jenne, they went there with an army
Commandeered by Jahannama,¹⁶⁶ the evil man,
36. And from Delebe to Sankore, o audience!
Likewise to Bambara, the land of food
37. Then to Yoro, Fūta Jallo and Toro.
The town of Mayo became covered in dust.
38. Then to Shinguīt, Timbuktu, and Tūba
As well as Mācina, the land of noblemen,
39. And to Badiagara, Dountze, as well as Quraysh
And Sare Fara, market of culinary salt.
40. They stopped over in Sofara and its surroundings.
Their commander was an ignoble lieutenant.
41. We would mention every land they occupied.
As much as our composition can possibly muster.
42. Then to Tūmu and its surroundings and Dōri

[said] you came to me with jahām, that is, that which you are proposing to me as religion lacks any good, just like the jahām that carries no water” (accessed , 09/12/2013).

¹⁶⁶ Hell.

- And Keur Taïbé and Dingoaba the herds
43. And all across Songhai including Namāri,
Tera and Daragol, lands of proud men.
 44. They took possession of all the lands over there
Both large and small of the earth.
 45. In Hallou, the prince took flight in fear
To Dakola and Sandire among the mass
 46. From Yaga to Galadji as well as Soriba
To Dyongore and Say, which are like twins,
 47. Kirtachi, Kounfa and Loumbou-Loumbou
Likewise Bikoune and Natangou respectively.
 48. These are all lands belonging to the Fulani
Except few additions necessitated by our verse.

The list consists mainly of territories which were either inhabited by Muslims or politically controlled by them. The political implication of this is highly significant. Shinguīṭ, Timbuktu, Jenne, Segou, Tūba, Fūta Jallon and Mācina evoke Muslim historical moments of cultural power and preeminence in territories that extend from North to South. These territories also recall Muslim militancy and jihad as well as resistance to European invasion. Note how 'Umar describes these lands as *'arḍu al-kirām*, lands of noblemen. This also reminds us of his lament in the course of his criticism of Europeans regarding the demotion of nobility and noblemen. The mention of the Fulāni ethnic group is also thematically significant. Islamic political ascendancy in these regions during the 19th century was mostly attributable to Fuāni religious zeal and militancy. They had played contributive roles in establishing caliphal kingdoms in Segou, Fūta Jallon and Mācina and were instrumental in establishing the Hausa Caliphate that has lasted until today. This positive description contrasts dramatically with how 'Umar represents European military campaigns against these territories. They went he

said to Jenne with *jaysh*, an army. The root-word, [j.y.sh.] connotes the act of rage, agitation; boiling or simmering. An interesting allusion is mentioned in *Lisān al-Arab* this way “كلّ شيء كَلَّ شيء”¹⁶⁷ (Anything that boils or bubbles up is said to effervesce even sorrow or choking from the chest). Thus this symbolism evokes magnitude of both the quantity and quality of colonial military power. The underlying signification of sorrow and choking contained in the citation also reinforces the rhetoric effect of gloom and sorrow that the invasion has brought upon Africans. Furthermore, the description of the commanding officer as *jahannama dhū al-malāmi* (despicable or blameworthy hell) buttresses these interpretations. Hell is comprehended as a lasting abode of the godly damned who have rejected God’s will on earth and are consequently condemned to eternal punishment according to some major religions like Islam, Christianity and Judaism. ‘Umar personifies hell in the form of the colonial military commander and by extension the forces that he represents. This suggests that this commander symbolically encapsulates the abhorring torments and agonies that hell could represent to those condemned to it. The depiction of colonialism in this regard portrays it as sinister system designed to subject Africans to eternal torment and reformation.

As we have already alluded to above, ‘Umar’s descriptions cannot be completely appreciated without a comprehensive view of the parallelism he tries to construct. In this regard the imageries of Africans within the above descriptive background of colonial conquest are worth examining. They are depicted as ‘*āhlu ‘al-zihām*, masses; ‘*ahlu ‘al-righām*, people of sand and dust (which also suggest people under compulsion, since the root of *righām* is r.gh.m. and the fourth pattern of the verb denotes to force, compel or coerce someone to do something). In passing there is also an underlying implication of the colonial

¹⁶⁷ <http://baheth.info/all.jsp?term=جيش> .

destruction of African economic sources represented by allusion to various markets of food, salt, wine, cultural artifacts as earthenware pots (*birām* sing. *burmatun*). The description of these places and their social and economic importance purposefully conveys the poet's feelings of outrage and indignation at the loss of human lives and sources of culture and economy.

The next sequel account of colonial conquest that 'Umar provides depicts colonial operations within territories extending across present-day Burkina Faso, Togo and Benin. These were territories that had not known much of Muslim influence before colonial intervention. Their contact with Islam had been mostly through trade and activities of Muslim *marabout*¹⁶⁸ clerics. Note how 'Umar describes the first list of territories in verse 49 as *'arḍ al-li'ām*, land of ignoble people. Next, 'Umar depicts European subjugation of Bosuama as reducing them to *khudām*, which connotes servitude and could be foreseeing Africa's occupation by Europeans as forcing Africans into a new master-subject relationship that would ultimately end in Africa becoming provider of raw materials to European industry.

49. Then we shift to Fadouga and Lalle,
Then Yadiga, all inhabited by ignoble men.
50. Did you not see that they have planted their flag
In Bosuama? Then they became like serfs.
51. They stopped over Wagadugu without a doubt
And its barracks are surrounded with security.
52. I could not find any brave men among the Mosi.
They had all fled like stray animals.
53. Their men and their women were all alike.

¹⁶⁸ French term of colonial origin used to refer to Muslim clerics who claim to possess esoteric powers of healing, protection and conjuration of spiritual and material blessings of all sorts.

In this shame they fled like herds.

54. So there is no difference between dancing
And faka¹⁶⁹ to them? This is indeed shameful.

In the above verses 'Umar focuses his narrative on the Mosi ethnic group who are dominant today in Burkina Faso. The Mosi were one of the powerful ethnic groups who held sway within the Mid-Volta regions before European colonialism. Their past glory came to an end in the last part of the 19th century after they were conquered and subjugated by the French. The last Mosi ruler was deposed in 1897 and then subsequently forced into exile in the Gold Coast (Ghana) where he died in 1904.¹⁷⁰ 'Umar describes to us this sudden reversal of fate by employing two contradictory cultural phenomena practised by Hausas: dancing and the faka or *kada*. The two cultural activities are strictly gender specific among Hausas. While dancing is characterized as a women activity, *faka*, on the other hand, is a 'manly' game of chest collision, to determine the strongest. "Only when it is breast to breast does one know a great man" a Hausa proverb states.¹⁷¹ After suffering defeat in the hands of Europeans, Mosi warriors are portrayed by 'Umar as confused and bewildered such that they were incapable of distinguishing dancing from battle. In other words they have been socially degraded to the state of women comparatively regarded in Hausa culture as weaker than men. Then 'Umar continues,

55. Have you heard how they stormed Kouna
With banners, and Salagu not in peace?

56. It was likewise with Boulsa, and all its inhabitants,
Lago as well, and Kadjateon respectively.

¹⁶⁹ Same as kada "A game of colliding with one another, chest to chest. (= faka; ka'diya; cf. ka'bba; ka'de I.1(d). [On-line Bargery Hausa-English Dictionary; <http://maguzawa.dyndns.ws/>; *Ka'da*, III, {2. n.f.} (b)].

¹⁷⁰ See UNESCO, *General History of Africa VI: Africa in the Nineteenth Century Until the 1880s*, (California: University of California Press, 2000), 662 onwards.

¹⁷¹ Quoted in John Iliffe, *Honor in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 15.

57. Bere and Nevri, and Dakaye were treated alike
And Kombisiri which has a wine market.
58. Then Zaga and the people there, say the Busanga,
They marched on Koupela on an ominous day.

These localities represent additional territory of ethnic groups related to the Mosi. The Boulsa and the Busanga together with the Tatenga were sub-groups of Mosi.¹⁷² ‘Umar’s narrative begins to adopt an earnest tone as he shifts from locality to locality. Note the play on the words “*sālighu*” that has initial rhyme with the word *salām*, which signifies peace. By juxtapositioning the two words ‘Umar emphasizes the doom that colonial forces forebode as they advance threateningly across the lands. Furthermore, the word *salām* invokes Islam, and ‘Umar wants thereby to establish a contrast between it and European colonial machinery that stands for Christianity. The occupied chain of towns that ‘Umar cites all happen to be non-Muslim towns and at the end of verse 57, he alludes to this by referring to their market of wine which he surely disapproves of as un-Islamic. In verse 58, the arrival of the colonial troop there is described as an ignoble day. This suggests probably the magnitude of rampage caused by the troops upon their victims. ‘Umar then shifts to other ethnic groups:

59. As for the land of Gurma they surrounded it;
In complete occupation, they are now like slaves.
60. We did not hear of any one who fought among them
And none who disputed [their rule],
61. Except Garju who disdained to be shamed.
He died [fighting them] and was interred.

The Gurma also represents another dominant group in the Mid-Volta region who have enjoyed a glorious past before the arrival of the Europeans and their ultimate fall. They were

¹⁷² UNESCO, *General History of Africa VI*, 662 etc.

neighbors to the Mosi with who they had clashed on several occasions. ‘Umar describes them as completely defeated and subdued. They have now become like slaves. Their submission appears disappointing to ‘Umar as he declares that they did not show any resistance, either physically or verbally. Like the Mosi warriors, they have fallen in stature from their valiant past to only a shadow of this past. ‘Umar contrasts this shameful act of submission to a single act of valiant demonstration of courage by one of their princes, Garju. ‘Umar cannot conceal his admiration and pride for this warrior. Note he detached from the rest of the group by the exceptional preposition “*siwā*” coming at the head of verse 61. He appears to be the only person who disdained to lose honor (*hayā’u*) shame. The word is a cognate of “*hayāh*” life which appears twice in verse 63. And carried away by Garju’s valiant act, ‘Umar drifts into an aphoristic mood in celebration of this unique deed of valor and heroism.

61. Except Garju who disdained to be shamed.
He died [fighting them] and was interred.
62. That is how honorable men should behave.
When they descend, he should die without illness.¹⁷³ [Not in vain.]
63. Life in abasement is like death
And death in honor is like sleep.
64. But those who could answer death’s call
Are few among men, except the noble.
65. We loved Garju truly, and truly we mourn him,
But those left behind shall live in regret.

In these verses we can observe a certain philosophical perspective on life that ‘Umar espouses. Honor is surely a moral value shared by all humanity. But ‘Umar’s verses seem to invoke heroic values that correspond to what ancient Arabs considered the very measure of honor and manliness, collectively termed “*murū’a*,” virtue. The code of conduct in Jāhiliyya,

¹⁷³ Jāhiliyya Arab warriors prefer death on the battle field than dying on sick bed.

says Nicholson, consisted of “the moral ideas on which pagan society was built, and of which Pre-[I]slamic poetry is at once the promulgation.” *Murū’ah* according to him included demonstration of courage, loyalty (even towards an enemy), generosity and chivalry.¹⁷⁴ Honor was so valued by ancient Arab warriors that they preferred to die on the battlefield than from any other cause. This is because he would not only be immortalized in their poetry but it would also earn both him and his tribe lasting honor. Like the ancient Arabs of whom he had read so much, ‘Umar also shows predilection for such valiant chivalric conduct; and he praises Garju for demonstrating it in the face of formidable foes such as the Europeans. Garju has exemplified the true qualities of a fearless warrior and becomes among the “few could answer the call of death.” For when he had to choose between the two alternatives: Life + shame and Death + honor, he did not hesitate in choosing the latter and ‘Umar immortalizes his memory in these verses. Unlike Garju, those who chose the former shall dwell in perpetual “darkness” which here symbolizes that their memories shall forever be tarnished with shame and they shall remain unrenowned. In furtherance of his sequel account of colonial assault on African lands ‘Umar continues,

66. And Bankatougou they invaded with force
Its chief took flight like a child.
67. Then Madouba, Sambalgou, and Bouti
As well as Pergalembiro and Taffo, the twin towns,
68. Then Sowadoubila, Dago, and all around
As well as Diakougou, Bendougou respectively.
69. Then Karimamma likewise followed by Tanda
As well as Yalou, land of culinary salt.
70. Have you heard how they stormed Korere

¹⁷⁴ Reynold A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, (79 – 90), <https://ia700404.us.archive.org/11/items/cu31924083936561/cu31924083936561.pdf>; accessed 09/20/2013).

With black banners like crows?

71. Its prince was fearless and courageous too;
He died with honor without any shame.
72. How wonderful his deeds were! He disdained shame.
He battled them and died and was interred.
73. Those who were left shall live and regret.
How great a leadership he showed, no leader could
74. He died without cowardice fearing no pain in battle.
May God reward him in Paradise.

It should be pointed out that these lands also fall within territories inhabited by Mosi and their groups. 'Umar depicts colonial onslaught as "*qasran*," forcibly. The adverb rhetorically conveys the sense of force and coercion by which colonial forces swooped upon the Africans in these areas. The sense of compulsion is further underlined by the chief's act of cowardice. 'Umar presents his flight before the Europeans as that of a *gulām*, child. The word *gulām* also connotes a slave; in a sense it describes the weakness and lack of courage that both child and slave are wont to demonstrate in the face of difficult situations. The imagery goes on to emphasize the disorder and degradation that colonial forces brought upon Africans during this period. It also reinforces 'Umar's fundamental theme of colonial invasion as an apocalyptic phenomenon that has upturned all social norms and leveled all hierarchies. The flight of the chief, however, suggests more than just self-degradation; it also conveys feeling of shame and outrage at the sight of such leader debasing himself in the face of his subjects. Such a leader would have no moral strength to lead his people again. Note how the rest of towns in the chain are mentioned quickly in passing as if depicting their quick fall like grass under the blade of the scythe. They are all engulfed in darkness. Darkness, as we have already hinted, suggests the opposite of Islam and at the same time the darkness of ignominy

and forgetfulness. Colonialism came to destroy a whole socio-cultural system, and the imagery of darkness captures this as if it is being swallowed into oblivion. It is a history being thrust into the dark recesses of forgetfulness. It is to reinforce the whiteman's claim that the African has no history, because it is always swallowed by the forces of oblivion.

After this seemingly laborious recital of the colonial conquest, as usual, 'Umar turns to his audience, and by means of a phatic shift, soliciting their rapt attention to his performance. “*'a lam tasma' nuzūluhumu bikorere...*” (Have you not heard of their descent on Korere...): here again he draws attention to the colonial symbolic demonstration of power, their flags. The flags are depicted as black as owls. The Arabic word for owl is *būmah*, and the plural is formed as *būm* or *'abwām*. The construction here, *bawām* is the poetic license “*ḍarūrat al-shi'rīyyah*” used by the poet for the sake of rhyme. Furthermore, owls are usually not black in color but range from white, brown and mixed of white black and ash.¹⁷⁵ The poet, however, is evoking the owl's mythic symbolism, both in ancient Arabia and among some African communities. In ancient Arabia, the unavenged dead person is believed to metamorphose into an owl that sits on his tomb crying, “*'Isqūnī, 'īsquni...*” give me a drink; give me a drink...” until he is avenged.¹⁷⁶ It is thereby associated with death. In the African system, owls are normally associated with witchcraft, mainly because they are nocturnal predators. This in addition explains the poet depicting it as black in comparison to the colonial banners. It thus signifies that the banners are signs of death and witchery because like witches the army not only takes lives but also instills a psychological fear in the mind of the natives upon sight.

In Korere apparently there was resistance against the colonial forces. This contrasts to the

¹⁷⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Owl>.

¹⁷⁶ Nicholson, 94.

conduct of those previously mentioned by the poet where the chief demonstrated cowardice. As usual 'Umar celebrates the courage of those who demonstrate resistance to colonial invasion even at the cost of their losing their lives; it would still be better than living in humiliation under colonial rule. Unlike the former chief, the prince of Korere showed courage and valor towards the Europeans. Like Garju, 'Umar praises him for his disdain of death and choice to die in honor than live in servitude. He thus becomes immortalized in 'Umar's verses as a true leader. This recalls the words of an old Arab bard, who once said,

*wa man hāba 'asbāba al-manāyā yanilnahu
wa 'in yarqa 'asbāba al-sama'i bi sullami.*¹⁷⁷

(He who fears death will not escape from it even if he were to ascend the heavens).

'Umar then continues,

75. They came to Nikki, meeting no fighting or dispute.
The chief became docile like a dove.
76. Then followed Djougou, Bankarou likewise Kandi
And add Ouesse and Sinende respectively.
77. Those in Gurma and Tamu also fought;
They were terribly slaughtered.
78. And all eminent men who refused to fight
Died slaughtered by guns or swords.
79. They were thrown naked on the garbage dump
To become food for birds and scavengers.

He now takes us to areas located in today's Republic of Benin. Like many of the areas he had mentioned above, people in Nikki did not put resistance when the European forces descended on their lands. Their chief succumbed and cowardly surrendered to them. 'Umar depicts him

¹⁷⁷ From the *mu'allaqah* of Zuhayr b. Abi Sulmā (c. 520 – c. 609), Arab poet of the Jāhiliyya period from the Muzainah tribe. See *Dīwan Zuhair bin Abi Sulmā* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1988, 111).

behaving like a dove in docility. The dove is the proverbial symbol of peace and surrender. We have already come across mention of people of Gurma. Indeed, their territories extend across the northern parts of Benin and Togo. From 'Umar's narrative, it appears that the Gurma together with the Tamu met the wrath of colonial forces and he describes their fate as being slaughtered in the most heinous manner “*'alā sharri al-ḥimāmi.*” The Europeans did not discriminate between those who showed resistance and those who simply surrendered. They were all put to death. What is more, slaughtering them seemed not to be enough for them; they also threw their corpses on the garbage in an open field for scavenging birds and animals. 'Umar presents colonialism at this point at its worse. The following account of colonial onslaught further enhances the picture of horror and barbarity which 'Umar is poetically depicting them.

80. They went to Kereku and Waria and Kekele
But they shed no blood on arriving there.
81. How many scholars just died without cause
For just in fear of them and was interred?
82. They did not care about killing anyone;
It was for them like killing wild ass.

We are now getting familiar with the scene of capitulating Africans before the European conquerors. The notoriety of the colonial encounter seemed to have preceded them wherever they went. In fact this very notoriety was enough to drive people to their graves as 'Umar reports. Psychological dread of anticipating death could be worse than death itself when it comes. But the last part of the hemistich insinuates more than it reveals. What 'Umar is suggesting is that if these scholars might not expect any compassion from earthly forces, their faith would at least procure them mercy from God in death. The imagery casts a grim

picture of the colonial situation in which humans are not expected to find mercy but callousness and humiliation. Their only source of hope of mercy would be death. It becomes the last resort for them. Indeed this corresponds well with 'Umar's theological discourse where martyred Muslims could expect God's grace and mercy. 'Umar depicts the callousness of colonial forces as cold and insensitive; killing someone becomes like slaughtering an animal in their eyes. In his third narrative on the colonial situation 'Umar depicts the European attitude vis-à-vis Africans as hunters chasing prey. This is what he is similarly alluding to in this verse where he presents Europeans as apathetic towards their African victims.

As we follow 'Umar's narrative, the picture of European conquest of Africans and their lands becomes grimmer and grimmer.

83. We thought in Borgou there were valiant men
Warlords without reproach;
84. We saw them carrying magic bowls on their heads
And bows and poisonous arrows.
85. They claimed they had weapons and medicines;
And poisons of various types filled in bottles.
86. This proved to be all false and utter lies;
They threw them away and fled like flocks.
87. No one stood firm except a few of them.
They turned into black donkeys and wild foxes.

The Borgou are also presently occupying northern parts of Togo and Benin. Like many ethnic groups in Africa before the colonial invasion could overtake them, the Borgou had enjoyed their glorious days, and they had successfully protected their territory against local enemy attacks. This is what 'Umar seems to allude to in verse 83; the courage of their warriors, he says, could not be doubted as their ancient history could bear testimony to. But

as 'Umar goes on to reveal, this ancient acclaim would soon be proved to have been built on fancy. For the first time in this narrative, 'Umar introduces us to some of the accoutrements upon which African warfare relied. In all likelihood the Borgou were not yet familiar with European firearms. They prided themselves in their bows, arrows and poisons as well as what 'Umar terms as *'adwiyatun ladayhim*, medicine in their possession. *'Adwiyah* is a term that translates in Hausa as *māgani*. Its use in Hausa is, however, generic and includes not only its sense of medicament for the cure of observable syndrome, but also any material or verbal medium believed to satisfy some need. So, for instance, there is *māganin wuka* (safety from knife-cut), *māganin bindiga* (medicine to ward off gunshot) as well as *māganin twari* (cough medicine). It is from this cultural perspective that we should understand 'Umar's statement that the Borgou warriors claimed to possess "weapons and medicine." This medicine, however, has proved ineffective against Europeans and their firearms. And as soon as these warriors realized the truth, they threw away their arms and took to their heels as 'Umar describes the scene. The contrast between the Borgou claim of courage and show of potent weapons with their sudden panic and stampede indicates the sad realities of the encounter between Europeans and Africans during this stage of the colonial invasion. It is not difficult to discern the tragic tone of irony in which 'Umar narrates these accounts of African defeats. Note again how he depicts the impact of this defeat upon the Borgou as a transmutation of their very beings from humans to animals: wild black asses and foxes. As I have pointed out above this symbolic presentation of the defeat of Africans by Europeans as transmutation from humans to animals reflects the liminal phase into which colonialism has reduced them; and this would foreshadow their transformation into the new western global world of capitalism.

On the other hand, when we closely examine the imagery captured by the word “*’ibn kitām*” a complex set of nuances emerges before our minds to suggest the ignominy and debasement suffered by the people of Bargou. *Kitām* is derived from the word *katama* that means to conceal and hide. Other derivatives are mostly used in compound constructions to express the sense of withholding and retention. For instance, the construction *saḥābun muktatamun* denotes a cloud that produces no thunder, *qawsun katūmun*, a bow that reverberates, *khirzun katīmun*, a stitch that does not leak, also a silent camel. And the word *katīmun* is also used to refer to a short plant that resembles the woad, the juice which is used to dye hair black. The word *kitām* itself is probably used in this form as a poetic license because it appears only in relation to the water vessel that withholds water or milk in *katama* *’al-siqā’u kitmānan wa kutūman = ’amsaka ’al-labna wa ’al-sharāba* . The neologism constructed by ‘Umar therefore combines nuances from every one of these constructions since he wants to suggest that these men are like children of women who are not only ignoble and unknown, but they are also just like clouds that do not thunder, because thunder is the sign of rage and potent energy and also like the silent bow because they lack any strength that can shake their enemies. To crown it all they are black like the color of the woad which not only realistically describes them but also suggests that they are insignificant in the view of the Europeans. They are not able to release their strength to fight the enemies until they cower in silent surrender.

‘Umar’s narrative shifts to other territories which were located, this time, within the northern parts of Nigeria and southern Niger. A survey of this vast geographical space shows it to be mainly inhabited by Muslim ethnic groups who have been politically unified under

the 19th-century Fulani-Hausa Islamic Caliphate of 'Uthman dan Fodio (1754 – 1817). They include the Zabarma, the Hausawa and Touareg from eastern Niger.

88. We then heard how they set out towards the east,
With flags and lots of weaponry.
89. They took the road towards Zabarma land
To Dosso as well as Tombokire in the wild,
90. Then to Loulou and Kanda and Doutchi
As well as Giwayan and Doumega, the twin towns.
91. They came to Ismael, the chief of Kebbi,
Peacefully without combating or fighting him.
92. Yes, then they went towards Tagazar and Azben
As well as . Oh may we live in peace.
93. O God, save us together with all Muslim nations.
Protect us from the calamities of the ignoble.
94. They went to Tera, Gobir and Maradi
As well as Tessawa and Agar, lands of noble men.
95. How many were the towns they ravaged on their way
Destroying and burning all foods?
96. Their army went to Zinder with evil intent
Carrying banners and heavy weaponry.
97. To avenge Jahannama (the evil man) they came in rage,
But only white bones were at the gates.
98. We heard when they went over to Shari;
They built a house of marbles at its centre,
99. Then to Logoni, Mandara and Musgu
And the lands of Sara respectively.
100. They went to Dikawa to fight Rabeh.
They captured him and tied him like a child.
101. Massive smoke arose at his capture
And covered the sky like heavy dark clouds.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Dust in the air suspended

102. That day their project was a great success
And that is the nature of world with humankind.

ʿUmar begins by proclaiming alarm at learning of colonial invasion moving towards eastern lands with massive battle readiness. After the various narrations of colonial conquest scenes he had provided above, it seems to come as no wonder that he is alarmed, for he knows that the fate of those lands will not fare any better than any of these lands that have already fallen under colonial onslaught. The list begins with the Zabarma lands of Dosso, which is their central town, as well as Tombokirey, located just few miles away from Dosso in the East. Lou'lou, Kanda, Doutchi, Giwayan, and Doumeyga are adjoining territories of Hausawa. Other areas affected include: Taghazar, Azabin, and Sālamay in the eastern part of Niger. This whole region has been conquered by the French and annexed into a larger geopolitical entity they named Western Sudan. It is probable that the French had encountered no resistance in these regions for which reason ʿUmar kept silent over the events of their conquest. At Kebbi, situated in present day Nigeria, ʿUmar briefly makes reference to the then chief of the city, Ismael whose reign seemed not to have been contested by the English as they had come there peacefully and without waging war. This region is dear to ʿUmar's heart, being land of his ancestors. As I have pointed out above, these lands are Muslim territories and colonial attack against them would surely alarm ʿUmar, like any Muslim. This becomes evident when in verse 93 he raises his voice in alarm to call upon the Muslim *Umma* to come to their help. At this point it is also significant to recall our remark concerning ʿUmar's general view of this European invasion. We had concluded, judging from the tone and diction of his narrative, that ʿUmar views this attack as a Christian attack

Marks the place where a story ended. (T.S.Eliot, "Little Gidding").

on *dār al-Islam*, the Islamic realm. He had already alluded to it as *muṣībah* and *baliyyāt al-Nasāra* or calamities of the Christians. It is therefore quite legitimate for him to call out to the Muslim world at large for help in warding off the *musībat al-li'ām*, the calamity.

Still within the region affected by the French invasion specifically, 'Umar's narration moves to cite towns of Tera, Gobir, Maradi, Tessa, and Agye which he describes as “*’arḍ al-Kirām*,” land of noblemen. They are noble because they fall within Muslim territories. 'Umar draws attention in verse 95 to the nature and impact of colonial rampage across the lands. The rhetorical question underlines his bewilderment at the scope of this arbitrary act of wanton destruction of men, property and food. In relation to the reference to *fasād* in the second hemistich of this verse, it might be significant to recall some of its religious evocations that could be embedded in 'Umar's discourse. The word *fasād* and its cognates are employed several times in the Quran, generally to express various senses of violation and act of polluting the earth through the acts of men. In this regard one can recall the angels' protestation (in Quran 2:30) when God indicated to them that he was about to create man. “Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: ‘I will create a vicegerent on earth.’ They said: ‘Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?’” But examine the following Quranic verses:¹⁷⁹

1. And did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief: But Allah is full of bounty to all the worlds... (2:251)
2. If the Truth had been in accord with their desires, truly the heavens and the earth, and all beings therein would have been in confusion and corruption! Nay, We have sent them their admonition, but they turn away from their admonition. (23:71)
3. She [Balqīs] said: "Kings, when they enter a country, despoil it, and make the noblest of its people its meanest thus do they behave. (27:34)

¹⁷⁹ These verses are all extracted from <http://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=fsd>; under Yusuf Ali's translation (Accessed, 07/07.2013).

4. On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people. (5:32)
5. Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned, that (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from Evil). (30:41)
6. What I fear is lest he should change your religion, or lest he should cause mischief to appear in the land! (40:26)
7. But seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief. (28:77)

Translators differ slightly on the rendition of the Quranic word *faṣād* and its cognate; Yusuf Ali's translation (as can be seen from the above) renders them generally as "mischief." I believe it is this religious interpretation of the word that is dominant in 'Umar's mind as he describes colonial acts of devastation across African lands in their bid to establish hegemony over them. In conjunction with another strong connotative word for destruction, *takhrīb* 'Umar depicts colonial conquest as the insensitive operation of violence perpetrated by Europeans to dominate and subject Africans to their will.

A similar scene of colonial violence is depicted in Zinder, situated in present day Niger. Note that, most often, 'Umar does not reveal specific motives of colonial attack on peoples and towns as he gives account of their campaigns. With respect to Zinder, however, he makes allusion to a possible act of vengeance for one of the commanders whose name has constantly passed in his memory: Jahannama (the hell). Their army descended upon the people *bi-sharrin*, he declared. The word *sharr* connotes evil, ill, mischief; calamity, disaster;

iniquity, injustice; harm, damage, injury; wickedness, viciousness, malice; vice, sin.¹⁸⁰ By predicating the complement clause *bi-sharr* (which is not a compliment at all) to the descending of the *junūd* (army) on Zinder, 'Umar suggests that their arrival was far from being a blessing (*khayr*) to the people; for underlying this meaning of *sharr* is its antithesis *khayr*. Symbolically the two words stand in binary relation of mutual exclusivity and as Saussure affirmed “in language, there are only differences without positive terms.”¹⁸¹ And within 'Umar's theological discourse it is not difficult to identify what these two terms represent: European culture and Christianity, on one hand, and Islam, on the other. This conclusion is reinforced by the word *jahannama*, “hell” which 'Umar employs to refer to the European army commander. In addition I cannot help but note the hypogramic relationship between *junūduhumu* (their army) and *Jahannama*. The consonants [*j.h.n.m*] appear in both constructions except that the former includes an additional /d/; in addition the only vowel that occurs in *junūduhumu* is the close, back vowel /u/ while the only vowel that occurs in *Jahannama* is the open front vowel /a/. This correlates with the fact that *Jahannama* represents the commander, symbolically placed at the front, while “*junūduhumu*” (the army) follows him in rank and position from the back. This linguistic relation incidentally underlines the close knit affiliation between these agents of violence against the African people.

Furthermore, the description of the army's action as an act of revenge depicts colonial violence as willful, personal and arbitrary. It is counter to the civil code of justice that Europeans claimed to espouse. The act of revenge is a primitive law and is clearly

¹⁸⁰ Hans Wehr, 461.

¹⁸¹ F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 120.

antithetical with a civilized sense of justice. On the other hand, colonial self-willed conquest itself is irreconcilable with the law of justice and civility. Otherwise it would not have been undertaken in the first place. Did their plunder result in a total massacre, that when they left, as 'Umar declared, when only white bones were left scattered at the gate of the city? *Wa fī abwābihā bīḍu al- 'izāmi* (and by the gate white bones were left). In another version this occurs as, *lidhā qatalū bihā julla al- 'izāmī*, (as a result they massacred all the great men). Whichever reading we employ, the sense of carnage and desolation can be imagined from the picture painted by 'Umar.

In another related incident, 'Umar conveys the sense of general panic and fear that has gripped the African populace; for now the campaigns seemed to have spread everywhere and news of towns falling in the hands of the heavily armed, callous colonial army has diffused across the lands. This is conveyed by the word *sami 'nā*, we heard. It is also possible from this utterance to imagine the psychological impact Europeans' colonial violence has had upon African societies. This violence would become a trauma that would be lived throughout the lives of people for a long time, and children would grow to inherit it from their elders, just by listening to the tales (sometimes wildly exaggerated) of how their land was forcibly occupied by the stranger, and the incalculable sacrifice they had to bear. In the town of Shari, 'Umar says, the colonial army had built a strong edifice of marble to solidify their occupation. The picture is quite symbolic as 'Umar depicts the structure as not only constructed from one of the enduring materials, marble, but also built in the middle of the town. The centrality of the site of authority suggests a total control of the land. It also symbolizes the panoptic nature of the colonial system. By fixing themselves centrally they would be able to keep eyes on the entire space, thus significantly the whole land. And it is

not only the control of the land, as a geopolitical realm, that it portrays; it also signifies the strong domination of socio-cultural set up of society. As we have pointed out before, the colonial occupation had to be symbolically demonstrated (through flags and administrative and military structures), not only to announce to people their subjugation to new authority, but also to deter rival forces which were also involved in the bloody scramble for the African lands.

'Umar's narrative has signaled all along that, in spite of the advantage of advanced material warfare possessed by the colonial army, which enabled them to win almost every confrontation with native Africans, it still did not deter brave African warriors from standing against them when they approached towns. Those were heroes who earned 'Umar's praise and glorification. Colonial history, as we know, has not accorded this side of African resistance much attention in its records. Few are the names today who are still remembered as heroes of that historic encounter between Europeans and Africans. This is one of the unique significance of 'Umar's historical narrative. It enables us to rewrite history and see colonial intervention in new lights. Dikwa is one of the important historical cities of Northern Nigerian situated in the upper eastern corner of the country bordering Cameroun. It used to be one of the Islamic Emirates established by a Sudanese Shuwa called Rabeḥ Zubayr bin Fadl Allah. It is said that Rabeḥ had seized the opportunity of the weakening of the Borno Emirates, captured it and usurped power in 1893 and then transferred the capital to Dikwa. He established a state of terror in the area and continued to wage war for slaves, whom he sold away. Many stories are told about his bravery as well as his cruelty. In 1900 after heavy battle between him and the French in which the French suffered many casualties including their commander Lamy Column, Rabeḥ was killed while attempting to escape across the

Chari River. He was then decapitated and his head carried on bayonets for the fun of the troops.¹⁸²

‘Umar’s narrative alludes to this battle in vivid and dramatic manner. He does not refer to Rabeh’s killing but to his humiliating capture. He was taken prisoner he says and treated like a slave or a child. The two significant words here are *asarūhu* and *ghulām*. The first connotes capture and being taken prisoner as well as being fettered. It is his demotion that ‘Umar seeks to underline for us. From being the great leader of a political entity that wielded respect and was feared all around, Rabeh has fallen to the status of a slave. He was the one who used to capture others and enslave them, but now the stakes are turned on him and he is forced to live the ignominy that he subjected others to. *Ghulām*, on the other hand, conveys the sense of a child as well as a slave. Both readings put him in a lower status than he was used to, for both a child and a slave lack self-authority. They are owned and have to obey the wishes of their lords. The next line alludes to the battle itself and its final conclusions. *Saṭa ‘al-dukhān* (the rise and spread of smoke) alludes to the burning of houses and other effects, which probably the army undertook after Rabeh’s capture. As we have seen before, the colonial army on many occasions does a clean sweep of towns and villages they captured. But the rising smoke is described by ‘Umar as covering the sky like dark clouds. What this emphasizes is the enormity of the blaze as well as the colonial anger that has caused it. As a result ‘Umar continues “that day was a great success for them.” Rabeh’s capture was a success because the French were able to eliminate a formidable enemy who had stood between them and the occupation of the area. It was also important because they would finally be able to establish full control over the area and own it as their motherland. The resultant peace also would shift

¹⁸² See *New Encyclopedia of Africa IV*, Jon Middleton & Joseph C. Miller, eds. (New York: Thompson Gale, 2009), 296.

their attention to greater exploitations of the resources of occupied lands, which would not be possible in insecurity. The two situations are contrasted by 'Umar as course of natural order of things in human existence: on one hand, Rabeḥ's status falls from high to low and, on the other hand, you have the French who have risen to become new lords and authority of the land: *Kadhālika ḥālu dunyā fī al-'anāmi* (that is the natural course of human life in the world).

This poem is distinguished by many significant literary characteristics, one of which is its striking performative elements. Time and time again, we see 'Umar's concern to avoid his discourse from falling into a dull soliloquy by using the device which in Arabic poetics is known as *iltifāt*, shifting. The term really means turning around. It is the perfect term to illustrate that desire to keep touch with the audience at large. And the successful effect of this device remarkably keeps communication channels open between narrator and audience. Its astounding effectiveness can be judged from the fact that however ancient such a poem is, when reading it one feels its actuality and immediacy of action being narrated. This is usually characteristic of didactic poems. The objective of the performer is not just to recite the tale, but also to gauge as he goes along its psychological reception from his audience.¹⁸³ This involves choices of moments as well as aphoristic utterances that would appropriately evoke the overall theme of the discourse.

Thus in the following verses, 103 to 106, 'Umar momentarily suspends the tempo of his narrative and launches into an aphoristic mood:

103. Vicissitudes of time from this to that
And then from that to this do not last.

104. There is no condition which will not pass away
As soon as it reaches its appointed end

¹⁸³ See Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Long Grove: Waveland Press Inc., 1984), 15 – 24.

105. And all crises, however long they last,
Will pass away just as it came like arrow-shot,
106. And from out of crises, rainy clouds arose
Without a drop of rain they pass like rainless clouds.

The theme of temporal transience has been evoked early in the doxology. Time and temporal evolution are viewed in the context of theological discourse as determined and willed by God. The phenomenon of change and transformation that we experience constantly in our lives imposes itself upon us as necessity and inevitability. Cyclic eternal emergence and evanescence of being has bewildered men's minds from perhaps the very dawn of human existence. Poets, philosophers, prophets and artists have all mused about it. It is the very quintessence of what 'Umar poeticizes as *ḥālu dunyā fi al-'anām*, *la condition humaine* (the human condition). 'Umar hereby acknowledges that no condition remains permanent once it emerges into existence; it is bound to disappear. This transience of human existence makes life appear a tragic phenomenon. After birth, life changes day after day till it ends in death; and man grows melancholic by contemplating this inevitability and watching its occurrence but unable to change it. The succession of joys and sorrows acquire greater meanings and significance in life. Sorrows can cease to scare frighten us with the knowledge that they will inevitably pass away. Thus colonial violence might bring untold pain and misery in its wake, but it is bound to pass and become part of memories. 'Umar's aphorisms can therefore reflect a sense of solace and an inner-survival mechanism that will help surmount the present difficulties.

Note the imagery in verse 106 in which 'Umar compares the crisis with threatening rain clouds. Like all natural phenomena clouds are ephemeral manifestations. Whether they end in beneficial rain or destructive winds and storms, they will come to pass. In the Sudanic

savannah, where 'Umar lived, rainfalls are not always a certainty.¹⁸⁴ Clouds might gather and raise people's hopes and fears, at times, only to scatter away with the winds. Such familiar sights acclimatize people to the uncertainties of life realities.

As he continues his narrative, 'Umar's attention shifts back to Jahannama, the colonial commander and his troops. This time, they have carried their invasion to Bābīma and Sikāso and conquered them.

108. And then Bābīma and its village of Sikāso
Jahannama (the evil one) came there with his hordes.
109. He attacked and quickly defeated it,
And he conquered Kardugu too, the land of food.
110. Then followed Dawakara, Tera and Gilāso
And all the way to Lu'be and followed by Dār al-Salām,
111. Then to Bobola as well as the land of Weydi
To Warkaw, which has a market of wine,
112. Then to Guna, Bitugu and Shibangu too,
To Dafi and Wahhābu completely.

He describes the commander as *dhū buqāmi/bughāmi*, the weak one or the one with muffled voice. The two words appear as variants in two versions of the poem. *Buqām* signifies unwanted webs that fall away from combing wool. And by extension it is used in the phrase, *mā fulānun 'illā buqāmatan min qillati 'aqlihi wa ḍa'fhi shubbiha bi 'al-buqāmi min al-Ṣūfi* (So and so is nothing but a wisp out web of wool, from his little mind and weakness, in comparison to the web of wool). *Bughām*, on the other hand, according to *Lisan al-'Arab*, normally refers to the voice of the gazelle, when it calls to the young in a low gentle tone.

¹⁸⁴ "Everywhere on the continent, the climate was similar to what has been described; increasingly frequent changes in rainfall resulted in more droughts in the last third of the century throughout the continent south of the Sahara." Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Africa and the Africans in the Nineteenth Century: A Turbulent History*, Mary Baker transl. (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2009), 5.

And *baghamta al-rajula idhā lam tufsiḥa lahu ‘an ma‘anā mā tuḥaddithuhu* (You speak to the man in low tone, when you did not clearly utter what you meant to say to him).

Whichever reading we choose to apply, the significance boils down to a critical expression meant to depict the commander pejoratively. Perhaps ‘Umar used *Buqām* in the sense of weak minded because of the insensibility he discerns in the colonial actions of the commander. On the other hand, *bughām* could refer to the foreignness of his tongue, which sounds unintelligible to ‘Umar and his contemporaries.

‘Umar describes the battle waged in those two towns as swift and effective assuring victory for Jahannama and his troops. The quick list of towns that follows reflects the easy and rapid manner Europeans were conquering lands as resistance began to weaken due to (as I have already pointed out) general fear and dread that had overcome the people. ‘Umar could, however, not conceal his sorrow in referring to these incidents that surely compounded the difficulties for Africans.

There are, however, some episodes over which the narration could pass without stopping to contemplate, express sorrow, or praise and celebrate. We have seen many of them along the line. One of such episodes, which detained ‘Umar’s poetic narrative, is the encounter between Mukhtār, a Muslim devotee from the town of Wahhāb, and colonial troop. He is portrayed by ‘Umar as resolute and energetic person. His judiciousness both socially and religiously is also suggested by the two words: *ḥazam* and *‘azam*. But his strong devotion is what has stricken ‘Umar when he depicts him as spending nights in devotion and prayer in comparison to others who spend their time sleeping.

113. It is there that Mukhtār, the valiant reverend, lives
And spends nightlong sleeplessly,

114. Save in reciting litanies and night-prayers

And throughout the day keeping the fast.

115. He was in that state when they arrived, but gave him no reverence,
Although he made his peace with them and gained honor.

Mukhtār's exemplary deed earned 'Umar's respect and adoration for many reasons. One, he has conducted himself with wisdom and sagacity in contrast to their irreverence towards him: he welcomed them and showed them no ill will. He has also demonstrated the *Suwarian*¹⁸⁵ stance by shunning aggression and choosing to establish the relationship upon peace and love. Furthermore, his devotion seems not to have been upset by the presence of these Europeans whose religion he knows differs from his. In addition, 'Umar seems to represent Mukhtār in a superior light compared to his aggressors since it was he who initiated peace with them and not the other way round. True devotion towards one's God through steadfastness in rituals as well as practical conduct of peace and non-aggression and generosity towards one's enemies seem to be in 'Umar's view true signs of nobility. Note that the word *kirām* (sing. *karīm*) also signifies a generous person.

The next episode that gains 'Umar's narrative attention is the encounter between Europeans and Samory:

116. And a warlord with many regiments
Who was their leader and was known as Imam,
117. But his surname also was Samori
And his children were known as children of Imam.
118. He had Gere and Kuntugi and women;
We heard they captured him trying to escape.
119. To Umul Kura pretending [not to], but running away.
Thus it was rumored privately and publically.

¹⁸⁵ This refers to a religious attitudinal stance practised by West African Muslims especially of Mandike tradition that advocates non-violence and peaceful co-existence among non-Muslims. It is attributed to a Mandike scholar who lived in the 15th century and was called Al-Hajj Salim Suwari.

Samory has become both famous and notorious in the history of African colonial records. He cuts such an ambivalent figure in the minds of both Africans and Europeans that it becomes quite difficult to make an adequate and impartial assessment of his life. For most Africans today he symbolizes African courage and resilience in resisting European occupation of Africa. Both hero and anti-hero simultaneously, Samory's memory lives on as an enigma for some historians. Born from a humble background, Samory would grow up within an environment of ethnic strife and discord mostly spurred by European demand for slaves. Contemporary circumstances would subsequently align to give him the qualities that he would later be known for, toughness, fortitude, tenacity, shrewdness and cunning. After saving his mother from servitude, he would rise to become leader of his ethnic group of Kamara. He would then wage relentless war against other Mande groups of the region to establish an Empire that came to be known as the Wassoulou Empire in 1878. His desire for expansion and hegemony brought him into confrontation with Africans as well as European colonial forces, specifically the French. With a well-organized military force at his command, equipped with modern European weapons, Samory was able to withstand the French for several years until he was finally captured in 1898 and sent into exile in Gabon where he died in 1900. Although he claimed himself to be a Muslim, it is doubtful whether his fights were motivated by Islamic ideological fervor as Malam Abu (1914) in his biography on Samory seemed to affirm: "Samori was an over-bearing person for everyone. Samori was a false Muslim. Samori, son of Kufila, one who deceives everyone."¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ Cited in Stanislaw Pilaszewicz, "On the Veracity of Oral Tradition as a Historical Source: the Case of Samori Ture" in *Unwritten Testimonies of the African Past*. Proceedings of the International Symposium held in Ojrzeń n. Warsaw on 07-08 November 1989 ed. by S. Pilaszewicz and E. Rzewuski, (*Orientalia Varsoviensia 2*), (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego 1989), 178.

According to 'Umar's narrative, however, he had claimed the title of Imam (religious leader) for himself; and his children were even addressed as "children of Imam." Could 'Umar be also corroborating Malam Abu's claim, through his equivocal tone when alluding to Samory's "pretending [not to] but running away?" This conclusion might not be far from the truth after all, when we recall 'Umar's tendency to glorify courageous African warriors who stood against European rule. With respect to Samory, 'Umar expresses no such praise nor does he even evince sympathy about Samory's fate. As I have indicated he sounds rather derisive. In fact a closer examination of the poetic diction would also confirm some of these interpretations that I am advancing. While describing his capture, 'Umar asserts that "'akhadhūhu 'ām." The word 'ām is the plural of 'amah and signifies a woman slave or servant; 'amah also connotes shame or defect. According to *Lisān 'al-'Arab*, the word also conveys senses of: "to be widowed" or "smoke" as "to smoke out honey bees in order to get the honey."¹⁸⁷ From the combination of these meanings, it might be safe to conclude that 'Umar intends to portray this act as a humiliation and degradation from Imam (a leader) to 'amah, a female slave. His attempt to flee from the French could also be insinuated as being "smoked out of his den," and he is now on the run trying to escape.

'Umar's narrative then takes us next to another colonial historical moment: the adventure of the Zabarmawa warriors in northern Ghana before and during the colonial invasion.

120. And where are the armies of those who ruled Gurinshi
The Zarma and the Hausa side by side?

http://baheth.info/all.jsp?term=أي¹⁸⁷

وَأَمَ الدُّخَانُ يَنْبِئُ إِيَّامًا: دَخَنَ.
وَأَمَ الرَّجُلُ إِيَّامًا إِذَا دَخَنَ عَلَى النَّحْلِ لِيُخْرِجَ مِنَ الخَلِيَّةِ فَيَأْخُذَ مَا فِيهَا مِنَ العَسَلِ. قال ابن بري: أم الرجل من الواو، يقال: أم يؤوم، قال: وإيَّامُ الباء فيه منقلبية عن الواو.
وقال أبو عمرو: الإيَّامُ عودٌ يجعلُ في رأسه ناراً ثم يُدَخِّنُ به على النَّحْلِ لِيُشْتَارَ العَسَلُ.
والأوامُ: الدُّخَانُ، وقد تقدم
والأمة: العيب، وفي بعض النسخ: وأمة عيب؛ قال: مهلاً، أُنْبِيتَ اللَّعْنَ مَهْلاً، إن فيما قلتَ أمه وفي ذلك أمة علينا أي نَقَصَ وِعْضاضَةً؛ عن ابن الأعرابي

121. They have ruled over Kassena and Leo and Paga
As well as Sate, Dabin, lands of ignoble men;
122. Likewise Bishe, Mankru and Nyoro
As well as Waya; it is the land of noble men.
123. And forget not Walambale and Sakalu,
And Kelu, Nabalú as well as all their lands,
124. Kaikanga, Firatan and Basīsan,
Up to Nafaru and Gangari respectively.
125. They had ruled over Gurinshi unchallenged
From right, and front.
126. There were no revolts except from slaves.
They were fully contented with them without blame.
127. The slaves of Gurinshi are not dependable.
Truly there is no trust in barbarous men,
128. Especially those among the Isala, and Dagarti,
Kasem, Kintoshi and Kanjaga, respectively
129. They repudiated their overlords relentlessly
And loathed them for teaten seasoned food.
130. And long ago, they used to [live] like kings
Who would have carpets spread for them to sleep.
131. Something like this has never dawned on them
No, not even in their wildest dreams.
132. On that day, they took refuge with Dagomba
In Wafuri where there is earthen pot market.

Before colonialism, the northern part of the Gold Coast (presently Ghana) was the confluence of many rival activities from local war lords, some of whom came from the upper northern lands of Niger, Mali and Nigeria. The most active of these African armies were the contingent of Zabarma and Hausa warriors. The Zabarma in particular were considered a formidable force that came to establish dominance over some ethnicities in the region among

them the Gurinshi and Sissala. In collaboration with the Dagomba and the Gonja, they had embarked upon series of raids into these neighboring territories to dominate and enslave the people. 'Umar lists some of these territories as Kassana, Leo and Begha, as well as Sati and Daben and describes them as "lands of immoral people." There are others, on the other hand, that he designates as "lands of noblemen," such as "Bashi, Mankuru, Nyoro and Waya."

'Umar is probably drawing a distinction between those who were Muslims, like the latter and those who were not, like the former. The Zabarma were Muslim warriors and 'Umar seemed to approve of their rule over these ethnic groups. Furthermore, the territories they governed over could be viewed as *dār al-Islam* in 'Umar's theological categorization and by warring them Europeans were attacking an Islamic polity.

'Umar describes Zabarma complete dominance over these territories as indisputable. The Gurinshi appear even as voluntarily submitting to them; and those who revolted were classified as among the "slave" groups. Thus 'Umar views this situation as a benevolent dominance since the free born did not object to it. It is important, however, to understand this description as only expressing 'Umar's personal bias which in part I believe can be attributed to his reverence for the Zabarma as Muslim aristocrats who deserved the right to rule their commoners. We have already seen how he strongly defended social hierarchy and accused the Europeans of upsetting it. Describing the Zabarma's high sense of aristocracy which he traced back to their past historical glory during the heydays of the great Songhai empire of the fifteenth century, John Iliffe (2005, 19) states,

The chief heirs of their military tradition were the Songhai-speaking Zerma groups, whose horsemen, when not fighting one another or their neighbours, were notorious during the nineteenth century, for their slave raids. Zarma society was highly stratified, initially between freemen and slaves, then between noble freemen and commoners and finally among the nobility

between fathers of families, women and young men. Honor was the behavior appropriate to a nobleman.

ʿUmar does not reveal how the Gurunshi “slaves” revolted against these lords which he describes in subsequent verses. There is no doubt, however, that European presence had emboldened them, and they finally decided to throw off this yoke from their necks. ʿUmar goes on to express strong displeasure at this boldness and accuses the Gurinshi of untrustworthiness. He could not comprehend how commoners like the Gurinshi would revolt against their aristocrat lords. Ironic as it sounds, ʿUmar could hardly apprehend the fallacy of his argumentation. For how could he object to European violence and subjugation of Africans while approving the subjugation of Africans by other Africans? The ultimate defeat of the Zabarma was painful for ʿUmar and he describes it as something they had never imagined could occur to them, even in their wildest dreams.

It is interesting to examine how ʿUmar discursively depicts Gurinshi as ingrates for revolting against the Zabarma. The first word he uses to describe them is *ʿujām* derived from *ʿj.m.*, and it signifies seed of the date palm or the like; it is also used to refer to a big-size bat. Other cognate significances are: foreignness, dumbness, and inability to be intelligible in speech. It thus depicts the Gurinshi as hard and empty headed, suggested by the imagery of date seed; and also as dumb, being incapable of appreciating the benevolence of their lords instead repaying them with betrayal; and finally as ignorant, unintelligible, savage and potentially dangerous as aliens might be to civilized people. Furthermore the use of the word *liss* here connotes taking food directly by the lips, which suggests an animal behavior. So it is a euphemism for describing the humiliating state of these lords who have been symbolically reduced into animals. The word *ʿāqūhum*, on the other hand, could be derived either from *ʿaqaqa* or *ʿaqqa*. The 3rd pattern of the first word *ʿāqqa* is synonymous with the 4th pattern

“‘aqqa” and connotes to be undutiful especially in “*jā’a bi al-‘uqūqi*,” meaning he did that which was an act of undutifulness, disobedience, refractoriness, or ill manners, to his father or the like. ‘Umar thus depicts the Gurunshi as children who have turned against their father (the Zabarma) and paid him with unkindness by betraying him to Europeans. The Zabarma fall recalls to ‘Umar’s mind aphorisms expressing the transience of life situations; no condition remains permanent is the fundamental law that binds every existence.

In another setting ‘Umar presents us with historical events related to another famous African ethnic group, the Ashanti. Before the advent of European colonialism, the Ashanti had established a vast kingdom, extending from the Coast of Guinea to the north, including the lands of Dagomba and Gonja, the two strongest tribes in the north at that time. They had conquered and subjugated many of the ethnic groups of the region and forced them to pay yearly tributes of slaves to them. But as all powerful kings are bound one day to fall from on high, the Ashanti too met their defeat in the hands of the Europeans.¹⁸⁸ ‘Umar does not hide his bewilderment and irony as he questions what might have caused this unforeseen turn of events. The Ashanti were strong adherents to their African form of religion, although they solicited the spiritual help of Muslims from time to time before the coming of the Europeans. The King even had his own personal Muslim priest called the Nkaramo who takes care of his protection and assisted warriors during wars.¹⁸⁹ In a derisive tone ‘Umar humorizes:

133. Was it the forests that deceived the Ashanti?
Or the thick twisted woods covered in the darkness?

134. Or was it their idols, or their wealth and gold?

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Ivor Wilks, *Ashanti in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Raymond A. Silverman, David Owusu, “The Presence of Islam among the Akan of Ghana: Bibliographic Essay” in *History of Africa* 16 (1989), (Jstor, accessed , 1/10/2010).

¹⁸⁹ David Owusu-Ansah and Raymond A. Silverman. “The Presence of Islam among the Akan of Ghana: A Bibliographic Essay.” (*History in Africa* 16 (1989)), 325-339.

Or was it their fancy or the drink of wine?

135. Certainly they were deceived by lies and falsehood
As well as ignorance and weared foolishness.

136. Their outcome was in swift death
And for those escaped met the claws of fate.

ʿUmar surely does not seem to nurse any sympathy for the Ashanti debacle either because they are not Muslims or merely for their supercilious influence across the region. The reference to the forest and trees probably points to the Ashanti habitat, which is in the Southern forest regions. It could also allude to the fact that the Ashanti would usually prefer fighting behind thick forest trees where they feel more secure and at home than fighting in the open. If this reading is true, then ʿUmar is being ironic here, taunting them for cowardice for not being capable of facing their enemies in open grounds. In the North where the terrain is mostly savannah steppe land, it is impossible to evade the enemy so easily. On the other hand, the mention of their false reliance on idols might suggest that ʿUmar is judging the ineffectiveness of these practices and therefore their falsity. If they had thought before that it was belief in their idols that gave them power over other ethnic groups, then the encounter with the Europeans has proved them wrong. As once before they had exercised such powerful dominance over the region, the Ashanti might have thought that nothing could hinder their permanent ascendancy, as ʿUmar seems to infer. But when the appointed day for any event arrives nothing can stop it, and neither wealth nor gold was sufficient to save the Ashanti from their enemies. If neither of all these was instrumental in the Ashanti defeat then, ʿUmar suggests, it could be just that they were carried away by their fancy of invincibility and paid for it. Finally, if it was not the temptation of fancy either, then it could be the wine they drink that caused their weakness and fall. Most of this discourse is meant to

condemn and critique Ashanti life, as 'Umar, a devout Muslim, would unequivocally consider any conduct that does not emanate from Islamic principles as offensive and reproachable. The Ashanti in 'Umar's view did not seem to have come out of their encounter with the Europeans with any consolation. They either met sweeping death or those who survived would have to live with the lasting agony of derision and the humiliation of defeat. Note at this stage 'Umar's ambivalent attitude towards the victims of colonial onslaught as a whole. He assigns praise to those he considers worthy of it for their glorious resistance against Europeans and at the same time for being symbols of values and virtues of nobility and generosity of material and life. We may wonder where 'Umar's standard of evaluation emanates from. There is no doubt that most of it derives from Islamic principles, but credit must also be given him for showing a tendency of transcending religious boundaries with regards to human suffering as a whole. His concern in this narration is not entirely grounded in Islamic paternalism. As we have pointed out above before, the discourse is first and foremost a critique of colonial conquest and unjustified occupation of African lands as well as inhuman treatment of Africans by Europeans in their bid to become dominant forces on the continent. This must not be lost from view whenever we are reading 'Umar's narrative even if at times he openly demonstrates his predilection towards Islam as the underdog in a European attempt to replace it with Christianity.

After covering the colonial campaign across the Sub-Saharan northern landscape 'Umar now turns to the South and looks at the gradual establishment of European colonial hegemony over the area.

137. The Christians have conquered Dina-Akyimfo
As far as Accra, where there are noble men,

138. Likewise the town of Gua Asinfo and all around

Up to Sambarfu in the count respectively,

139. All the way to Tetemu, Kunda and Agye
As well as Agwana and Ayigbe, which are like twins,
140. Likewise Ajashi, Dahomey and all around
And many numerous lands uncountable,

Needless to say these areas had been, over some time, already claimed by the British as colonies and a number of forts had been built long ago along the coastline to serve as entrepots for exporting slaves and importing goods from Europe. Dina Akyimfo, the ancient name for Cape Coast city, had been among the first coastal towns where Europeans had fixed themselves and built forts and administrative centers. Afterwards Accra followed, which would later come to acquire the status of capital city for the colony. All towns cited by 'Umar from verse 137 to 139 are located in the Gold Coast (now Ghana). These had become areas annexed by the British Empire, and from there the colony would gradually spread through coercion and negotiations until the whole area that is today within the political administrative sphere of independent Ghana would be claimed as the British colony of Gold Coast. Consider how many innocent lives had been lost during European colonialism that would never have been remembered without their immortalization in texts like 'Umar's.

The Ayigbe ethnic group popularly known as Ewe is located in the southeastern corner of Ghana and spreads across the coast eastward through Togo, Benin and Nigeria. Awuna is one of the dialects of the group, but outsiders often use it to designate the people. Dahomey is the colonial name for present independent Republic of Benin. Together with the republic of Togo they had been colonized by the French. As we have noted, 'Umar does not specify the colonial countries that were involved in the annexation of these lands. Either because, at the moment he was composing the poem, he was not aware of the difference between the

European powers involved or for strategic purposes he decided to treat colonization of the African sub-region as a single phenomenon that does not differ in any way from one power to the other. In 'Umar's view the colonization of Africa is a historical event characterized by oppression and destruction of people and their cultural systems. And it was Whites who undertook it, irrespective of their different background.

Just like the western coastal lands that extended from the Gold Coast (Ghana), that of Nigeria had also been occupied quite earlier in the 19th century mostly by the British. 'Umar begins his narration here by citing the lands of Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ilorin and Alofa inhabited by the Yoruba ethnic group. The Yoruba were partly Islamized before the coming of Europeans especially from the North. The Islamic emirates established by 'Uthman dan Fodio had extended its conquest southwards to Ilorin, but it was not able to spread further South as yet; although Muslim migrant traders had infiltrated the southern lands and succeeded in converting some people from the cities. One of the concerns of colonial powers at the time was to check the influence of Islam within the lands they conquered and rigorous intellectual and military efforts were invested in searching out and stopping it. 'Umar was surely aware of this and he did not conceal his apprehension at the consequences of European ultimate occupation of these lands; as he says in verses 158 and 164.

158. We have been horrified with what they did to us;
Their aim is only to control the world.

.....
164. Their real intention is to fight Muslims
And they would sow discord without a doubt.

These verses reflect the anxiety and fear with which Colonial expansion was viewed by 'Umar and other Muslims like him. As more and more lands fell into the hands of Europeans, the slow expansion of *dar al-Islam*, prior to European intervention, across the lands through

trade, exchange (between Muslims and non-Muslims) and jihad activities, was bound to grind to a halt. The already tense relations between ethnicities was becoming even more tense, as European expansion continued and Christianity (the old rival to Islam) gets greater privilege to propagate and dominate. Colonial expansion in Nigeria was being viewed by Europeans with even greater importance and urgency in view of the strong Islamic influence they discovered from the North with more prospects of extension to the South.

But 'Umar's attention becomes focused on other towns within the region of Nigeria that have fallen victim to colonial campaign of expansion. These are Lafiage, Bunu (Benin city?), which he describes are *'ard al- 'ijāmi*:

141. Likewise Ibadan, Abeokuta, the Yoruba lands
Up to Ilorin as well as Otu, Alufa among the list,
142. And likewise Lafiāge and all surrounding lands
Up to Bunu, lands of barbarians,
143. And some of the lands of Nupe, Lafiya and Adamawa
As well as Munci, Kafi, Nasarāwa like twins,
144. Likewise lands of Yawuri, Busa, and Gombe
As far as Illo, in which there is a slave market,
145. Likewise “the house of floor,”¹⁹⁰ they burnt it down
In raging fire, and they marched ahead

The word *'ijām* is derived from *'ajam* that connotes among other meanings stranger and barbarian or someone whose language and culture is foreign to the speaker. It thus suggests 'Umar's desire to portray these towns as inhabited by ethnicities whose languages and cultures are foreign to him. By extension it also suggests that these people have not yet been absorbed into the fold of *dar al-Islam*; they are therefore barbaric in the way Romans considered all other races barbarians. The rest of the towns that follow in the list have had

¹⁹⁰ *Bayt al-daḡīq*.

come under some Islamic influence; these are Nupe, Lafiya, Adamawa, Muncie, Kafi and Nasarāwa, Yawuri, Busa, Gombe, and Illo. This last apparently was a slave market center just like Salaga used to be before it was destroyed during the civil war of 1892. Another town which 'Umar cites as Bayt al-daḡīq (House of Flour) has been burnt down by colonial forces, *ḥarrakūhā bi nārin*. He does not reveal to us the reason behind this unfortunate act of vandalism from Europeans. But as always, 'Umar prefers only to provide us with barest information leaving us the task of imagining the rest. The reference to this town as *bayt al-daḡīq* is probably significant as it could also signify house of powder. If it was gunpowder then we could imagine the state of affairs when it becomes burnt down. This reading is not farfetched since it was normal those days for towns to have depots of gunpowder that is either sold out to people or used for defensive purposes. The famous Alḥājj 'Umar Tall had died from an explosion of such a depot which he accumulated for use in his jihad campaigns. The desperation of colonial invasion could be deduced from 'Umar's cryptic *bal qaṣaduhum 'amāmu*, "their aim is to proceed further."

In verse 146 'Umar continues describing colonial expansionism when after just burning a town they were proceeding to take their invasion forward. Here, we can feel 'Umar's bewilderment from the shift in the tone of his narration. He expresses this consternation by a rhetorical question, *wa hal ḥaqan 'ataw Zaga yā unāsan?*

146. Could it be really true that they reached Zaga?
If true, then their aim is to march ahead.

Zaga, of course, is located in the farthest corner of northeastern Nigeria, a short distance from Lake Chad. The fact that Europeans could already have reached this point, so close to Chad, not only demonstrates their superior power, but also their true determination to occupy and control all Africa. Furthermore, if Zaga is reached, then that part of dar al-Islam just west of

it under the Fodio Sultanate and its vassals, would also come under potential threat from Europeans. This reading is supported by 'Umar's remark at the end of that verse that *wa in ḥaqqan fa niyyatahum qudāmi* (if that is true then their aim is to march ahead). Whichever way the campaign moves, it would still be *dār al-Islam* that would be targeted, since from East to West all those lands are under Muslim suzerainty.

Let us note before we continue further how successfully 'Umar combines dramatic, rhetoric and performative devices to achieve narrative effect. We are presented with scenes of tragic drama being enacted upon African soil. Two forces are pitted against one another: on one side Europeans, fully armed with highly effective war machinery; on the other side Africans armed only with spears, swords and sticks; they are not the aggressors but defenders of their lands. Armed with such advanced and effective weaponry and being well organized, Europeans were able to succeed in conquering Africans and taking over their land and freedom. The inherent hubris lies in the inequality between these two forces with the aggressor side having advantage of arms and wanting unjustly to dispossess the weaker force. 'Umar at times invites us deep in the mist of battle where we are shown heart breaking sights and sounds, the fall of kings and kingdoms, the debasement of nobility, the burning and devastation of towns and properties, the sheer cultural inferiority of African society in the face of a militarily advanced haughty and indurate force, the treatment of human beings like animals and above all the vindictiveness with which all this is sometimes executed without any remorse. But what is even more tragic in this context, as 'Umar depicted from the very beginning of his narrative, is the futility and vanity of this pathos-ridden human drama that is unwittingly transient but at the same time perpetual in its evolution. Power and dominance in

this regard cease to have meaning as time constantly swallows all in its entrails. It is Edward Young (1970, 11) who said:

Here teems with revolutions every hour;
And rarely for the better; or the best,
More mortal than the common births of fate.
Each moment has its sickle, emulous
Of time's enormous scythe, whose ample sweep
Strikes empires from the root; each moment plays
His little weapon in the narrower sphere
Of sweet domestic comfort, and cuts down
The fairest bloom of sublunary bliss.

The general philosophy embedded in 'Umar's poem seems to be echoed here by this English poet who died in 1865. All men's efforts end up being destroyed by time.

Rhetorically, 'Umar employs a set of tropes and imageries to convey the emotional pathos of this dramatic enactment. Space is skillfully compressed to mere names of towns and cities, and individual names made to metonymically represent whole ethnicities and communities. Africa like a black enormous giant stands taciturn watching its limbs, like the mythic Hallāj, being torn apart piece by piece to feed ravenous predatory wolves.

Understandably embedded beneath the narrative is the trope of hunting. The different European states seem to illustrate group of hunters tirelessly foraging through land to ferret out their prey for the kill and remorselessly sitting at table in Berlin to share their booty. Note also that throughout all this narrative never has 'Umar given voice to Africans. A deep uneasy silence pervades the entire narrative. We are almost left to imagine these wandering shadows spread across the land, waiting in a Spivakean askance,¹⁹¹ and wondering who would speak for them. We have already made reference on several occasions to 'Umar's performative frame. But what has struck us the more is his constant alertness and desire to

¹⁹¹ The reference is to Spivak's article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" which questions the agency of discourse of those who find themselves incapacitated by circumstances to speak for themselves.

keep communicative links between him and his audience always open. Among significant elements of framing performance according to Richard Bauman are: the narrator subjecting himself to audience evaluation and making the performance amenable for increasing audience's experience.¹⁹² 'Umar has succeeded in achieving this by regularly addressing the audience through the use of the second person and the use of demonstrative verbal devices such as "did you see," "did you hear" and through rhetorical questions.

Having covered almost the entire length and breadth of what is today called the West African region, 'Umar's narrative shifts to its center of performance: the mid-Volta region and specifically in the lower northern region of the Gold Coast (Ghana). This is where 'Umar had lived half of his adult life and this is where he experienced the enfolding of the colonial drama. The narration resumes with a rhetorical question directed at the imaginary audience at large.

147. Did you see how the Dagomba kept wondering
Whether they would come to them in peace?

Dagomba represent one of the dominant ethnic groups of the northern region of the Gold Coast, and prior to colonialism, they controlled one of the powerful kingdoms which had succumbed only to the powerful Ashanti before the arrival of the Europeans. In fact on their own part they have subjugated many neighboring ethnic groups to their authority. But the rhetorical question that 'Umar poses is significant for a number of reasons that 'Umar's narrative does not strategically reveal. The entire area within which Dabgon¹⁹³ is located includes a number of ethnicities such as Gurinshi, Mamprusi, Kusasi, Gonja, Kabre, Konkomba and Nanumba, just to mention a few. It was a region coveted by all three colonial powers: French, English and Germans. Each of these powers had reached a point where their

¹⁹² Richard Bauman, 1984.

¹⁹³ Dogomba is used to designate the people while the kingdom is known by Dagbon.

gaze became riveted on this region; the French pushing southwards, the Germans northwestwards and the English northwards. In order to avoid impending clash, they agreed to designate the area neutral zone in 1896. Whether the area was seen as strategic or whether it was for its potential riches, or whether it was just for the sheer demonstration of strength, each of the colonial powers wanted to possess it. A series of ground negotiations were initiated by each to try to lobby the ethnic groups to accept their suzerainty. The English and Germans formed alliance to prevent the French further progress into the area. But while the French understood their disadvantage and withdrew, the Germans were bent on beating the English to the game by lobbying directly with the chief of Dabgon, the Ya-Na. When they failed to persuade him, the Germans decided to attack. And according to Holger Weiss (2008, 155-156),

German hopes to be granted free conduct through Nanum and Dabgon proved unrealistic. None of the kingdoms granted permission; instead both their rulers summoned their soldiers to stop the German intrusion. Not surprisingly the Germans decided to subdue any resistance on their way to the North. The Nanumba collected large forces in both Wulensi and Bimbila to impede the advance of the expedition. The two forces fought their first battle near Wulensi, but the Nanumba forces were driven to Bimbila. A new battle commenced at Bimbila. The Nanumba were mowed down with heavy loss of life, and the rest fled with their blind king to Chamba. Bimbila was set on fire by the Germans before they continued their advance to the north. The Dagbamba too tried to stop the advance of the German force on its march against Dabgon. As in Nanun the outcome was a bloody battle. At Adibo the Dagbamba were killed in great numbers; heaps of dead bodies were to be found in all directions. The War-Chief with all his captains died on the battlefield. Ya Na Andani fled from Yendi, the Germans entered Yendi, set fire to the town and departed for Sansanne-Mangu.

Like most local narratives about colonial conduct towards Africans this was not a fiction. If there are still people who believe that colonialism was established after negotiations were concluded between Europeans and African chiefs, this is partly what debunks such claims. Could there have been peaceful negotiations in a situation where aggressors came invading,

never doubting their right to the lands and moreover considering themselves the powerful side in the face of “primitive” groups armed with only spears, sticks and knives? What some scholars have failed to consider is the fear and intimidation which was first inspired in the mind of Africans before such negotiations were even melodramatically staged. The African was left with no choice but to give in to the dictates of force in order to preserve life. But even then what kind of life would be worth fighting for if in the end it would lead to the same result: living slave in his own house? This was what alerted the English to German duplicity and so they took measures to restrain any further German tyranny by negotiating with them to declare the area a neutral zone. But the Germans were not deterred as two years later, they returned with greater force to impose themselves upon the people. Meanwhile, according to Holger Weiss (2008:156), quoting E. F. Tamakloe,

... [f]rom a local perspective, the arrival of the German force was at first misunderstood. Tamakloe was informed by his informants that the Germans were not believed to be staying for a long time. [...] “the white man is come from the water, he is a fish,” was another expression, indicating that the white man would not stay for long (since a fish could not survive on land).

In the interim the Ya Na Andani had died and the subsequent political vacuum resulted in an in-fighting among the aspirants to the throne. It is here that ‘Umar’s discourse sets in as it expresses the Dagomba’s uncertainty about German return and whether they would come this time peacefully instead of attacking them as they did previously. But they were proved wrong as the Germans came back this time with “their cavalry and foot soldiers, and fell upon the people of Savelugu in Sang, and Idi, the eldest son of the Ya Na Andani, who was the former Tugu Na and had aspired to become the Savelugu Na, was killed.” (Weiss, 156)

Thus as ‘Umar describes,

148. The chief of Yendi was among those people
Who spoke wisdom and truth;

149. As for his subjects, and his children too,
They are all evildoers and of bad reputation.
150. When he died disaster descended upon them.
They were attacked by German regiments.

The lack of unity and diplomacy demonstrated by the Ya Na Andani cost the Dagomba their freedom and land. They fought among themselves and that encouraged the Germans to step in again to assume authority. It was said that they finally agreed to go by the wishes of the people in crowning one of the aspirants. But he later proved to be only a stooge in the hands of the Germans who were the de jure rulers dictating to him what they wanted. As Holger Weiss (2008, 157) reports, quoting Tamakloe,

...though the Germans were his benefactors, their settlement in Yendi did him no good as he was deprived of all his authority as a king. Consequently, Alhassan was utterly rejected and despised by his own people, and the country was, after its partition by the Anglo-German Border Commission in 1900-1901, ruled directly by the Germans, and sometimes through the agency of the king's own ministers to whom only the Germans talked.

This therefore is the metanarrative of 'Umar's discourse that reveals people's tragic fall through their own disunity and the opportunistic duplicity of colonial actions.

Next, 'Umar's narrative presents us with another historical encounter between other northern ethnic groups and the Europeans. Most of these groups had not yet been Islamized before the coming of the Europeans although Muslim presence among them could be discerned owing to the busy trade exchange that was thriving across the region at this time.

151. Mention Gambaga, then Kusasi and Mango;
As well as Bariba, Tasi, Sagode in the list.
152. Remember Kete, our town, that day how it was occupied
As well as Nanumba and Konkomba, the savages,
153. And the Bāsare, the Kabre and all the rest
Who used to live in fortresses above hills,

154. Likewise Sogode, and Karkare and Faso
Including Gafilu and Samari, which are like twins,
155. And Arju and Salimango and all its environs;
The Chief of Suburku fled among the crowd.
156. The tall Christian came to battle him
He ran away and left the lofty palaces.
157. Have you witnessed how they surrounded Kūna
And its environs and how they marched beyond?
158. We have been horrified with what they did to us.
Their aim is only to control the world.
159. Have you seen how they came to Washsīha?
A noble prince reigned there in the town.

Gambaga, Kusasi, Mango, Bariba, Tasi and Sagode are localities and ethnicities located in the region that was being contested between the British and the Germans. Most of these groups were what anthropologists classified as acephalous communities that did not have known organized political units like the others which were ruled by chiefs or kings. They were mostly nomads roaming through desert lands and are quite distinct from the other ethnic groups around. Some of these localities are inhabited by ethnic groups of Dendi who are cognate with the Songhay ethnic groups. ‘Umar soon moves through these towns and cites his own place of residence, Kete, known locally by the compound name Kete-Krachi. Note the suppressed tone of sadness and nostalgia as he calls, “Remember Kete, our town, that day how it was occupied.” In addition to Kete, the Nanumba and Konkomba were also subdued. These two acephalous groups lived mostly nomadic lives in the desert.¹⁹⁴ Together with the Basari and Kabre they form a distinct ethnic group that lacked any unified political entity

¹⁹⁴ See Nehemia Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa: A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-colonial Period* (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1968).

before the coming of Europeans. Remark 'Umar's conduct towards these groups when he qualifies them as *'al-li'ām*, "evil or immoral people." This is how he distinguishes Muslims from non-Muslim groups by pointing out their un-Islamic moral life as well as the fact that they were predatory groups who lived on raids upon other groups of the area. He goes on to add, *wa kāna maqāmahum qal'u al-'akām* (their residents were in mountain fortresses). This corroborates what we said about their nomadic life in the desert.

Eastward 'Umar's gaze invites our attention to other towns within the region: Sagode, Karkare, Faso, Gafilu and Samari. As the names file past his gaze we are invited to imagine within our minds what sort of action took place there in the context of colonial assault and devastation. It is at the next landmark that he wants us to tarry and contemplate the scene between Europeans and natives of Salimango. It all looks familiar; Africans mowed down before the colonial artillery, and kings and chiefs killed or losing authority to become reduced as low as commoners among their subjects. This time it is the Chief of Suburkou whom we are invited to witness running without shame among the crowds. The word *rukām* signifies an accumulation of sand or the like. The imagery thus suggests a great crowd of people being chased away by the colonial forces like the wind blowing away sand dune.

156. The tall Christian came to battle him.
He ran away and left the lofty palaces.

The word *ṭāmm* derived from *ṭ.m.m* connotes fullness and swiftness in relation to horse gallop specifically. Thus what 'Umar wants to convey is that the Chief of Suburkou was so much frightened by the white man and his forces that he wasted no time in vacating his court to seek refuge among the crowd. Note the motif of social reversal that is being depicted by 'Umar in this episode. Throughout the poem we have seen similar situations where Umar evokes this motif as one of the great calamities of colonial intervention in African society.

Note the rhetorical *iltifāt* in verse 157 conveyed by “‘*a lam tara...*” As we have been pointing out, this is one of the performative strategies being employed by ‘Umar to keep the communication with his audience constantly opened. It makes us feel as though we are sharing in the narrative. *Hāfa* suggests: to encircle, surround from all sides, and it emphasizes the hunting imagery that we suggested as embedded within the discourse of the poem. One can imagine these natives caught within the net of colonial cavalry running helter-skelter to try to escape the firing guns aimed at them. But ‘Umar barely reached the end of his verse when he already foresees the forces proceeding onwards after accomplishing their task of conquering the people. In his usual casual way he does not tell us the outcome of firing on the confounded unarmed multitude. He leaves us the task of imagining the rest. We can imagine however ‘Umar’s pent up emotions of sadness at evoking this scene for us. In a characteristic cry of despair he blurts out:

158. We have been horrified with what they did to us.
 Their aim is only to control the world.

The verb *rā‘a* denotes to scare, terrify, and petrify. The verbal noun has a cognate *rū‘* which signifies heart, mind, and soul. By extension therefore it points to the fact that ‘Umar’s fear has infiltrated deep into his heart and pervaded his whole being, driving him into hysteria and psychosis. But this is only an illustration of the African state of mind as a consequence of the callousness of colonial military forces. Fear such as this does not subside at once. It becomes part and parcel of people’s lives and for ages they go on living it through trauma and nightmares. The psychological damage caused by colonialism to African mentality has unfortunately not attracted adequate critical inquiry from scholars that could shed some light on the present crisis of identity besetting African people. For every war is bound to leave its physical and spiritual scars on victims. Even soldiers who return from it after witnessing their

own dreadful acts spend years and years suffering from the trauma of what they saw and did. And what about victims who suffer it? Survivors will not forget the sight of loved ones falling under the firing guns and their own helplessness before it all. Some will not be able to live through it with the shame of degradation, rape and vandalism that they were forcibly made to suffer against their will. Throughout 'Umar's discourse we have observed how proud and noble men have been emasculated and reduced to women. In patriarchal societies such as Africa, before the arrival of Europeans, the consequences of such degradation could leave serious marks of fear and humiliation in the minds of proud people. The work of such critics as Franz Fanon (1967, 2007, 2008), Albert Memmi (2006, 2013) and Edward Said (2004, 2006, 2007, 2012) have given prominence to the importance of this phenomenon for our understanding of the full impact of colonial violence on the lives of colonized people today. It is a project that should be accorded further intensive research in order to provide us full understanding of the real sources of social crisis across the world.

After contemplating the determination and persistent drive of colonialism across the lands of Africa, 'Umar arrives at an interesting conclusion, a conclusion which we should acknowledge reveals an intelligent foresight from a man who had hardly had any significant contact with Europeans until their emergence on the African scene. "Their real intention" he says, "is to rule over mankind." How prophetic 'Umar's word proved to be! The imperialist capitalistic project launched by European powers in the 19th century in a bid to expand their domination over other lands resulted in the occupation of lands outside Europe from China to Africa. Between 1880 and 1914 all the African continent had been claimed as imperial territory by the European powers except Ethiopian and Liberia.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ UNESCO, *General History of Africa: Vii.* (Paris: UNESCO, 1990) 19.

In verse 159, 'Umar continues with his narrative of conquered lands across the region saying,

159. Have you seen how they came to Washsīha?
A noble prince reigned there in the town.
160. That is their way of scorning us,
And they swooped upon us like dark swallows.
161. And if we asked: "What do you want from us?
Is it your intent to fight peaceful people?"
162. They scoffed and said: "How can you battle us?
Sit back and endure us without a shame."

Note here again how 'Umar underlines the degradation of African leaders to demonstrate reversal of social hierarchy caused by colonialism within African communities. As has been pointed out, 'Umar is made distraught by the social fall of African aristocracy as a result of European intervention, and he has continuously made references to it across the narrative. Let us also note at this point, his sudden interpolation of plural pronoun "we" as a way of identifying himself with the narrative action. By personalizing the narrative 'Umar could also bring the suffering of victims of colonial violence closer to our heart and make us empathize with them. He depicts colonial attack on African communities as swooping like *samām*. It can also be read as *simām* or *samā'im*, which all seem appropriate to the narrative context of 'Umar's poem. According to Lane (1968) *samām* denotes a certain kind of bird, which he identified as the mountain swallow. *Simām*, on the other hand, occurs as the plural of *samm*, i.e., poison. The other word *samā'im* is a plural form of *samūm*, used to refer to the hot or cold wind that frequently blows across the Arabian desert. It is one of those words Arabs called *'aḍadād*, a word that denotes two contradictory meanings at the same time. Whichever reading we decide on applying in this context, it reinforces the general meaning 'Umar wants

to convey about Europeans' descending with full force on African lands. In this regard we could say Europeans are depicted as descending upon Africans swiftly and in large flocks like swallows, or the effect of their arrival could be described as severe as the hot wind or sending chills down the spines of Africans. Yet still European colonialism could be viewed as poisonous injection into African social body that will result in its death and deformation. As will become evident, European cultural influence would become a hegemonic threat to the entire African cultural system.

Europeans had become convinced by now about the effectiveness of their superior weaponry against Africans. This has been proved so far by their successful campaign across the lands. They could therefore not conceal their disdain and contempt towards this people who persist in opposing them against the odds. European derogation is expressed by 'Umar as *'ihaanatuhum ladayna*, their contempt for us. The word *ihānah* is derived from *h.w.n* which connotes lowness, baseness, etc. *Ihānah* is the verbal noun of the fourth verbal pattern *'ahaanahu* and means "He lowered, or abased, him; debased him; rendered him abject, vile, mean, paltry, contemptible, despicable, or ignominious."¹⁹⁶ This conforms well to 'Umar's general feelings about the European attitude towards Africans and corresponds as well to a depiction of liminality that this section of 'Umar's narrative depicts. 'Umar further demonstrates this European condescending ethos vis-à-vis Africans through a dramatic illocutionary exchange between "we" (Africans) and them. 'Umar could not understand why Europeans would assail African people who have been living a peaceful life without extreme upheavals like the one Europeans are spreading across the lands. The European response reveals much about this contemptible attitude that 'Umar claims they manifest towards

¹⁹⁶ Edward William Lane, *An Arabic – English Lexicon* (London: William and Norgate 1863) 3046 (<http://www.tyndalearchive.com/tabs/lane/>; accessed, 9/10/2013).

Africans. Africans were expected to accept European occupation without resistance and to endure whatever painful consequences might follow. For is that not the nature of human existence? Survival of the fittest? But what is the source of 'Umar's real fear regarding this European invasion? As we have already pointed out, there could be no doubt about his conviction that the whole colonial assault was a Christian design to destabilize Muslims in Africa. This is what he reveals in verse 164 as he says:

164. Their real intention is to fight Muslims
And they would sow discord without a doubt.

In the next verses that follow, 'Umar prepares for a closure; he resumes the description of the colonial conquests. The tale does not seem to want to end. How could it when the ravages are still going on around him without any relapse? His desperation and discomfiture is manifested in verse 165. European conquest is spreading rapidly and they are successfully advancing to defeat Africans and occupy their lands. He could only turn to his lord for help:

165. I do not know how this will come to end;
We ask our Lord to end it well for us.

166. We also heard they went to Illela,
As well as Agadez which are noble lands.

167. They said their envoy came up to Bauchi
To beguile them with ornate rhetoric.

168. They also sent Adam to Kano with some funds,
And men carrying stuff to bribe the lords.

Note that he says "We heard that..." suggesting that this is information that reached him almost as he was about to put a closure to his tale. Illela and Agadez are cities inhabited by Muslims located in Niger and Nigeria. Although he had already gone over areas afflicted by the colonial ravages in these regions, 'Umar still finds it necessary to return to them in order not to omit any detail possible in his historic narration of colonial hegemony. Note too that

these lands are described as *'arḍu al-kirām*, lands of noble people. As we have pointed out above, 'Umar has been greatly disturbed and concerned by the downturn of the life of the nobility as result of colonial intervention in Africa. It is therefore not surprising that he finds it necessary to return to these lands whose fate has become changed for the worse by the Europeans.

As Europeans battled their way across the lands, they used all strategies to dominate the people. Their invincible machinery has enabled them to crush and contain any resistance that stood in their way. They have killed and massacred, they have burned and destroyed towns and lands; but resistance would not be killed by such acts of atrocity; they would only feed it. So another strategy they had adopted is to cajole and bribe chiefs through paltry gifts of food, clothes and ammunition; and through false promises of peace. It is to one of these subterfuges that 'Umar is referring in verse 167, when he says,

167. They said their envoy came up to Bauchi
To beguile them with ornate rhetoric

'Umar does not conceal his irony in the last part of this line as he demonstrates colonial dissimulation and trickery through eloquent rhetorical messages addressed to chiefs to allay their fears and attract their cooperation. Indeed Europeans were weary of open confrontation with organized Muslim groups wherever they found influence in the lands. And there was an initial determination from them to try to negotiate peaceful co-existence with Muslims in order to avert war. We see this in British colonial policy towards Muslim states of the Northern part of Nigeria. A series of messages and correspondences were exchanged between the governor and chiefs that culminated in Northern Nigeria being declared semi-

autonomous under the 'Uthmanic Caliphate.¹⁹⁷ This policy resulted in what became known as British system of indirect rule. Kano was one of the strong enclaves of Islamic rule before colonialism and we see here how the British tried to lobby the king by sending him “money/ and loads of furniture.”

In verse 169, 'Umar indicates that he had witnessed personally the colonial convoy led by Jahannama (hell) across the lands of Rōbuwa carrying loads and proceeding ahead in their bid to conquer the lands:

169. I saw that devilish commander, in the wilderness of Rōbuwa
With lots of loads marching to go beyond.
170. Their landing would be in Zarra, not false at all.
Well, we have no one upon who to call except our Lord.

The evocation of the name Jahannama (devilish commander) again suggests the state of calamity that has descended upon the lands as a result of colonial presence in it. As they advanced, they descended on the town of Zara, and here 'Umar plays upon the word by evoking the Arabic word for falsehood, *zūr*. This underscores the truth of what 'Umar wants to convey. There is no doubt that the Europeans have desired to cover every part of the region and to subject it to their dominion. It is necessary that his audience is convinced of this and therefore he underlines it by bringing in the word that might seem to suggest what he was saying as untrue *zūr*, thereby negating it. The tale is closed by the expression of

¹⁹⁷ With respect to the history of the British Indirect Rule system, see Michael Crowder, “Indirect Rule: French and British Style” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 34:3 (Jul., 1964), 197-205; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1158021>. Accessed: 17/02/2014 21:55; Assa Okoth, *A History of Africa: African societies and the establishment of colonial rule, 1800-1915* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 2006) 322, and also Toyin Falola and Mathew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

despondency and loss of hope; again he can only turn to his lord to save them from this Christian calamity. Thus after describing this series of spatial ravages perpetrated by Europeans across Africa and the incapacity of Africans to resist it, 'Umar turns to God for possible intervention to save them from the ordeal of colonialism.

4.3.3 Failed Re-aggregation and Frozen Liminality

The re-aggregation phase is the culminating stage of the tripartite ceremony of the rites of passage as propounded by van Gennep in his theoretical structure. The purpose of ceremonial rituals is ultimately to achieve a change, elevation or transformation from one cultural identity to another. After undergoing the necessary rites initiates re-enter their community in a novel status, and this is often followed by celebration of what van Gennep terms as aggregation or incorporation into the community.

Successful re-aggregation occurs, most often, when the ritual process of transformation culminates symbolically into a positive elevation in social statuses of initiands. The very essence of the ritual was to restore social harmony and equilibrium. When society fails to initiate its neophytes into their new social statuses, their very presence threatens the general wellbeing of its members. The ritual process gets rid of the pollution their presence caused and restores social harmony once gain. At the end of his narrative, however, the transformational process through colonial invasion does not seem to have culminated on a positive note for Africans. No doubt, there has been some change. But it was a change that did not call for celebration. At the end of this poem Africa is in mourning. It is mourning the death of so many able warriors some who have died after demonstrating great heroism. Instead of joyful celebration, fear has forced people into cautious silence, and Ūmar portrays the transformation in surreal terms. Let us see how 'Umar describes the closure to this tragic

drama. It is a true catharsis presented in phantasmagoric images. It will therefore be appropriate to call this a failed re-aggregation. Quite often the process of transformation fails to achieve its tragetted goal of maturity; it becomes still-born. In this case, the subjects undergoing the ritual remain suspended in the margin phase of liminality and according to Turner this liminal state may become even fixed and permanent. Further developing this idea Bjørn Thomassen (2009, 2) sates that,

In ritual passages, liminality is followed by reintegration rituals that re-establish the order of the new personality as a part of the social order that he or she re-enters with a new role, stamped by the formative experience. This is a critical passage, but without reintegration liminality is pure danger. Hence, relating to crisis periods of larger societies where the social drama has no foregone conclusion, the question becomes: how is the liminal period dealt with, and how (if at all) is it ended?

Thomassen quotes this important insight from Szakolczai (2000) that further highlights this crucial moment in the ritual process of transformation. “Liminality becomes a permanent condition when any of the phases in this sequence [of separation, liminality, and reaggregation] becomes frozen, as if a film stopped at a particular frame.” Some immense transformational crises such as wars, trauma as well as experiences of extreme psychological impact on life aften lead to this state of “frozen” liminality. Thomassen cites examples such as communism after the Second World War and monasticism in which this state has become permanently fixed. ‘Umar’s three narratives all end in this characteristic frozen liminality in which Africa fails to re-incorporate herself into her own historical life cycle.

Confining our evaluation of the qaṣīdah and its temporal composition, from the year 1900, to the perspective of ‘Umar’s personal psychological experience, there is no doubt that the contingencies of colonial invasion had had a tremendous impact upon his life as an African as well as a Muslim. On the other hand, the qaṣīdah, in reality chronicles Africa’s historical

encounter with colonialism. Thus 'Umar's narrative mirrors both his personal temporal experience with colonialism as well as that of the whole continent at this specific moment. How then does 'Umar perceive the culmination of this development at the close of his composition? In other words what immediate changes does he apprehend at the moment of his qaṣīdah's narrative closure?

The impact of colonial conquest and subsequent domination across African lands was an emasculation of the nobility and destruction of social hierarchy. Colonial violence and coercion have left people shocked and demoralized. The threat of death and annihilation hung heavy in people's minds and all that mattered to them was self-preservation. Truth, honesty, righteousness, honor and trustworthiness have become principles no longer applicable by men in their daily lives. It is this moral transformation in people's conduct that 'Umar begins to address at this stage of his narrative. He begins by saying:

171. Silence, we have to keep in these our days,
And patience from oppression and abuse.
172. He who would dare to speak the truth aloud
Would live in grief and woe.
173. People bemark themselves in idiocy and lies,
Deception, and retailing in calumnies.
174. Truth in these our days is not approved,
And he who says the truth will be reviled.
175. Truth has become a bitter pill in these days
And propagating lies has become commendable.
176. O God, o Merciful, have mercy
Upon your servants, free or slave.

People are prone to take refuge in a culture of silence when they find themselves overwhelmed by intimidating and menacing circumstances. 'Umar's narrative account of

colonial conquest has revealed how Africans have been subjugated to varied forms of violence and psychological trauma as a result of colonial acts of abuse and oppression. Thus their familiar milieu was turned into a world of fear where it became necessary to adopt various strategies in order to adapt and survive. *Sū'u* is the verbal noun derived from the verb *sā'a* which denotes to be or become bad, evil, foul, wicked; to become worse, deteriorate; to grieve, sadden, afflict, hurt, vex, torment, trouble, offend, pain, make sorry, or displease someone.¹⁹⁸ *Sū'ū al-kalām* as used by 'Umar in this context would suggest the general attitude of contempt expressed by Europeans towards Africans, be it verbal or otherwise. 'Umar has already pointed out some of these European expressions of contempt such as the retort:

162. They scoffed and said: "How can you battle us?
Sit back and endure us without a shame."

The colonial library does not lack such historical testimonies of European conducts towards Africans. There is no doubt, as we have indicated before, that racial prejudice played a major role in European conquest of Africa. Blacks were generally interpellated in various terms that carried racial discriminatory undertones, including laziness, lying, promiscuity, savagery and cannibalism (Franz Fanon, 2007, 2008). This atmosphere of apprehension drove people to become more circumspect in their daily lives. In order to survive it, some Africans chose to collaborate openly or clandestinely with the new forces; others their real intentions to beguile the threat of official censure. For according to 'Umar, people have grown to understand that sincerity, truth and boldness had become too risky to maintain. The resultant new conduct of simulation is described by 'Umar as *zīnah*, (adornment, embellishment, clothes, and toilette). Thus like the chameleon, people changed their temperament to suit their environment.

¹⁹⁸ Hans Wehr, *sā'a*, 438.

At this point 'Umar, here, tries to establish parallelism between two poles of social behavior that have been engendered at the wake of colonialism: these are truth and falsehood. Social morality has been corrupted and people have adopted new forms of behavior to save themselves from the scourge of colonial oppression. Truth has become difficult to be upheld because under colonial authority people are forced to adopt strategies that will allow them to beat the surveillance of the system, while at the same time it will permit them to adopt silence and concealed resistance on the blind side of colonial authorities. In the eyes of 'Umar, however, this behavior is condemnable, and he seems not to have understood the psychological impact of colonial abuse which has created fear and intimidation in people's mind. As an orthodox Muslim, 'Umar is not capable of endorsing any form of hypocrisy. He views that as a debasement of people's sincerity and nobility. From his own avowal, he has understood the change in people's behavior as abnormal and imposed upon them by the difficult circumstances that overwhelmed them. The dilemma forces him to cry out in exasperation, appealing to God for salvation.

176. O God, o Merciful, have mercy
Upon your servants, free or slave.

'Umar takes his description of the social malaise wrought upon Africans to a higher level of symbolism. It is what one might describe as a moment of magical realism:

177. Truly, their gristles are of guff and idiocy;
As for their blood, it's mixed with envy and hate.

178. Their veins are made of chronic grudge and viciousness.
Their bones ingrained in human hatred.

179. The love for wealth is what they have for skins.
And love of power what they have as hair.

180. Malicious gossip is their litany;
The flesh of others is like flesh of birds.

Not satisfied with the simple description of the social moral decay that has engulfed the African communities, 'Umar depicts this social impact of colonial violence as a transmutation of the moral body into the physical. The social vices become so infused in people that they become transfigured into those very vices. Their cartilage becomes transmuted into stupidity and ignorance. Their blood is turned into a mixture of shame. Their veins are turned into mutual envy and immorality. Their bones have turned into mutual hatred of mankind. Their skins metamorphose into the love of wealth. Their hairs change into the passion for leadership. And idle talk has become their incantation. The flesh of others has become like the flesh of birds to them. In these last few verses 'Umar's rhetoric becomes ambivalent and their reading, multidimensional. His religious orthodoxy places him in a position of strict censurer of social vices in whatever form they appear. It becomes difficult for him to countenance such behaviors and to understand them in any way other than acts of hypocrisy and impiety. It is from this perspective that he looks upon the social transformation of people in the context of colonial hegemony. He is outraged at the social corruption and the perversion that has eaten deep into people's life. But in our view the situation needs a more sober and critical appreciation, taking into account the menacing and terrifying social environment in which people have found themselves. Under tyranny it becomes extremely difficult, in fact dangerous to live an honest life. What 'Umar sees as hypocritical behavior, we see as psychological strategies people adopt for survival. It is a common behavior under any tyrannical situation.

In the remainder of his narrative, 'Umar addresses an apologia to his audience. From verses 181 to 197 he pronounces a disclaimer for his composition. The content of these verses suggests that people have already become acquainted with 'Umar's narrative. In

addition people might have reacted to it by voicing out their criticism of the poem and he responds to them here.

181. My verses are but for musing and reflection;
Foolishness is not part of poetry.
182. Neither are they meant to seek love from people of the book.
May God forbid us to incline to that.
183. Nor for delight and joy did I my verse compose,
But to express sorrow and grief,
184. And surely we had not heard of a person who intended evil
By corrupting the meaning of words,
185. For corrupting words is not new;
It is something men have done from antiquity.
186. Some men, there were who distorted the Taurāh
That the Lord of the throne mentioned it endlessly.
187. Do you know those who seek to lead astray?
They would distort the words we have composed.
188. He would falsely interpret Quranic verses.
And it is God who shall reward humankind appropriately.
189. Who could be more envious than learners?
But though they envy, we would be absolved
190. And who could be more spiteful than reciters?
But if they spite us we will not be grieved.
191. Have you not heard what has befallen Sayuti?
May God reward him among the noble ones.
192. His verses too were mixed with jest and jive;
His intent was not that, but to express grief.
193. The chronicling of these lands and towns
Is only meant to warn and rouse the noble-minded.
194. It is not as heedless men might think,
To just distract or try to sway the crowd.

195. May God forbid my doing this or that
Until the day I'm interred in the ground.
196. The eloquent are begrudged for their skills
By envious men who envy them their gifts.
197. Our maundering discourse has fulfilled our aim.
We shall conclude it in perfect finale:

His verses, he says, are meant to teach lesson *lil 'itibār* and not for foolery *'al-ḥamāqah*. It is easy for those who could not appreciate the lightness of 'Umar's verse and its monotony at times not to take it seriously and consider it even foolish. Probably many have been satisfied by reading it this way for a long time. But we know better and could appreciate its historical significance as a critique of colonialism.

The expansive description of colonial conquests across the regions is a rare historical testimony that affords us an almost eye witness account of events that transpired during those historical moments. As 'Umar testifies, the poem also conveys a lesson for future generations to learn how European colonialism had imposed itself upon their ancestors and the violence that those ancestors had endured in the hands of the colonial masters. He goes on to emphasize that his composition was not meant to ingratiate himself with Europeans either. At this stage that would have been tantamount to apostasy and so he dismisses it by "May God forbid us to incline to that."

He goes on to add that his verses are also meant *lil 'ightimāmi*, expression of grief, sorrow, sadness and anxiety. *'Ighitimām* is the verbal noun of *'ightamma*, which denotes to be distressed, sad, worry, grieve or pine. It is derived from the root *gh.m.m.* and connotes to cover, conceal, veil; become filled with sadness, pain or grief. Its passive form also denotes

to be obscure or incomprehensible.¹⁹⁹ Thus 'Umar's qaṣīdah represents an account of sorrows, pains and anxieties felt by Africans during the colonial conquests. To those who accuse him of distortion and fabrication, he responds that although distortion is something well established in human discourse, he would not stoop himself to such debasement. He cites the case of the Tōra and how it was distorted and how attracted God's wrath on those who perpetrated it. Furthermore, he evokes historical examples of scholars similar to him who had also embarked upon similar undertakings in good faith, but they did not escape from envious censure.

In this closing section of his qaṣīdah, 'Umar is significantly grounding his narrative in parallel with conventional principles of verbal performative frame of poetic performance. As I have pointed out throughout this analysis, 'Umar's narrative account exhibits several elements of performativity as expounded by Richard Bauman. The poem thus demonstrates its own reflexivity as narrative performance. Bauman (2008, 38) argues that conventional verbal performances play significant cultural roles as interactive channels through which performer and audience mutually act to bring about social transformation. As he puts it,

It is part of the essence of performance that it offers to the participants a special enhancement of experience, bringing with it a heightened intensity of communicative interaction which binds the audience to the performer in a way that is specific to performance as a mode of communication. Through his performance, the performer elicits the participative attention and energy of his audience, and to the extent that they value his performance, they will allow themselves to be caught up in it. When this happens, the performer gains a measure of prestige and control over the audience-prestige because of the demonstrated competence he had displayed, control because the determination of the flow of the interaction is in his hands. When the performer gains control in this way, the potential for transformation of the social structure may become available to him as well (...).

¹⁹⁹ Hans Wehr, 683.

Evidently 'Umar's narrative chronicles the historical process of Africa's transformation through colonial conquest at the beginning of the twentieth century. The process is an ongoing operation, and from his narrative tone we can discern 'Umar's unease at the future outcome. The poem ends on a melancholic note of resignation and surrender to the inevitable situation and 'Umar expresses his submission to God's will praying for His intervention on behalf of Muslims to relieve them from the ordeal fate has drawn upon them.

The Quran, textually, becomes the symbolic spring from which Ūmar now seeks healing and spiritual rejuvenation. From verse 198 to 213, therefore, he turns to God in supplication, invoking the *baraka* of the Qur'anic words and the goodwill of God's prophets and saints.

For, as he says,

202. For no harm shall touch those who resort to you
Nor shall they violence see, O Lord of humankind.

203. No worries will he have, nor grief, nor sorrows feel,
The one who stand before you, nor sickness.

The fresh wounds on Africa left to bleed at the wake of the colonial invasion cannot find cure through human agency. Obviously, what Africa needs at this stage is a spiritual revival or reincarnation into a newer form. And perhaps that is why 'Umar has given us the above description of a metempsychosis. As a Muslim scholar, 'Umar has served as both spiritual and physical healer to people in the community. And his recourse to the Quran, in this regard, conforms to to divine injunctions where the Quran has been declared *nūr* (*light* or *illumination*) as well as *shifā'* (healing or remedy) for the sick soul. For instance in Quran 10:57, God declares, "O mankind, there has to come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts and guidance and mercy for the believers." And in Quran 14:1 similarly God announces, "Alif, Lam, Ra. [This is] a Book which We have revealed to

you, [O Muhammad], that you might bring mankind out of darkneses into the light by permission of their Lord - to the path of the Exalted in Might, the Praiseworthy.” At the end of this narrative, ‘Umar has come to comprehend the destructive impact of colonial violation upon Africa as a historic cataclysm of immense proportion. And since this has been caused by Christians, it would only be by means of that which God has prescribed to be the true “light” and ‘healing”, i.e., the Quran’s blessed message, that there can be a true rebirth.

Chapter V

*Lābārin Naṣārā*²⁰⁰ or An Account of Africa's Colonial Re-Birth

5.1. The Post-liminal Phase in Africa's Colonial Experience.

Now we come to the last of 'Umar's triad of qaṣīdahs that he composed from 1899 to 1906 as sagas of the European conquests of Africa. In contrast to the first two, 'Umar's last qaṣīdah is distinctive with respect to its medium of composition. As pointed out before, the first two qaṣīdahs were both composed in classical Arabic; the last one, however, is in Hausa Ajami. This poetic genre, which became popular probably from the beginning of the nineteenth century was a significant propaganda tool employed by the Fulani-Hausa Caliphate to make Muslim subjects about their reformist ideology (Hiskett, 1975). Hausa being then the lingua franca of the caliphal polity, its use became fundamental. It was a language widely spoken across the realm of the 'Uthmanic caliphate and beyond: from northwards across the mid-northern part of Niger to the middle of Nigeria, southwards; then from the far corners of northeastern Nigeria to the mid-Volta regions in the West. The spread of Hausa across these regions was due in large part to trade. This was a major profession of the Hausa people, and they had frequently charted along the length and breadth of the West African territories long before European colonialism. Thus Hausa grew to become one of the highly spoken languages across the region. 'Umar's decision to revert to his native language could in part

²⁰⁰ Based on MSS. IAS.AR/43; 109 (v); 302; 370. I have not included the Ajami version of the poem here. I have made use of Piłaszewicz's edited version which he used in his article "Homiletic Poetry of Alhaji Umaru." *Africana Bulletin*, 30 (1981): 73 -109. See my full translation in appendix VI. Like most of 'Umar's poetic composition, this qaṣīdah has not been entitled by the author. Most critics who have studied it gave it this title or its translation equivalent partly to reflect the dominant theme and also because the word Naṣārā features as the unique rhyming word of the poem.

be accounted for by a prospect of reaching this larger audience that the Hausa linguistic community afforded in comparison to the limited circle of privileged Arabic literati.

Before examining this qaṣīdah, a brief comment regarding its form and structure might be necessary. As many scholars have already observed, African pre-colonial literature had been fundamentally orature²⁰¹ due mainly to limited acquaintance with written culture among the people. African Muslim cultures, however, were an exception as through Islam these people came to develop an Arabic writing system which they subsequently employed in writing their own languages, in form of Ajami (as has already been pointed out above). Hausa poetic expressions were therefore already being composed in Ajami side by side Arabic poetry. The symbiosis between the two literary structures resulted in the latter greatly influencing the former. Some of these discernible influences include the adoption of the Arabic classical poetic meters, the dual hemistich and stock imagery.

Accordant to our syntagmatic analysis of 'Umar's triad colonial qaṣīdahs, analogous to van Gennep's ceremonial pattern of the rites of passage, this last qaṣīdah would represent a narrative of the stage of *postliminal* in Africa's colonial experience. Structurally, this stage follows "initiates'" emergence from liminality and their official induction into new social statuses corresponding to their new identities. Reincorporation is in most cases accompanied by celebration and conferment of insignia. Victor Turner states that:

... in the third phase the passage is consummated. The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations of a clearly defined and "structural" type, and is

²⁰¹ See Eileen Julien, *African Novels and the Question of Orality* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992); Alain Ricard and Flora Veit-Wild, *Interfaces between the Oral and Written Interfaces* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005); Isidore Okpewho, *African Oral Literature : Backgrounds, Character, and Continuity* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992); Ruth H. Finnegan, and Thomas Leiper Kane Collection (Library of Congress. Hebraic Section) *Oral Literature in Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1970).

expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards.²⁰²

Considering the most probable date of 'Umar's composition of this qaṣīdah, (which Weiss thinks is 1906 in contradiction to Goody and Pilascewicz who dated it as 1903²⁰³) it would be safe to conclude that the qaṣīdah coincides chronologically with what we might term as the *postliminal* phase of Africa's colonial experience. By this date there was hardly any territory across the entire continent (with the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia) that had not fallen under possession of one of the European powers.²⁰⁴ Although much of the conquests that 'Umar chronicles had already been executed by 1900,²⁰⁵ the establishment of real administrative features became concretized only from 1907 onwards. It was for instance the date when Lord Lugard officially instituted indirect rule over Nigeria as colonial policy when the British had had full control over the Hausa-Fulani caliphal realm. French territorial dominions in West Africa, on the other hand, had already been consolidated under a federation of *Afrique Occidentale Française* (French West Africa). From North to South across the continent, territorial boundaries were carved out to delineate geopolitical borders of British Africa, French Africa, German Africa, Belgian, Portuguese and Spanish Africa. Furthermore, immediate colonial wars of conquest had grounded to a halt, as imminent threats of resistances and counteroffensives became relatively contained.²⁰⁶ In this phase according to Turner "[t]he ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a stable state once more." This laying down of colonial administrative structures reflects simultaneously new

²⁰²Victor Turner, in William A. Lessa, 1979, 335.

²⁰³ Holger Weiss, 2008, 161, note 86.

²⁰⁴ ²⁰⁴ UNESCO, *General History of Africa VII*. Ed. A. A. Boahene. (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2000) 1.

²⁰⁵ See UNESCO, 2000, 44: "By 1902 the conquest of Africa was all but concluded. It had been a particularly bloody business. The devastating power of the Maxim gun and the relative sophistication of European technology must have been a sobering experience for the Africans. But though the conquest of Africa by Europe was accomplished with such relative ease, the occupation and the establishment of European administration in Africa — as the following chapters will demonstrate — were not."

²⁰⁶ See, UNESCO, 2000, chapter 2.

identificatory political and social statuses being assigned Africans through various legislative instruments promulgated in European imperial Metropolises. Adu Boahen states that this phase announced "...the completion of the establishment of the colonial system in the 1910s."²⁰⁷ In other words it was Africa's baptismal phase when peoples and lands acquired legal designations to feature on the global geopolitical map as imperial extensions of European empires.

Let us now examine how this *postliminal* phase is thematically reflected, furthermore, in 'Umar's Ajami narrative. First of all let us note in passing how 'Umar's shift from the Arabic medium (in which he has composed his two previous poems) to the Ajami in itself constitutes a *postliminal* performance. It is as if he has moved from the foreign to the local. His audience now becomes specifically the people of his own land. If formally he had cast his gaze over the whole real of Muslim '*Umma*, it is his native home that henceforth becomes paramount in his mind. Thus he introduces his narrative with the following verse:

1. This situation that has descended is what we shall compose.
Hearken to the story of Naṣāra.²⁰⁸

The first point to note here is 'Umar's periphrastic use of the word *abingha*, which we have rendered contextually as situation. Literally it translates as "this thing." Morphologically the word is made up of the noun *abu* (thing), and the genitival marker '*n*' as well as the demonstrative '*ga*' (this). So the full significance of the construction is 'this thing'. But its import can only be fully understood by relating it to the cultural context within which it is employed. The phrase "this thing" when used within cultural discursive contexts denotes various unexpressed meanings understood clearly by interlocutors. It is a deictic marker of

²⁰⁷ UNESCO, 2000, 14.

²⁰⁸ Thereafter, Christians.

discourse. And as Mitsuharu Mizino (1993) states, discourse deictic markers are “partly the direct perceptual information from the physical circumstance of such-and-such a situation of utterance and the context of utterance, and partly the acquired social conventional knowledge, which is independent of the situation or context of utterance.” What determines meaning here depends often on the mental attitude of interlocutors apropos complex motivating stimuli influencing their actions and reactions. In the Hausa cultural context specifically, the use of the deictic can sometimes be prompted by motifs of fear of, respect for or desire to demean and affirm one’s superiority towards that “thing” in question. In the context of ‘Umar’s narrative discourse, it is possible to presume that his use of this deictic was motivated by inner fear and apprehension towards the subject of his narrative, the *Nasārā* (Christians). It is as if a direct address of the name has become impossible or forbidden. Indeed, by this time we could rightly imagine how Colonialism has come to symbolize threat, the mention of which could evoke feelings of fear and dread in minds of interlocutors. In societies like Africa such cultural behaviors abound. Prone to superstitions, many societies hold to beliefs of an animated external world populated by supernatural forces who could not be interpellated without evoking their retribution. Consider, for instance, how in some cultures the god of thunder would not be mentioned by name lest it wreck havoc on persons; you could not say “snake” in the night for fear of that it would appear and bite you. Such taboos could be circumvented in Hausa through the use of discursive markers such as the deictic “this.” It is in this guise that I think ‘Umar’s periphrastic expression should be understood. As we shall see later through his account of colonial conquest across the lands, the inhabitants have come to view the Whiteman as the very indomitable force to which they had to submit without question. All the fearless warriors of the land have been subdued one

after the other. Such force, which is capable of taming the traditional dominant forces, surely should be feared by all. But in the end 'Umar utters the "thing" as "Lābārin Nassārā," the history of the Christians.

This discursive strategy foregrounds the theme of the narrative as a completed event whose external existence cannot be doubted. In other words it is "here," visible and palpable. Furthermore note the reflexivity of the phrase "this thing." It points to itself; in other words it creates what it states. It is what Austin (1962) describes as performative utterance. The fact that this device points to what is here now establishes 'Umar's third qaṣīdah in the postliminal.

After presenting us with a long list of local leaders (mostly Muslim) who have been defeated by European forces, 'Umar turns to examine the new political reality brought about by the European invasion. He points out,

195. Now take a look at these rulers we have named;
They have all fallen under Christian control.

This is like singing a requiem for Africa's political aristocracy. All across the lands the trauma of defeat had begun to take on the shape of concrete tragedy as the world of yesterday slowly receded into the past. At the same time 'Umar is underlining the unavoidability of the new turn of events and the need for critical adjustment to accept the inevitable change that would follow. For what is the use of resistance in the face of such powerful foes as the Europeans and when all reliable forces have succumbed before them? Remember, 'Umar, as we recall from his aphoristic pronouncements in the previous qaṣīdah, is a realist. He views

change as an inevitable force in life and no situation however pleasant or tragic, will last forever.²⁰⁹ As a result he makes his position clear:

196. Who would dispute our plain account?
As for us, we have surrendered [to the brave Christians.]

He soon follows this declaration of surrender with what can be described as a public acknowledgement of virtues of colonialism. It is as if 'Umar is consoling his audience and inviting them to abandon their sorrows and brace themselves for the new change by adopting a positive attitude towards European colonialism. It is upon this positive tone that 'Umar concludes his narrative stating that

256. As much as I am concerned, may their rule last forever!
Because I live a life of prosperity under Christian rule.

As a whole this qaṣīdah is an appropriate closure to 'Umar's narrative on Africa's colonial evolution and a worthy reflection of the *postliminal* phase of this transformational ritual rite of passage.

5.2. *Lābāri-n-Naṣārā* Examined as Tripartite Poetic Structure Reflecting the Poet's Temporary Psychological Ritual Transformation

Almost seven years had passed since 'Umar composed his first narrative qaṣīdah to give account of the experience that the European invasion of African lands has had on him and the rest of Africans at large. That immediate reaction was followed in 1900 with an update which resulted in his second narrative that reflected his perspective on the progress of the invasion

²⁰⁹ See Qaṣīdah II, 103-104

103. Vicissitudes of time from this to that
And then from that to this do not last
104. There is no condition which would not pass away
As soon as it reaches its appointed end
105. And all crises however long they last
Would pass away just as it came like arrow-shot

and its impact on Africans. By 1907, the Europeans had achieved most of their goals of conquest and had entered the phase of laying down administrative structures for their new “overseas” possessions. ‘Umar’s third qaṣīdah, which has been entitled *Lābārin Naṣārā* (the story of the Christians/Europeans), chronicles this final stage of what can be called the “fall of Africa.” In what follows we will examine the tripartite structure of the qaṣīdah from the perspective of van Gennep’s ritual theory of the rite of passage.

We can identify three thematic structural parts of the qaṣīdah as follows:

- The prelude, from verse one to verse four;
- The transition or journey part, from verse five to verse one hundred and ninety four;
- The coda or re-aggregation, from verse one hundred and ninety five to the end of the qaṣīdah, i.e., verse two hundred and sixty.

5.2.1 The Separation Phase

As has already been pointed out in previous analysis, the prelude corresponds to the phase of separation in the ritual ceremony of the rite of passage. It reflects the stage of preparation prior to embarking on the ritual process. In narrative discourse, it is affirmed by the narrative prelude that lays down the ground work for narrative development of action. In the prelude ‘Umar gives signals about the theme of his narrative through a number of motifs. The use of the deictic “this” (to which we have already called attention) gives an indirect hint concerning the gravity of the narrative theme which would subsequently be announced as the “story of the Christians/Europeans.” The word *lābāri* is a borrowed construction from the Arabic word *al-‘akhbār*. It is the plural of *khabar* which means in Arabic: news; information, intelligence; report, communication, message; notification; rumor; story; matter, affair; ...pl.

annals.²¹⁰ In Hausa, where only the Arabic plural equivalent is used, the word is used to designate what it connotes in Arabic significances, although the present context more appropriately suggests annals, or story or as historical narrative. The orality of the narrative is also introduced as *ku saurāra* meaning “listen,” and the second plural pronominal marker *ku* signals the audience at large. In the next two verses the speaker invokes the two fundamental sources of his religious conviction, God and Muhammad, as the main authorities who warrant the theme of his discourse. This evocation sets the stage for the eventual thematic confrontation between Islam and Christianity or the realm of *dār al-Islam* and *dār al-ḥarb*. Furthermore, we must point to the significance of this evocation, as the mention of God and Muhammad reflects the fundamental Muslim creed of *shahādah*: the attestation of faith. It is the pronouncement of the *shahādah* that introduces a person symbolically into Islam and denial of it signifies a rejection of Islam *in toto*. Thus ‘Umar is projecting a very important thematic inclination here. Verses four and five finally draw the above- stated motifs into clear perspective.

4. We were living our lives in our land
And we had no concern regarding Jews or Christians,
5. When [at some time] they said kola was scarce
[Because] of strife between Ashanti and Christians.

Verse four states in Ajami poem as, *munā nan dūniyarmu, cikin kassarmu* (we were in our world, in our land). “*Duniya*,” which is an Arabic borrowing, translates as world; it transcends *kasā*, which can mean land, country as well as territory. The juxtaposing of the two words underlines the fundamental contrast ‘Umar wants to draw between their immediate locality, where they rule supreme, and the wider world of human habitation where

²¹⁰ Hans Wehr, *kh.b.r.* 225.

they exist as distinct free men. Furthermore, *kasā* connotes a restricted sense of cultural belongingness; that is the sense in which it is understood when they say, *kasar Hausa*, the land of Hausa speakers. *Dunia*, on the other hand, usually conveys an ethnological (racial, religious) significance. That is why it is not difficult to understand 'Umar's expression *Duniarmu*, as possibly connoting "our African world" or "our world as Muslims." Thus the poet delineates the specific and then the general. And that is the reason why 'Umar states in the second hemistich of verse four, "And we had no concern regarding Jews or Christians". The original Ajami verse reads, *fa bābu batun Yahūdu bale Naṣārā* (and there was no reference/discussion/ conversation²¹¹ regarding Jews or Christians). 'Umar is quick to exculpate his community of any sin of aggression towards Europeans. In other words, "*nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa*, to be conscious of no guilt, to turn pale at no accusation of crime."²¹² And this puts the European invasion of Africa truly as an act of unprovoked violation of their independence. It also justifies his argument in the previous *qaṣīdah* that the invasion was motivated by religious enmity towards Muslims.²¹³ It is significant to note that 'Umar has all along been building a case in which the colonial conquest of Africa would be viewed as wrong and unprovoked. The harmony of this idyllic life was perturbed consequent to the European assault on one of Africa's most powerful polities, Ashanti. Note, however, that it was not the fight itself which attracted concern among Umar's society, but its negative impact upon the kola supply to them. Before the intrusion of Europeans in West Africa, by the nineteenth century slaves and gold have been replaced by kola nut as most important

²¹¹ George P Bargery, *Online Bargery's Hausa-English Dictionary* (<http://maguzawa.dyndns.ws/>; accessed 01/12/2010).

²¹² Hugh Moore, *A Dictionary of Quotations from Various Authors in Ancient and Modern Languages*. (Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Pub., 2007) 252; the quotation is attributed to Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus, 65BC – 27 BC).

²¹³ See verse: 164. Their real intention is to fight Muslims
And they would sow discord without a doubt.

commercial commodity. It is a commodity that is highly valued in West African societies where it is chewed as a stimulant and serves other symbolic cultural functions. Chinua Achebe's famous quote illustrates this clearly among Igbos of Nigeria, "He who brings kola brings life."²¹⁴ The Hausas, more than any other ethnicity, were extensively engaged in the kola nut trade between the Mid-Volta region and Hausa land. The nuts were mainly cultivated in the southern territories in the dominion of Ashanti Kingdom and exported to northern markets such as Salaga where Hausa traders would buy them and subsequently convey them to Hausa land, where its demand was high. It is therefore understandable that the confrontation between the British and Ashanti would endanger the trade, as it was Ashanti control which safeguarded the peace in its transaction.

In this prelude 'Umar has prepared the necessary narrative ground for developing his theme in the next phase that follows.

5.2.2 The Margin Phase

As we have seen, 'Umar has closed the prelude on an alarming note, announcing the disturbing news of strife between the British and Ashanti. At this moment we are immediately thrown headlong into the dangerous zone of liminality where peace ceases to reign and chaos holds sway. The British and Ashanti had been at odds since 1806-07 in what became historicized as the Ashanti-Fante War. At that time Ashanti had dominated the geopolitical space of southern Ghana and when the British came to the scene they began to pose a threat to this Ashanti hegemony by checking some of their coercive actions towards the local weaker ethnicities. There was a series of confrontations between the two sides between 1824 and 1874 after which the British finally succeeded in subduing the Ashanti and

²¹⁴ Chinua Achebe, *Things fall Apart* (London: Penguin, 2010).

destroyed their political dominance over a large territory spanning from south to northern Ghana. The reference 'Umar is making here, however, relates to the last clash between the two sides which took place in 1900. In a bid to consolidate the territories they have occupied in the Gold Coast, the British invited Ashanti to become its official protectorate. When they refused the British advanced on Kumasi the Ashanti capital in 1896 and forced them to surrender. The King Agyemang Prempeh was arrested and exiled to Seychelles together with many Ashanti leaders. Ashanti was then declared a British protectorate. In 1900, the British asked the Ashanti royal house to surrender the golden stool which is the traditional symbol of the Ashanti confederacy. Yaa Asantewaa, queen mother of Ejisu, had at that time become regent of Ejisu district following the death of her brother the substantive king. She roused a rebellion among the Ashanti leaders to reject the British request and then led the men to besiege the British fort. The siege was lifted by a British force sent by the Governor; Yaa Asantewaa was captured and also exiled to Seychelles. We must, however, observe that the allusion 'Umar makes with regards to confrontation between the British and Ashanti, and the subsequent retrograding commercial effects could well be a general statement that takes all these historical encounters into consideration.²¹⁵ For any of these clashes might have adversely affected trade across the Mid-Volta region which had been under Ashanti control for a long time.

6. Then it was later said, Ashanti was no more.
The whole land has been scattered by the Christians.
7. Slaves became like kids as they rejoiced
Saying: "We shall serve no more due to [the arrival] of the Christians."

²¹⁵ See Albert Adu Boahen, *Yaa Asantewaa and the Asante-British War of 1900-1* (Accra; Oxford: Sub-Saharan Publ. ; James Currey, 2003); Ivor Wilks *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

8. Every one of them declared his independence,
Carrying themselves with pride because of the Christians.

The repercussions of the British wars in particular and those of the Europeans in general upon African societies were quite considerable in their transformative impact. Large and powerful kingdoms, such as Ashanti, were conquered and destroyed and the long-standing social stratifications disorganized. We have seen how 'Umar sorrowfully lamented this turn of events in his second qaṣīdah. What he is doing here is a recapitulation of some of these major themes. No other social group had welcomed the European conquests more than the African slave class. Their joy and relief at reclaiming their freedom knew no bounds. 'Umar, who had already deplored the decline of the nobility, finds this slave jubilation quite offensive to his self-esteem. We can sense this in his sarcastic remark that the slaves were “carrying themselves with pride because of the Christians.” His resentment towards the Europeans and these slaves at this moment of his narrative is quite evident.

From this stage of the narration 'Umar enters into an episodic enumeration of European encounters with African ethnic leaders and warlords and their eventually defeat and surrender to colonial rule. His narrative proceeds gradually across this African landscape and describes vividly how these African leaders exerted all efforts to defend and resist foreign occupation. It is interesting to note how most of these narrative descriptions focus on the territories under control of the Hausa-Fulani Caliphate of 'Uthman dan Fodio and his descendants. The list starts with the famous warlord Samory.

9. Then soon we learned that Samori had come
With his massive army; who are Christians [to challenge him]!?
10. They consisted of infantry units led by warlords as well as cavalries
Together with accoutrements to torment the Christians.

11. But in reality, it was not true. For it was he himself,
Whose territory was being routed by the Christians.
12. He was trying to escape and in full flight
Glancing fretfully about to avoid the Christians.
13. It was then that Prempeh got wind [of it],
And sent to inquire about the Christians.
[And then dispatched messengers to him
Saying: "Let us team up and crush the Christians."]
14. It was then also that the Christians learned of it
So they captured Prempeh by ruse.
15. And then together they bore down on Samori,
French and English, kinds of Christians,
16. And soon Samori fell into [their] hands.
He was captured; he would be taken to the Christian lands.
17. Before this he had committed atrocities and waged war.
Men were slaughtered and while women wailed,
18. They were slaughtered like chickens and guinea-fowls.
Woe! Come quickly, o Christians!

The story of Samory's precolonial and colonial adventures had already been exhaustively narrated by 'Umar in the second *qaṣīdah*. In both that narrative and this one, one is struck at 'Umar's ambivalence towards Samory and the role he played in Africans' resistance to foreign occupation. African historians are almost unanimous in praising his military acumen and challenge of European occupation. In this context 'Umar begins by presenting Samory as the formidable force who could even be feared by Europeans. "Who are Christians to challenge him?" 'Umar retorts, considering his mighty armed warriors who he proceeds to describe. 'Umar soon depreciates this showmanship by announcing it as false and simply illusory based on false rumors. He describes his capture in a rather humorous tone, almost trying to depict him as cowardly.

12. He was trying to escape and in full flight
Glancing fretfully about to avoid the Christians.

Do we sense a smothered delight in 'Umar's tone as he narrates this incident? Holger Weiss (2008, 162) sees a suppressed criticism in these words. In a critical commentary on this poem he says:

However, apart from being a lamentation, Imam 'Umar's work is also highly critical about the actions of the local rulers and the late precolonial conditions in the region. In his view, Samori's and others' activities in term of warfare and slave raiding, too, had only brought destruction and fear.

Weiss's comments seemed to be justified by what 'Umar says in verse seventeen and eighteen. And it is also significant to note that although Samori had been described as a Muslim fighter, 'Umar does not seem to agree as he makes no allusion to that effect; while he regularly laments the fate of other leaders and expresses his Muslim sympathies.

One can wonder what would have happened if African warriors had met the European invasion in a united front, when they had realized their individual inadequacies against them. After all it has been said that sometimes the European did not confront the Africans with great numbers. They had rather always relied on the superiority of their weapons. Precolonial African societies have always been presented as disunited, fragmented and in constant discord with one another. Despite the fact that some of the ethnicities were able to impose themselves on the others by sheer spartanic love of war and conquest and were thereby able to establish large kingdoms, the sense of ethnic distinctiveness always remained so strong between individual units that total integrations were never achieved. What persisted were rather the unforgettable feelings of ancestral enmities fostered by the desire to ascend at any given opportunity and rule in turn. This is supported by the fact that the prehistory of Africa has left no memory of long-lasting dynasties like the Pharaohs for instance. Thus the

conquest of African by Europe might be partly attributed to the lack of unity among Africans themselves. There were, however, some exceptions and perhaps the nature of Africa's past is still to be fully understood. One of the few instances of a call for collaboration between Africans during the European invasion is what is alluded to by 'Umar here as an attempt from Prempeh, the king of the Ashanti kingdom, to forge unity between him and Samory to fight the Europeans. Recognizing their mutually incapacity against the European armed forces, 'Umar says,

13. It was then that Prempeh got wind [of it],
And sent to inquire about the Christians.
[And then dispatched messengers to him
Saying: "Let us team up and crush the Christians."]

It is really a memorable instance in the history of Africa that deserves to be chronicled. Unfortunately, the Europeans (English, French and German), who were in the region and fighting for the same cause, worked in concert and succeeded in foiling this collaborative attempt.

'Umar's next episodic narrative focusses on Alḥājj 'Umar Tall's territorial patrimony which crumpled after his death in 1864. The rivalry among the family members, coupled with French maneuvers, thwarted any solid continuity of 'Umar's empire. The elder son Ahmadu's reign was contested by his younger sibling Agibu, who collaborated with the French and deposed him and chased him out of the empire. 'Umar presents the story as follows,

19. Ahmadu, of Segu, was a great man.
It was there, in Segu, that they pounced on him, the Christians.
20. Agibu, his younger sibling, yearned to rule,
So he went and called the Christians [for help].
21. So Ahmadu was chased out from all his land.

He took off as far as dūtsen kūrā²¹⁶ in Kebbi.

22. It was said that he died. May God have mercy on him!

He was a noble man, true believer and thankful servant (of God).

As Ahmadu was chased out of the land, he went as far as Kebbi in Nigeria, probably to seek help from Muslim authorities over there. 'Umar does not indicate any possible motive behind his choice of running to Nigeria. We could only deduce that the presence of Muslim rulers there might have led him to seek refuge with them hoping he could get assistance to repulse the French from his land. On the other hand, his father 'Umar Tall had had strong ties with the royals of the Sokoto caliphate, where he might even have had his first inspiration to embark on his historic jihad. He had also established matrimonial ties with the house of Dan Fodio during his sojourn, on his return from ḥājj. Whatever Ahmadu's reason in retreating to Nigeria, it did not pay off as he ultimately lost his life at Dusten Kura (the hyena's hill) somewhere in the territory of Kebbi. 'Umar could not hide his sympathy for him in these verses of lamentation, as he prays for mercy for his martyred soul. Note how he emphasizes Ahmadu's nobility, a characteristic which 'Umar esteems greatly. By contrast 'Umar describes the brother Agibu as *kanen nāsa Agibu mai son sarauta*; literally this means "his brother Agibu who yearned for power." From 'Umar's words we can discern an attitude of censure for the brother's action in collaborating with Christians against his brother simply because he desired worldly power. Surely 'Umar is not alone in criticizing acts of Africans' collaboration with Europeans during the colonial conquest as a disservice to the African cause. It was what, these critics argued, weakened Africa's resistance to colonialism. Others, however, disagree and declare that collaboration should be considered as another viable

²¹⁶ Literally "hill of hyenas" situated in Kebbi.

strategy adopted by Africans to contain and diffuse colonial violence towards Africans which could have been worse.

From verse 22 to 33 'Umar's narrative lens focuses now on the Northern part of the Gold Coast (Ghana). The first group of people he would consider are the Zabarma overlords who had migrated from Niger in the early parts of the nineteenth century and succeeded in imposing themselves by force of arms over Gurunshi ethnic groups in the north of the Gold Coast (Ghana). According to 'Umar,

23. The Zabarma in the land of Gurunshi were powerful warriors
No one could challenge them, except the Christians!
24. Amariya created a furor out of sheer ingratitude.
He engaged them in war; there were then no Christians.
25. [And then he heard about the French
And soon he bestowed to the Christians.]
26. They (his people) complained that he has mocked them; they have had enough
Of his war, and he aligned himself with Christians.
27. It was then that he betrayed them; they (his people) were being killed.
Evil firearms are possessed by the Christians!
28. [Alas! Fighting against loaded guns was unknown!
Hell is filled in the Christian gun!]
29. It was then that they were invaded (by night). They were being killed.
Devilish firearms are possessed by the Christians!
30. And then their warlord Ali was killed.
[Know that Christian shooting does not miss (its target).]
31. The Zabarma troops had already decamped;
Some of them travelled to the southern lands.
32. Know that their leaders returned to Dagomba land,
In Yendi where the German Christians were.

Weiss (2008, 123) provides a vivid historical account of the Zabarma activities in the northern Gold Coast before and during the colonial conquest. According to him,

A distinctive feature of Zabarma activity was its military nature which, in the end, was based on a simple equation: to get slaves to trade for guns, ammunition and horses. Thus what came into existence in about 1870 was a typical, 'predatory' state, where an equestrian community was able to sow terror and fear over a large territory but was unable to transform itself from a destructive to a constructive, consolidating force. Especially the last leader, Babatu, was to be known as the "Ruler of the Gurunshi" – admired by Muslims but feared by non-Muslims.

As Weiss had indicated the activities of the Zabarma warlords in the region created a great deal of anxiety for the indigenous ethnic groups. Babatu's predatory activities especially were so ruthless and insensitive that even Muslims were not spared from his atrocities. A case often cited in this regards was his merciless onslaught against the Wa Muslims in 1887.

Weiss describes the event as a "disaster for the Wala state." According to him when the Zabarama warriors launched their attack,

The Wala army fled, the Wa Na committed suicide, Wa was taken, its mosque was burned down and its leading Muslims were executed for treachery; Nasa [another town within the Wala state] was pillaged, its mosque destroyed and the town never regained its earlier position. The area was put under military occupation for over a year. (130)

It is this demonstration of insensitive destructive power exercised by the Zabarma warriors that 'Umar depicts as almost invincible; there seemed to be no one who could challenge them until they came face to face with the Europeans. As has already been pointed out, the Gurunshi (who consisted of various ethnicities) were those most affected by these rapacious activities of the Zabarama warlords. But what is true with respect to any tyrannical rule is that it nurtures the seeds of its own annihilation. Over time the Gurinshi grew weary of this tyranny and soon rebellion built around one of their chiefs called Amariya. Seizing the opportunity of the Europeans (who also saw the Zabarma as threat to their cause), Amariya

allied with them in a bid to throw the Zabarma yoke off their shoulders once and for all.

Weiss (2008, 131 - 132) narrates how the Zabarma tyranny was finally brought to an end by these allies.

Babatu and the Zabarma state was already a problem for the British, and the advent of Samori's troops made the situation even more complicated from a British perspective. The French ... had signed a treaty with Amariya, and were in any case the sworn arch enemies of Samori. ... The British made treaties with Tumu, Dolbizan, Gworu, Sankana and Achillon, all of whom requested protection against the Zabarma. Thereafter, the British commander, Lieutenant Henderson, moved against Babatu and ordered him out of 'Grunshi' and Dagarti. Babatu who was defeated by the French and their 'Grunshi' allies at Yaro and Kanjaga. ... Babatu's opportunities for manoeuvring in the northwestern Voltaic Basin were lost: the foundations of his state had crumpled.

The historical accounts of the Zabarma activities in relation to colonial conquest and occupation across Africa, like those of Samori and Chaka the Zulu, are problematic to assess with unambiguous critical objectivity. And this in my view sometimes complicates the agenda of postcolonial criticism and renders it vulnerable to opacity in judgment. Despite the iniquity and tyrannous rule of some of our precolonial rulers (which is absolutely condemnable) their role in resisting foreign occupation is laudable and worthy of remembrance. What makes matters even more complicated is when their resistance role is examined in parallel to those of Africans like Amariya and Agibu, who (as pointed out above) have been branded by some critics with the pejorative label of "collaborators." Ultimately, the final judge of any historical event will always remain its posterity. And by nature historical judgments are based on "circumstantial evidence," liable to varying interpretations. The negative narratives of the European colonial invasion of Africa will not be forgotten, just as its positive narratives would also remain "traces" and supplements" to challenge their claims.

It is interesting to draw attention to some relevant signifiers that 'Umar's narrative discourse presents that help understand some of the historical realities of the encounter between Europeans and Africans during the invasions. It is a fact that Europeans' possession of superior advanced weaponry played a major role in giving an upper hand in their fight against Africans. Although some of these weapons had already been imported into Africa and were indeed being used by some of the African troops (such as Samori, Babatu, Alḥājj 'Umar Tall, etc.), most Africans had had little direct experience with these weapons and their devastating impact. 'Umar quite often remarks on this and points to the effectiveness of European weaponry while at the same time he depicts Africans' vulnerability and ignorant exposure to them. This is what we see 'Umar express when he says,

26. It was then that he betrayed them; they (his people) were being killed.
Evil firearms are possessed by the Christians!

27. [Alas! Fighting against loaded guns was unknown!
Hell is filled in the Christian gun!]

In the following account 'Umar describes a series of encounters between Europeans and Africans. These are the Gurma and Borgou (various ethnic groups located in former territories of Burkina Faso, Niger, Togo, Benin and Ghana, before the arrival of Europeans).

33. There was Garju, a prince of Gurma;
He behaved insolently towards the Christians

34. When he prepared to assault (them) with a spear ...
Hold it! You really think you will reach the Christians?

35. There and then a gunshot pierced through Garju.
He died instantly; that is the action of the Christians.

36. Now, not so fast! Have you heard how they entered Kandi?
In truth, the Christians have the guts!

37. And so, Saka got prepared, [claiming] he was going to attack;

- It was his brains that they blew out, the Christians!
38. The crowd instantly dispersed, everybody screaming:
 “Take shelter now, here are the Christians”!
39. Believe me, Saka, son of Kutu, was truly a brave man.
 He used to claim that no one could challenge him, even the Christians.
40. When he prepared for battle, he met them face to face.
 It is a frightening thing, to face off with the Christians.
41. Instantly, there and then, he was knocked down flat,
 And soon the people of Borgou were declaring that they have submitted to the
 Christians.

As pointed before, ‘Umar’s narrative account in this *qaṣīdah* is presented from a different perspective in contrast to the second *qaṣīdah*. Indeed what makes ‘these narratives interesting and still relevant (despite their unity of themes and motifs) is the varying perspectives from which ‘Umar presents them. Almost the same events and episodes are depicted in both *qaṣīdahs*. But at each time the emphases ‘Umar accords to them vary in correspondence to the underlying purpose and literary effects he wants to achieve. This is what we observe for instance in his portrayal of Garju’s heroism. In *Nazm al-la’āli*, the Gurma prince warrior Garju had earned ‘Umar’s praise and empathy for his single-handed act of valor and for demonstrating a true act of heroism when the Europeans attacked his ethnic group. He went on to project him as an exemplary hero,

62. That is how honorable men should behave,
 When they descend, he should die without illness²¹⁷ [not in vain].

In the present narrative, however, ‘Umar presents him in a different light. It is his lack of prudence that he underlines. He says, *yā yi tsaurin ido*. Literally this makes reference to an

²¹⁷ Arab warriors prefer death on the battle field than dying on sick bed.

act irrationally executed, as if it is the eye, *ido* that motivated the action. Thus as soon as the eye saw, it followed immediately, *da tsauro* (quickly/hastily), by taking action, without any due deliberation of its consequences. In this regard, 'Umar is being critical in revealing (and as we shall also see in subsequent scenarios as well) the weaknesses of Africans' responses in the face of the better equipped European armies. Obviously he does not see any purpose in suicidal acts of foolhardiness. For why should a sensible person, without adequate preparedness and effective weapons, rush to attack a force armed with machine guns and rifles? He would only be throwing himself in the mouth of death. These statements reveal a deep realism in 'Umar's attitude towards European invasion. In fact what really makes this qaṣīdah's narrative distinct from the rest is the realism in 'Umar's attitude that it reveals. What has transformed 'Umar psychologically is probably the opportunity of witnessing, throughout a period of almost eight years, the effectiveness of European weaponry in attaining its target from long range. 'Umar couples this narrative with that of another African warrior: Saka from the Borgou ethnic group of Kandi. In an analogous situation to that of Garju, 'Umar describes Saka's prowess as a skilled warrior who had believed in his own invincibility. His high mindedness could not brook the idea of any rival above him. 'Umar says, even the Christians were considered insignificant in Saka's mind. It is significant that 'Umar first depicts Saka as supercilious and arrogant in order to understand his act of temerity which inevitably hastens his death. His death is described horribly as *Kukulwā sunka halba mai*, literally, it was his brains that they shot out. The imagery underlines the heinous nature of colonial acts of violation towards Africans. In the second qaṣīdah, 'Umar had underlined Europeans' antipathy towards Africans describing them as insensitive and callous towards their victims.

82. They did not care about killing anyone;
It was for them like killing wild ass.

Saka's death resulted in the total surrender of his group as they came to realize the folly of continuous resistance.

'Umar's narrative now shifts back to caliphal territory in northern Nigeria, specifically at Nupe.

42. When they arrived in the land of Nupe, [saying] we have come to rule,
Our Abubakar declined to surrender to the Christians.
43. At once he managed to kill one of them,
But then, it did not augur well killing a Christian.
44. They soon withdrew and organized themselves.
It was not good a thing, the coming of the Christians.
45. Unwillingly he moved out and left his town.
He kept running as they chased him, the Christians.
46. He appeared like a hare half-caught in a trap [trying to escape]
As they raced, [he and] the Christians.
47. Meanwhile the crowd dispersed and all scattered out.
Only a few remained. Be sensible, o Christians!
48. They kept chasing until they took him prisoner.
Be reasonable! How could he resist the Christians!
49. It was in Lokoja that they finally came face to face.
Up until his death he kept fighting the Christians.

The caliphate established by 'Uthman dan Fodio from the beginning of the nineteenth century, had expanded southwards to the lands of Nupe. In the last decade of the century, the reigning ruler was Abubakar. He was carried away by religious zealotry and hampered the Europeans from advancing into his territory. Abubakar, 'Umar says, *yā ki biyan Nassārā*,

he refused to submit to the Europeans. He even had the audacity to kill one of the European men to prove his point. But as 'Umar points out, that was a very bad decision to make. "*Ashe dai bābu kyau a kashe Nassārā,*" (But then, it did not augur well killing a Christian). It did not take long for Abubakar to realize his unwise decision, for the Europeans soon counterattacked and defeated the Nupe warriors. Their leader Abubakar took to his heels hotly chased by the Europeans. 'Umar depicts the chase as:

Shinā ta gudu sunā binai Nassārā
Kaman zomo da kūba anā ganinsu
(He was running away, being pursued by the Europeans.
They appeared like a hare locked in a trap being pursued)

The imagery here evokes the motif of hunting, which, as we have already pointed out, represents symbolically the Europeans' conquest of Africans. For we have noted that 'Umar often presents Africans in animal imagery and the Europeans "hunting them down" to kill. The hare is a common animal often hunted or caught in traps for their meat in this area of West Africa. Abubakar is depicted as a hare whose feet were caught in a trap. When the hunters approached, it began running trying to escape while they raced after it to catch it. The scenario is profoundly dramatic. One could imagine, on one hand, hungry hunters who would not like to be denied the prospect of a delicious meal exerting every effort to catch their prey. On the other hand, an animal is caught between life and death, exerting all its energy to remain alive. Abubakar knew quite well the fate that awaited him if he was caught; the Europeans, for their part, could not allow an African to go free after killing one of them. Furthermore, allowing the death of their colleague to go unavenged would send the wrong signals to other Africans who might be emboldened to follow Abubakar's example. It was therefore crucial that they send a message by punishing Abubakar as a deterrent to any future rebellion. When they finally caught up with him in Lokoja, they attained their aim by

avenging their colleague and setting a precedence for those who would dare. 'Umar then describes the futility of Abubakar's escape for, he says, "Be reasonable! How could he resist the Christians!"

'Umar's narrative then shifts, one more, back to the Gold Coast (Ghana). The description focuses on the encounter between the tribe of Dagomba and the Germans:

50. Keep calm! Have you heard about the Germans in Adigbo?
Where the Dagombas encountered the Christians!
51. Their chief rifleman was not a coward.
He had killed a Christian before they took his life.
52. The Dagombas are brave and true warriors.
They had assaulted a German among the Christians.
53. After they killed many Dagombas
They continued to Yendi, the Christians.
54. [Know (however) that they did not tarry there], in Yendi.
They live an inconstant life; the Christians.
55. And as soon as the bugler sounds, they set out on their way.
Imagine this reasoning: Christian wisdom
56. The Dagomba were holding meeting at Zongo.
They captured the Yarima of Yendi, the Christians.
57. There and then they killed him; blind though he was.
Then the gathering dispersed due to the Christians.
58. At first they were preparing to fight one another
But soon they reconciled to oppose the Christians.
59. The pagans of Tasi challenged the Christians,
And Mister Graf was a tall Christian.
60. With just few weapons, they (Christians) crushed them all.
Then they dispersed and cried out, "Woe, the Christians!"

In his previous qaṣīdah 'Umar had presented a similar scenario of the encounter between the Germans and Dagomba. At this time the Germans were anxious to secure this territory into their possession, as both English and French were also contesting it. Each of them had embarked on diplomatic maneuvers to acquire official ratification from the local chiefs. The people of the area, (dominated by Dagomba and Gonja) however, were embroiled in internal disputes that put this enterprise into serious jeopardy. While the English were content in abiding their time, the Germans felt they needed to take matters into their own hands to insure their success. Both the Dagomba and Gonja were ruthlessly assaulted and forced into submission.²¹⁸ Let us note here as elsewhere that 'Umar's focus on the main converges on ethnic resistance to the conquest and how Europeans responded to it. As in the previous episode at Nupe, the Dagomba also attracted the Germans' wrath by killing one of their men. The Germans response was to ransack Dagomba towns and vent their spleen on them. But note how 'Umar stresses the fact that Dagomba had to set their internal disputes aside to unite against the Germans when they were confronted, although as 'Umar goes on to show, that did not avail them as the Germans overcame them and occupied the land. In a similar vein the Germans were also responsible for subduing the people of Tasi who, 'Umar says, were defeated with just a few men and weapons. This brings an end to yet another African traditional independent polity.

The above narration is followed closely by an account of Yaa Asantewaa's historic mobilization of Ashanti men and women to besiege the British fort at Kumasi in 1900. This episode has already been alluded to at the beginning of this analysis. The emphasis at this juncture, however, seems to be 'Umar's desire to project the bravery of a legendary African

²¹⁸ See Holger Weiss, chapter three as well as Levtzion, 1968.

woman. There is a certain general belief in modern scholarship that in precolonial African societies (like all human societies for that matter) women most often played passive role with respect to political matters of state; they were hardly expected to contribute actively in such affairs of crucial import as war. It is a belief, however, which seems in my opinion, to have been mainly fostered by a Western pre-modern perception of women that in turn has become predominant in the postcolonial cultures. It is undeniable that women, in addition to their roles as mothers and wives, have always been conspicuous in African societies as cultivators (of land and culture), counselors, warriors, queens and queen mothers. There were women warriors, for instance, in Dahomey kingdom of West Africa, known famously as the Amazonians of Dahomey, whose courage and bravery was comparable to that of men. Moreover, the woman remains up to today the symbolic source of ethnic vitality in matrilineal societies such as the Ashanti. Yaa Asantewaa's prominent presence in 'Umar's narrative can be interpreted as recognition of women's role as vital sources of masculine potentiality. In effect she is the only female actress in this colonial narrative drama. But is it not evident that even though she stands alone among this list of African male warriors and leaders, her actions nevertheless outshine those of most of her male co-actors?

Our next narrative scenario relates to the historic encounter between the colonial forces and the Magaji of Keffi in Northern Nigeria.

73. The Magaji²¹⁹ of *Keffi* was a true warrior.
He claimed no one could stop him, even the Christians.

74. He killed an official of high rank
And he was vaunting of having killed a Christian.

75. It was then that they chased him out of his land.

²¹⁹ Warlord.

- He was running away trying to escape from the Christians.
76. And soon enough his troop dispersed all together.
He was reduced to loneliness because of the Christians.
77. He was crossing the millet-fields hoping to escape
And reach territories devoid of Christians.
78. It was in a cemetery that he died, there in Jarwal,
When he met our lord, the forgiving Lord.

This narrative falls within the scope a number of colonial conquest narratives in ‘Umar’s qaṣīdah that seem to constitute a common pattern.²²⁰ We are here referring to those narratives which describe the European assaults on African ethnic groups in consequence of the death of a European claimed to have been caused by Africans. Those cases already alluded to include: Saka, the Borgou leader, Abubakar, the emir of Nupe and the Dagomba in the Gold Coast (Ghana). In all these cases, as ‘Umar mentioned, Europeans’ response had been a decisive and bloody onslaught upon African communities. The pattern seemed to reiterate itself in the northern Nigerian Town of Zaria. The town constituted one of the sub-divisions of the Hausa Fulani Caliphate, headed by an Emir. According to Pilaszewicz, “Magāji was the representative of the Emir of Zaria and the most influential member of the king[‘s] court in Keffi.”²²¹ And in a like manner, ‘Umar initially presents the Magaji as a brave African warrior who thought that no one could challenge him. And like all the other African warriors

²²⁰ According to John Lonsdale, “African military resistance invited defeat and dismemberment, ...” (744) from “The European Scramble and Conquest in African History” in *The New Cambridge History of Africa* 6, J. D. Fage and Roland Oliver (Eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 680 – 766.

²²¹ Stanislaw Pilaszewicz, “The Arrival of the Christians”: A Hausa Poem on the Colonial Conquest of West Africa by Alḥāji ‘Umaru’ in *Africana Bulletin* [Warsaw] 22 (1975), 77 n. 35; Johnston has indicated that it was the British Resident officer Captain Melloney who was treacherously murdered by the Magaji and his men on the 3rd of October, 1902. Lord Lugard then sent after him and he was finally caught and killed in Kano where he took refuge. See H. A S. Johnston, *The Fulani Empire of Sokoto*. (London: Oxford UP, 1967) 187 – 188.

who considered themselves unbeatable, he went to kill a European and vaunted his exploit. What followed was the logical closure to the syllogism, its expected clause of conclusion: he saw danger coming, he tried to escape, he was chased, caught and was killed. 'Umar had declared elsewhere that "*ashe bayā da kyau kasha an-Naṣārā*," it is not good/advisable/appropriate/prudent to kill a Christian. Obviously it is a lesson that up to now our African heroes have not yet come to understand as 'Umar did.

The next episode depicts an analogous narrative to those we have just examined. This time it unfolds in Zinder, a Hausa Muslim locality situated in mid-southern Niger, very close to the Nigerian border. 'Umar says,

79. In Zinder, Jinjir has indeed committed an outrage
When he behaved senselessly by killing a Christian.
80. Hell! He had killed a prominent Frenchman,
Sacrefou's very younger brother, the Christian warlord.
81. Thereupon *Sacrefou* closed in with soldiers
Made up of huge battalions of Christians.
82. But Ahmadu Jinjiri went to confront them ...
It was not a good idea confronting the Christians!
83. It was there that Jinjiri died a martyr's death.
Then they went on to kill people, the Christians!
84. Thereupon they took control of cities and villages.
Within Zinder there is no authority today apart from Christians.

The circumstances that led to this clash is presented by Pilaszewicz as follows: "Jinjiri [was] a nickname of Amadu Kuren Daga, the Sultan of Damagaram. On 5 May, 1898 two French officers, Cazemajou and Olive, leading the Mission du Haut-Soudan, had been

deceitfully murdered when returning from a visit paid to Sultan Amadu.”²²² It is not clear what transpired thereafter; neither did any record of the incident indicate Sultan Amadu’s implication in this crime. But as a leader of his people, experience has shown, he could easily be considered the prime suspect and subsequently pursued for revenge by the French. Jinjiri was eventually captured in a village called Roumji, where he took refuge, and was summarily killed on the fifteenth of September 1899.²²³ Evidently ‘Umar does not condone such hasty acts of irrational behavior, as we have witnessed across his narrative. In this regard he reiterates, “*A bin nan bai kyau ba gamon Naṣārā,*” it is not a good thing/safe to meet/encounter/challenge a Christian. Sultan Amadu’s imprudence, like all other African leaders who ‘Umar alluded to, had contributed in no small measure towards European eventual occupation and control of Africa and its people.

In a similar episode narrated by ‘Umar here, the British were forced to invade another Nigerian town and vented their wrath upon them.

85. There were some pagans, who were known as Munche
Who maneuvered stealthily and killed Christians.

86. At that moment the Christians turned back
Know that indeed death always accompanies the Christians

87. And learn that the Christian battle-line knows no retreat.
Birds then began rejoicing as well as hyenas.

Again Pilaszewicz provides us with the historical background to this encounter. He states that “Early in 1901 a British expedition against the powerful Munshi tribe on the north bank of the Benue river was dispatched to punish that people for an attack launched by them on a party constructing the telegraph line from Lokoja to Ibi.” The Munshi ethnic group, known

²²² Pilaszewicz, 1975, 79 n.38.

²²³ Pilaszewicz, 1975, 79 n. 39.

also as Tiv,²²⁴ is situated across the contemporary Nigerian States of Benue, Plateau and Taraba around the southeast. Islam has not had any significant influence on them. The action of the Munshi parallels those we have already examined and depicts a sad scenario of Africans' lack of deliberation during the European conquest. For as 'Umar has been pointing out all along, confronting the Europeans was suicidal and only people who have not witnessed their capability would dare offend them. Death, 'Umar declares, accompanies them wherever they go. And that is why when the predatory birds and animals notice their presence, they began to rejoice. The image of predatory animals accompanying the Europeans depicts their viciousness and insensitive brutality during their colonial conquest of Africa. 'Umar has repeatedly alluded to this in his narrative especially in his second qaṣīdah.

When Magaji was killed (the incident which 'Umar narrated to us previously), the British turned to the Emir of Zaria himself, Emir Kwassau. As usual 'Umar begins presenting our hero by describing his courage and indisputable power. His fame has spread across the land and no one would be foolhardy enough to challenge him, except, as 'Umar says, the Christians.

88. Where is Kwassau of Zazzaw, the valiant one!
No one could dare challenge him except the Christians.
89. It was here that he was captured and subjected to public humiliation.
They pilloried him; how come o Christians?
90. It was there in Lokoja that Kwassau had passed away.
What shall we say concerning the Christians rule?
91. O God, grant him a peaceful abode!
Let him dwell in blessings and drink from pure springs!

²²⁴ See O. Temple and C. L. Temple, *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates, and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967).

Death, as 'Umar has been cautioning, was a constant companion of the European army. Thus even Kwassau's fame could not avail him against them. 'Umar introduces a new element of colonial cruelty for the first time in his narrative: public humiliation of their victims. Death, in whatever painful manner it is executed for traditional warriors, such as those we are witnessing in 'Umar's narrative, was preferable to public pillory. For shame is a moral stain that remains forever attached to a person's body, and will even tarnish his descendants. Such acts of moral degradation are therefore hardly resorted to by merciful adversaries. It is therefore significant to underline this perspective of moral criticism that 'Umar's narrative evokes regarding colonial conduct in Africa. One cannot but wonder whether some of these acts of violence were not motivated by racism. 'Umar could not conceal his utter disappointment at these acts of violence towards African leaders and warriors, especially as they concern aristocracy. He interjects, "*anā wada, zā mu ce muku an-Naṣārā?*" (What can we possibly say to you, o Christians?)

'Umar's next narrative episode comes closest to his heart, as ethnically this is where his ancestors hail from. Although his father would spend most of his life in Kano (where 'Umar was born), Kebbi would always constitute "home" as long as Kabāwā (sing. Bakane) are concerned. Pilaszewicz relates that "Sama dan Nabame (Samaila), the son of Yakubu Nabame, was the ruler of Kebbi in the years 1883-1915." His rule covers the entire period we might term as "the conquest of Africa."²²⁵ It corresponds also to the scope of 'Umar triadic poetic narrative: 1899, 1900, 1906/7.

92. Where is the Kebbi ruler, Sama son of Nabame?
He has kept silent, observing the Christians.

²²⁵ See also Johnston, 1967.

93. The Kebbi people cried out to him, “Oh! Let us prepare [for war]
Let us unite and crush all the Christians!”
94. He responded: “I am not going to behave irrationally, Oh people of Kebbi
And take you to be slaughtered before the Christians.
95. Know that Sama does not play farce or fraud.
He shall remain totally upright even towards Christians.”
96. [Sama acted wisely and people were saved.
He served as Kebbi’s gatekeeper for the Christians.]

Sama dan Nabame, the Kebbi ruler, is presented as a remarkable leader whose conduct contrasts diametrically from all leaders so far mentioned by ‘Umar in his narrative. He is the symbol of the sagacious leader whose deliberative actions manifest wisdom and foresight. He has learned his lesson well by careful observation of his political and social environs, a philosophical stance worthy of a Platonic Philosopher leader. ‘Umar presents him as the contemplative “*fa yā yi kurum, shinā kalon Naṣārā,*” he kept silent watching the Christians. ‘Umar contrasts his stance with that of his subjects. Caught in the frenzy of surrounding events, the people began agitating for action. Everyone is champion before the fray but true and genuine champions emerge only at the end. The crowd is always swayed by emotional contagion and few will stop to weigh the odds. This is true especially when a people’s honor is challenged as Africans felt in the face of European assaults. In response to his people’s goading to fight, Sama wisely declines pointing to the foolhardiness of such undertaking which would without any doubt result in their slaughter by the Europeans, just as it has to those around them who did not heed the warnings boldly carried by outcomes of such impetuous sallies. Sama is not only wise, but ‘Umar depicts him also as honest and upright king. He would not change this ethos even regarding Christians whose religious belief goes contrary to his, and above all whose injustice and moral bankruptcy he could clearly attest to.

Sama's wise action has saved the Kabāwā from harm and also preserved their dignity. In my opinion, 'Umar uses the persona of Sama to represent the apotheosis of the kind of leadership he was expecting Africans to adopt vis-à-vis the threat of European colonial invasion towards the beginning of the twentieth century that is, when he came to understand the military capacity of European power and their lack of ethical empathy towards Africans. In fact 'Umar demonstrates that there is wisdom and greater advantage in Sama's conduct as he goes on to indicate that he not only retained his power and kingship, but he also earned the trust of his adversaries to such extent that they appointed him their "gatekeeper." In this connection, we cannot but revisit our previous deliberation regarding how colonial collaborators have been judged over time. Could Sama be described as "colonial collaborator?" If the answer to this question is yes, then probably our poet was also a collaborator and was advocating a collaborative stance during colonialism.

It would not be wrong to consider 'Umar's account of Sama's exemplary conduct as the climax of his narrative. For we are soon led back to our pattern of reckless leaders who brought the wrath of Europeans upon them and their people and consequently lost both freedom and territory forever in the bargain.

97. The people of Abuja made the mistake and confronted them.
They were vaunting that they would kill Christians.

98. When they gathered, they lurked behind the hills:
There is foolishness in the one who confronts the Christians

99. Upon arrival the Christians fell in battle lines
And soon they shouted: "Fire," in the Christian language.

100. Anguish soon engulfed the mountains.
Smoke rose high from the action of the Christians.

101. The people of Abuja turned and took to their heels.

They kept running, crying: “Oh, Christians!”

102. There are some people of the Kunkuru tribe, there in Maradi.
Ask them [what they know] concerning the Christians.

103. When they challenged them, they realized they had no chance.
There and then, they submitted and surrendered to the Christians!

In the above verses ‘Umar describes the encounter between the Emirate of Abuja and the Europeans. European assault and brutal acts of vengeance upon audacious ethnicities for their insolence and disrespect would by now have been carried to far and near towns and localities. According to ‘Umar, it was a panic-stricken Abuja folks who had gathered outside their town to confront the British. As we could expect at this stage, verbal displays of courage through vaunts and empty boasts were thrown about. When the real combat began, however, it became obvious that “actions were louder than words.” As ‘Umar keeps on reminding us “*akwai wawtā ga mai tarbon Naṣārā,*” (there is foolishness in the one who confronts/challenges the Christians). The truth of this statement soon became evident as the people’s threats and boasts turned into cries of woe and lament. One would imagine at this juncture how ‘Umar could be wondering when Africans would come to heed his warnings and save their lives. They should have asked the Kunkuru of Maradi how grievously they came to learn their lesson, ‘Umar scoffs.

The people of Gobir are the subject of ‘Umar’s next narrative sequel. Note how he begins mentioning the Gobir leaders sequentially evoking the musical formulaic of the Hausa *kirāri*, praise. There is a tendency on ‘Umar’s part to sometimes eulogize characters for their outstanding social status, courage and heroism, as we have observed. ‘Umar distinguishes the Gobir leaders by their courage and hot-temper. But despite these seemingly outstanding distinctions they could not withstand the Europeans’ attack. This is because, as ‘Umar points

out, their traditional weapons could not reach the Europeans from long range whose guns, on the other hand, could effectively reach their targets from distances away. So 'Umar says:

104. Where are the children of Babari and Soba,
Bawa, and dan Gudi who surpasses all equals?
105. Know that the Gobir people are brave men and valiant warriors
But for all their valor they avoided the Christians.
106. When they challenged them, they realized they were too strong for them.
Such weapons could not reach the Christians.
107. Their weapons, however, could strike at us
Although it is from afar that they aim, these Christians.
108. [So the Gobir people] said: "Brothers, note that
Our fight with them is difficult, these Christians."
109. They soon surrendered and became reconciled.
Today they have come under Christian rule.

This incident also demonstrates that it was not all African leaders who went ahead to confront Europeans without prior deliberation of the consequences. The Gobirāwā were wise in first assessing their battle strategy in order to ascertain the possibility of their success. When they understood how impossible it was for them to win this battle, they instantly withdrew and surrendered to the Europeans, thus becoming part of European colony.

We need not linger on the narrative of Rabeḥ, which has been exhaustively recounted by 'Umar in his second qaṣīdah. Rabeḥ was one of those precolonial warriors whose acts of vandalism earned them immense animosity and hatred across Africa even before the European advent. His slave raids and banditry spread fear and terror through the northern territories of Nigeria which were dominated once by the enlightened Borno Emirate. His reputation (like those of other slave raiders such as Samory and Babatu in the West) made

him unpopular among Africans and his defeat and death in the hands of the Europeans did not attract much sympathy. It could rather be considered a good riddance as it brought peace and security to the people of the region. And as we have already pointed out 'Umar "sheds" no tears over such deaths, as he is wont to do in the case of other Muslim leaders and warriors, in spite of the fact that Rabeh was claimed to be a Muslim fighter.

Next, 'Umar shifts his narrative to the rulers of Kontagora. Kontagora was a dependency of the Sultanate of Sokoto and its rulers were related in blood to the Sultans of Sokoto long before the arrival of the Europeans. Nagwamatse was their patronym. In the wake of the European colonial campaigns, the reigning sultan was the direct grandson of 'Uthman dan Fodio, the founder of the Sokoto caliphate in 1809.

114. And then the grandson of Shehu, the ruler of Kontagora
His father was Nagwamatse, who loved good tidings.

115. Everybody benefited from his father's [generosity]
Men, women, the elderly, as well as children

116. [He was the son of Atiku, Bello's younger brother
Rulers of Hausa land, when Christians were not here

117. Nagwamatse is now dead; (now they are here)
He was waging his wars, Christians were not here.]

118. Then they put him in fear, and forced him to flee from his land
He kept running with Christians in pursuit

119. It was in this manner that they captured him, there in Maska;
Then they paraded him around; the Christians fancy!

120. But then after they said to him "Return to your land!
We shall set you free". Thus you see the coming of the Christian!

121. [There was Murda, true believer, who loved Muslim creed
Warlord of the town of Sada who fails not to settle scores

122. During the battle of Kontagora he fought like a bull

They had it tough with him, the Christians

The attack on the rulers of Kantagora announces the beginning of European assault on the Hausa-Fulani Muslim political realm. From 'Umar's perspective, this assault on the caliphate marks the beginning of the apocalypse. His narrative has drifted in a desultory manner all across the African territories, as if he is on a quest for substantive data to confirm his fears. We have indeed arrived at the climax of 'Umar's expositon. The narrative assumes a critical moment as it converges thematically on territories situated in the northern part of Nigeria that constitute the entire political realm of Hausa-Fulani Caliphate established by 'Uthman dan Fodio and his family at the beginning of the nineteenth century. 'Uthman dan Fodio was a Fulani scholar who became influenced by the teachings of one of his highly admired teachers, Jibril b. 'Umar, a Tuareg of the Saharan city of Agadez, in northern Niger. He ultimately embarked upon a jihād to implement what he theoretically expressed in his theological *magnum opus* entitled *Ihyā'u al-Sunnah wa 'Ikhmādu al-Bid'ah*. From 1804 when the jihād was effectively launched to the death of dan Fodio in 1817, the jihādists were able to conquer all traditional Hausa territory and established an empire that was described as the second largest Sudanic Empire to emerge since the collapse of the Songhai Empire in 1591.²²⁶ At its zenith, it stretched from Dori (in present-day Burkina Faso) in the West to Adamawa and the Benue River valley and the Southeast up to Yorubalands of Ilorin in the South. Before his death 'Uthman dan Fodio had divided the territorial control of this vast realm between his brother, Abdullah, and his son, Muhammad Bello. Sokoto became the official seat of the Sultanate with Muhammad Bello as the succeeding Sultan after his father and 'Uthman's brother took control of the second division of the Caliphate with Gwandu (in

²²⁶Toyin falola and Ann Genova, *Historical Dictionary of Nigeria* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 2009), 331.

Kebbi) as its center. In addition thirty emirates²²⁷ were established by the mid-nineteenth century, all of whom owed direct allegiance to the Sultan of Sokoto. Some of the most prominent emirates besides Gwandu and Sokoto included Kano, Kontagora, Ilorin, Bauchi, Zazzau, Katsina, Gombe and Hadeija. Before the European colonial intervention, the Hausa-Fulani dynastic rule had not fully consolidated its power over the disparate regions of its empire, where local age-old conflicts and disputes remained obstacles to peace and harmony. Furthermore internal power struggles, which had constantly bedeviled smooth transitions of power among 'Uthman's successors, also contributed to weakening the Sultanate's hold on its political realm. These were some of the fault-lines which partly facilitated the Europeans' gradual conquest and occupation of the Caliphal realm by the end of 1903.²²⁸ We shall analyze these various narratives as one theme constituting the final fall of the Hausa-Fulani Caliphate of which they consist.

'Umar's narrative does not follow the accurate chronological sequence of how these events unfolded in time. He allows his poetic muse the freedom of structuring his tale. As we have seen, he begins with the fall of Kontagora (verses 114 – 122). This emirate was established by one of dan Fodio's grand-children, Umaru Nagwamatse, who apparently felt sidelined by his ruling family and decided to seek out his own destiny elsewhere. He eventually conquered the lands of Yauri and established his own emirate at the town of Kontagora in 1864. As a result the Sultan of Sokoto would crown him *Sarkin Sudan* (King of the Blacks) in 1859. He died in 1867 and bequeathed his throne to his son Ibrahim Nagwamatse, who would reign from 1880 until 1901, when his clash with the British, which 'Umar chronicles here, temporarily brought him to the brink of fall. In fact, Ibrahim's

²²⁷ Toyin Falola and Ann Genova, 2009, 331.

²²⁸ See Johnston, 1967, Chapter Seventeen: "Cracks in the Edifice", 138 144.

confrontation with the British was indirectly motivated. In 1899, he invaded the territory of the Emirate of Zaria and annexed the town of Gwari. This act of aggression compelled the Emir of Zaria to seek British assistance who did not hesitate to attack Kontagora and occupy it in 1901. Ibrahim Nagwamatse was kept in sequestration until 1903 when he was released and reinstated on his throne.²²⁹ This incident attests to what we have pointed out above regarding the internal discords within the Caliphal realm that partly precipitated its fall.

ʿUmar now shifts to the next emirate and quickly dispensed with it in two verses: 123 and 124. He says,

123. There was our Umaru, son of Salmanu of Bauchi -
They captured him at Yarba, the Christians!

124. No one knew what offense he had committed against them.
Only God knows it, and they themselves the Christians.

Umaru Salmānu was the fourth Emir of Bauchi who reigned from 1883 until 1902 when he attracted the wrath of the European. He was attacked and imprisoned, like most unruly rulers, at Yarba. ʿUmar would not conceal his consternation at this apparent act of arbitrary power demonstrated by the Europeans. It is in similar manner that another ruler, Abubakari of Zaitakora, was also captured and held captive (verse 125). Note how ʿUmar conveys his anxiety at these shows of caprice from the Europeans as he says,

126. For sure we do not know the cause of their dispute;
Only Almighty God [knows] it, and the Christians themselves.

127. None of us knows the cause of his offense.
Only they know it, the Christian authorities.

He tries to find reasonable justifications for these acts, but fails, concluding,

²²⁹ Kontagora." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 11 Oct. 2013. <http://www.britannica.com/>); see also Johnston, 1967: 142 – 144; see also Muhammad Umar Sani, *Islam And Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British Colonial Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

132. For me I really do not know; they have indicated
That there is nothing forbidden for them, Christians!

'Umar is trying, at this point, to critically examine colonial use of force and seeks justification for it from perspectives of universal moral principles. He was a highly educated scholar who has not only studied Muslim jurisprudence and ethics, but we also know, from references he made in a number of poems, that he had some acquaintance with the ideas of philosophers such as Aristotle, Socrates and Spencer. Even if it might seem far-fetched to allege that he had read these philosophers' works, we can still assume with strong justification that he had had some knowledge about them through the vast Muslim literature he had perused.²³⁰ The conclusion he finally draws emphasizes the universal consensus that European colonial conduct had been inconsistent with its civilizing claims of adherence to universal principles of justice, tolerance, charity and promotion of high human virtues. This is almost the same accusations with which Aimee Césaire (2006, 11) indicted the West when he declared its civilization as decadent, sick and moribund. After enumerating horrid crimes perpetrated by Europeans across the world in their desire to dominate and control other peoples, Césaire concludes,

Pour ma part, si j'ai rappelé quelques détails de ces hideuses boucheries, ce n'est point par délectation morose, c'est parce que je pense que ces têtes d'hommes, ces récoltes d'oreilles, ces maisons brûlées, ces invasions gothiques, ce sang qui fume, ces villes qui s'évaporent au tranchant du glaive, on ne s'en débarrassera pas à si bon compte. Ils prouvent que la colonisation, je le répète, déshumanise l'homme même le plus civilisé; que l'action coloniale, l'entreprise coloniale, la conquête coloniale, fondée sur le mépris de l'homme indigène et justifiée par ce mépris, tend inévitablement à modifier celui qui l'entreprend; que le colonisateur qui, pour se donner bonne conscience, s'habitue à voir dans l'autre la bête, s'entraîne à le traiter en bête, tend objectivement à se transformer lui-même en bête. C'est cette action, ce choc en retour de la colonisation qu'il importait de signaler.

²³⁰ Indeed almost all the Europeans who had been acquainted with 'Umar during the colonial days, such as Mischlich, Ratray, Klauss and Duncan, have attested to his intelligence and erudition.

The various colonial violations across Africa which 'Umar describes in this narrative are echoed by Césaire in that epochal “discours.” It is true that 'Umar has not made reference to racism as a motif for European conduct towards Africans, in his narratives. This is an important point for us to note, for what it reveals is the fact that Africans, prior to colonialism, were not capable of discrimination from the basis of epidermal color. Racism was a concept that had no existential reality with regards to their philosophy of life. They were capable of perpetrating most ugly vices, like all human beings are wont to do. And in general they did not view slavery in the way our world has come to view it today. Indeed the very Europeans who later fought Africans against it were those who had developed it to its utmost degree of human depravity before self-guilt compelled them to a change of heart. It would by no means be justifiable to sell and buy one's own kind. Nevertheless, this change of heart had not mollified European conduct and racial apathy towards Africans; neither did values of “enlightenment,” religious feelings, nor universal sense of human fraternity hindered them from treating Africans in the most horrendous ways. In my view this is one of the lessons that we could derive from 'Umar's poetic narrative.

The emirate of Hadeija (verses 133 -135) had also for a long time been a predicament for the Hausa-Fulani Caliphate prior to colonialism. The relationship between the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emirs of Hadeija had been tense ever since Muhammadu Buhari Sambo's accession to the throne.²³¹ In fact Buhari had humiliated the Sultan by inflicting heavy damages to its forces during a number of clashes between them. According to Johnston (197, 142),

Buhari was never subdued and to the day of his death in 1863 he remained the scourge of his fellow Fulani. When he died Hadeija was, it is true, brought back into the Empire and reconciled to Sokoto. But the

²³¹ H. A. S. Johnston, 1967, Chapter Nine “The Consolidation of the Empire”.

damage that he had done lived on after him. The solidarity of the Empire, especially in the north-east, was shattered. Worse still, his evil genius had proved how easy it was for a determined ruler to defy the distant suzerain.

Buhari's rebellion had ended with his death and so had the strength of his emirates. His successors did not inherit his military acumen and strong personality. When the reigning Emir, Muhammadu dan Haru, tried to stand in the way of the British, he was soon disposed of and a stooge enthroned in his place. 'Umar contrasts his lack of tact and diplomacy with Sama who was able to save his throne and dignity by saying,

134. When he rebelled against them, he prepared for war
Because of (his) ignorance; he lacks knowledge of the Christians.

His recklessness like all the rest of the African rulers who confronted the Europeans brought his downfall and the fall of that powerful emirate established by his forefathers like Buhari.

In the next episode (verses 136 – 161), 'Umar describes the eventual fall of the seat of the Caliphate, Sokoto. The British had been attacking the territories of Caliphate from various sides, but most importantly from the South. These southern emirates succumbed one after another and were coerced into collaborating with the British. As Lonsdale attests,

Lugard was able to play upon divisions between and within the southern emirates to subdue them separately. In the final confrontation which Lugard provoked in 1903 the new caliph, Attahiru I, found no alternative to a hopeless battle, followed by a *hijra* which secured much support. Yet those Fulani who remained to collaborate with the conqueror found it possible to preserve the dominance, not only of the Muslim religion but of those conservative social forces in which it had become encapsulated.²³²

The reigning Sultan, Muhammad Attāhiru I. could not defend the political legacy bequeathed to him by his predecessors for not only has he lost the allegiance of his emirates, he also lacked the adequate war logistics to effectively confront the British troops. So he chose the

²³² J. D. Hargreaves, in *The Cambridge History of Africa* 6 (2008), 276.

only alternative opened to him, *hijra*. In fact it is alleged that dan Fodio had foretold the coming of the Christians and that when that moment arrived his people should migrate (*hajara*) towards the Sūdān. But Attāhiru was still able to mobilize a large faithful following en route of *hijra*, a situation which further alarmed the British who did not hesitate to take action. They pursued the Sultan and his following up to Burmi, a town close to Bauchi, where they besieged them and the Sultan together with many of his followers were killed. As `Umar laments,

159. It was there that they killed him, on Friday,
During prayer time; oh! Christians!

160. It was there that the head of Muslims was interred
As he died a martyr's death in the hands of the Christians

The Sokoto expedition was in fact prepared conjointly with that of the emirate of Kano. The two cities had always been viewed as symbolic centers of Hausa-Fulani political power. Their ultimate conquest would therefore give the British complete control of Shehu's former empire. In fact Johnston (1967) gives a detailed correspondence that was kept between the Sultan and the Emir of Kano as they continually kept assessing British maneuvers and contrivances to wrestle their empire from them. At this moment the two rulers were faced with the predicament of resistance or surrender to the menacing forces. This predicament was made more confounding by the intransigence of the '*Ulamā*' to sanction negotiations with *kuffār*, disbelievers, despite the fact that Quranic discourse presents '*Ahlu al-Kitāb*, especially Christians, as more genial towards Muslims. The Emir of Kano, Aliyu, had finally decided to join the Sultan in Sokoto where they could effectively constitute strong defense against the British. As soon as he left however, the British troops had already reached Kano and Johnston (1967, 188 - 189) describes the ensuing drama thus:

When they reached the city, however, they found the newly repaired walls manned and the massive gates closed against them. It has been customary in the past to describe the capture of Kano as if it was a great feat of arms. The truth is that, with the Emir and half his army away in Sokoto, the defenders had a hopeless task. As the Hausa population remained passive, neither helping nor hindering the Fulani, there were not nearly enough troops to man the eleven miles of fortifications and defend the thirteen gates. All that the British needed to do, therefore, was to blow in one of the gates and put a storming party through it before the defence could rally and counter-attack. This they accomplished with negligible casualties. Before long the city was theirs. In a military sense, Kano was an empty shell and its capture a hollow victory. Nevertheless, it was still the greatest city of Hausaland and its fall shook the Empire.

When the Emir later returned, his efforts could not undo what had already been a *fait accompli*. The short offensive his troops tried to put up in against the British was soon repulsed, and finding himself outmatched, the Emir turned and fled with the troops at his heels, until they caught up with him in Gobir and took him to Lokoja where he was imprisoned. With the Emir and the Sultan both gone, the resistance collapsed and the people surrendered to the British. In 'Umar's concluding remarks,

191. Thereafter they have regained their safety
And declared: "We will not fight Christians anymore."

192. [Then the Christians inquired] "Where is the next in royal line for us to enthrone him?"
And so they appointed a ruler in Kano; the powerful Christians!

193. Ever since, their authority became established in the land.
Who is there to challenge the authority of the Christians?

"Who is there to challenge the Christians," indeed! After the conquest of Kano and Sokoto, the entire northern territories became officially part of the British Northern Protectorate which Lugard had already proclaimed as far back as 1900. On the 21st of March 1903, Lugard convened a meeting at his camp during which he made the following statement of

declaration of intent as I quote from his wife's memoirs, *Tropical Dependency*. According to Flora Lugard Shaw (1965, 450 - 452) or Lady Lugard as she was eminently called,

After a preamble alluding to the treaties of alliance made between Sokoto and Great Britain, and recording the circumstances which had led to war, much against the desire of the British Government, the High Commissioner continued : -

"The old treaties are dead — you have killed them. Now these are the words which I, the High Commissioner, have to say for the future. The Fulani in old times, under Dan Fodio, conquered this country. They took the right to rule over it, to levy taxes, to depose kings, and to create kings. They in turn have by defeat lost their rule, which has come into the hands of the British. All these things which I have said the Fulani by conquest took the right to do now pass to the British. Every sultan and emir, and the principal officers of State, will be appointed by the High Commissioner throughout all this country. The High Commissioner will be guided by the usual laws of succession, and the wishes of the people and chiefs; but will set them aside, if he desires, for good cause, to do so. The emirs and chiefs who are appointed will rule over the people as of old time, and take such taxes as are approved by the High Commissioner; but they will obey the laws of the Governor, and will act in accordance with the advice of the Resident. Buying and selling slaves, and enslaving people, are forbidden. It is forbidden to import firearms (except flint-locks), and there are other minor matters which the Resident will explain. The alkalis and the emirs will hold the law courts as of old; but bribes are forbidden, and mutilation and confinement of men in inhuman prisons are not lawful. The powers of each court will be contained in a warrant appointing it. Sentences of death will not be carried out without the consent of the Resident.

"The Government will, in future, hold the rights in land which the Fulani took by conquest from the people, and if Government requires land, it will take it for any purpose. The Government hold the right of taxation, and will tell the emirs and chiefs what taxes they may levy, and what part of them must be paid to Government. The Government will have the right to all minerals, but the people may dig for iron and work in it subject to the approval of the High Commissioner, and may take salt and other minerals subject to any excise imposed by law. Traders will not be taxed by chiefs, but only by Government. The coinage of the British will be accepted as legal tender, and a rate of exchange for cowries fixed in consultation with chiefs, and they will enforce it.

"When an emirate, or an office of state, becomes vacant, it will only be filled with the consent of the High Commissioner; and the person chosen by the Council of Chiefs, and approved by the High Commissioner, will hold his place only on condition that he obeys the laws of the Protectorate and the

conditions of his appointment. Government will in no way interfere with the Mohammedan religion. All men are free to worship God as they please. Mosques and prayer-places will be treated with respect by us. Every person, including slaves, has the right to appeal to the Resident, who will, however, endeavour to uphold the power of the native courts to deal with native cases according to the law and custom of the country. If slaves are ill-treated, they will be set free as your Koran orders; otherwise Government does not desire to interfere with existing domestic relations. But slaves set free must be willing to work, and not to remain idle or become thieves. . . .

The quote is so constitutive of British (as well as European) expression of control over African territories at this stage of final conquest that I considered it significant to produce it almost in full here. The references to “the old treaties” is in connection to various spurious treaties and agreements which African rulers were coerced and cajoled to ratifying without fully understanding their commitments to them. In a way Lugard is just removing the mask of dissimulation behind which Europeans pretended to respect African sovereignty in order to legally bind them to laws they could hardly understand. In other words, if ruse failed to win Africans over, then force would. Such declarations are quite often only heard over radios, in postcolonial African states, when coup d’etats occur toppling governments. In summary, emirs and their subjects have just been “divestitured”. *Tant pis* for you, *tant mieux* for us! Not only has Lord Lugard divested Africans of their lands, he has in simple words divested them also their freedom and independence: people would obey Emirs who have to obey the Commissioner who would appoint the Emir. But the commissioner makes a curious addition which sounds rather odd under postcolonial readings but probably not odd to his audience, who might have found it almost an offer of concession. He does not abolish slavery, far from it; he endorses it and dresses it in new acceptable garb.

The purpose of Lugard’s declaration of “coup” was to forestall any future rebellion and to instill in the minds of his audience that while he is ready to give the carrot, he would not

hesitate to apply the stick when it is necessary. The outcome of this speech was a complete surrender from the emirs and 'Umar stresses this when he declares,

194. Now take a look at these rulers we have named,
They have all fallen under Christian control.

195. Who would dispute our plain account?
As for us, we have surrendered [to the brave Christians.]

196. We pray Almighty God, the Sublime One
To preserve us from Christian contempt

197. Know that those who challenge Christian authority
We care not about them, for us, we support only the Christians.

In this last verse one wonders whether 'Umar is being ironic or clearly expressing his sincere feelings. There is no doubt that the British action has succeeded in instilling fear in people's minds, and everybody is wondering what else they will have to endure. As we have shown above, 'Umar has been a realist all along. He had criticized those rulers who have acted irrationally towards the Europeans and as consequence brought their downfall. Perhaps this is just his realism that he is projecting. In the next section of this narrative we shall see evidence of this temperament, as Umar assesses the new colonial system in light of the old Africa conditions. Lonsdale (2008, 723) explains how European conquest finally disrupted the African ancient political allegiances and relations.

As events, European victories destroyed or discredited African political structures; they loosened the allegiance of subordinates, they offered alternatives to submissive labour among the poor, whether slave or free. There was a dynamic relationship between these two qualities of conquest.

5.2.3 The Phase of Re-aggregation

'Umar has described the final stage of colonial conquest and occupation of African territories in the closing section of the above verses. The surrender of African leaders, faced by European contemporary weapons of “mass destruction,” cemented European colonial takeover of Africa. That stage was a reflection of liminality that would eventually resolve into a re-aggregation into the fold of society, a new society with new forms of conduct and behavior. 'Umar invites us to appreciate with him the new system that has been set up by colonialism as he gleefully exhibits Africa's new colonial image. He then proceeds to enumerate various innovations that the Europeans have introduced in the African way of life.

198. Listen and take note of this composition:

I want to describe the character of the Christians.

199. The grass in town is weeded and swept away.

This is good indeed among the Christian deeds.

200. Smooth roads have been constructed straight across

And even bridges have been built thanks to the Christians.

201. The markets are swept clean, no refuse can be seen.

And the stalls are repaired; that is the Christians' deed.

202. Safety reigns here, and there is no plundering

And there is no deception in what the Christians do.

203. Anyone who buys your good pays you in cash

But when he refuses [to pay], then go to the Christians.

204. Fighting has also ceased in the era of the Christians;

There is no brawl or punching someone thanks to the Christians.

205. When people fight, they are quickly arrested,

Arraigned and then questioned before the Christians.

206. And when you refuse to sweep [your compound] you are arrested

And locked up in a court-room of the Christians.

207. Then [as punishment] you are made to sweep the burial ground.
All these are good deeds brought by the Christians.
208. Regarding the wars which used to be waged across the Sudan,
As soon as they arrived they have ceased - the strong Christians!
209. [Where are the rulers of Futa], Borgu and Gurma!
They are all no more; today only the Christians hold sway.
210. [Moreover (in those days) they could only maintain power by waging wars
That has now ceased to be, thanks to the Christians.
211. People used to quarrel among themselves or fight.
That has now ceased to be, (thanks to) the learned Christian.]
212. Today, whoever they chose to appoint a ruler
People must perform comply with Christian authority.
213. And know that in this era there is no sense of self-importance;
For no one can be imperious in this Christian era.
214. In reality self-sufficiency consists in preserving one's dignity;
Why then not enjoy yourself in the comfort afforded by the Christians?
215. In fact whoever deviates [from the law] is dragged before the courts.
He is detained [to stand trial] before the Christian Commissioner.
216. He is fully interrogated and must give a detailed response.
Order reigns in the Christians' court.
217. He is asked to explain the causes of his deed.
The Christian magistrate shows great discerning.
218. The slave-master will be sentenced to prison.
Indeed slaves can see the [effectiveness] of Christian authority.
219. The chief of your town will be locked up in prison
Even at the expense of a commoner; see effects of the coming of Christians.

As can be seen, the above list incorporates significantly the essential transformations introduced by the Europeans in the African system of life at the beginning of the twentieth century. On closer inspection, however, one would be left wondering if these innovations were really "new" to Africans, or even whether their introduction was motivated by sincere

feelings of charity and generosity to elevate human conditions of Africans. Prior to the colonial invasion, for close to three hundred years, Europe had willfully exploited African raw materials and human labor for its advancement and wellbeing. Africans were hunted down across their lands, bought and sold and forcibly shipped to Europe and to Americas, and forcibly made to work to serve European economic interests at home and abroad. Across these years Africans were brutalized and “thingified” into commodity; they were denied humanness. Africa’s colonial conquest has been justified by many people on various grounds including political, economic, cultural, racial and religious. After examining some of these justifications, Khapoya (2013, 104) has this to say,

The cultural reason for colonization was deeply rooted in the ethnocentrism and cultural arrogance of the European people, who regarded anyone different as being culturally inferior. In the case of the Africans, because they were not technologically advanced or their achievements were not written and therefore not known to the rest of the world, the Europeans felt that it was their duty to “civilize” and “uplift” the African people.

Because of Europe’s uncharitable involvement in the history of Africa prior to the last part of the nineteenth century, ‘Umar’s narrative accounts need to be read with critical lenses on, in order to distinguish between his various ambivalent perspectives that he tries to adopt (vis-à-vis colonialism), across the trends of his sequential narrative. While in general, he depicts colonial conquests as brutal and vicious, at other times, he adopts an attitude of neutrality; and we have often seen him (especially throughout this qaṣīdah) attempting to be critical towards hasty actions coming from some African rulers, and praising Europeans for their bravery, manners and inclination for orderliness and justice. These shifting attitudes reflect the ongoing psychological metamorphosis ‘Umar was experiencing. This particular final experience is commensurable to a resolution of his metal transformation. He has finally come to accept colonialism on its terms, as he has come to realize the futility of continuous

resistance. In other words, “If you can’t beat them, join them.” But these novelties, being introduced by colonizers into Africa, amount to nothing more than laying foundational grounds for the global capitalist enterprise. We should be mindful of the selective nature of these categories that can be summarized as: cleanliness, facilitating communication, security, commercial law, individual liberties and, above all, autocrats to oversee the efficient and successful operation of the system. The principal objective of European conquest and occupation of other lands including Africa was to create economic spheres for generating more income through extensive exploitation of cheap raw materials (for their industries) and establishing market zones where their products could be sold and bought. There is no need elaborating on this aspect of colonialism which has now become an *argumentum ad infinitum* especially through Marxist ideological criticism across the social scientific disciplines.²³³

In the next section of the narrative, ‘Umar depicts the drama of transformation that is unfolding around him, all over Africa. The literary mechanism he chooses to convey the new mannerisms portrayed by people in their various social positions is the satiric fable which he presents thus:

220. The coming of the Christians we can metaphorically thus describe:
The dog eats up the hyena, thanks to the Christians.

221. The she-cat walks unafraid in the way of the wildcat.
She taunts him, thanks to the authority of Christians.

222. And now the hare also swaggers before the lion,
Berating him with insults; thanks to the Christians’ presence].

223. [Dogs willfully offend and sing songs,
Wagging their tails about, thanks to the Christians.

224. They even affront the lion, tugging his mane
And now badger him, thanks to the Christians.]

²³³ See especially Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Cape Town: Pambazuka, 2012).

225. [And the baboon now takes a club
And trounces the leopard, thanks to the Christians.]
226. Likewise the hen and her brood of chicks -
They now stand and squawk at the kite, thanks to the Christians.
227. They rail at her together with her spouse, the hawk]
[Shouting, “You are no more affrighting, thanks to the Christians.”]
228. [Here is the billy-goat who takes a whip,
And thrashes the jackal, thanks to the Christians.
229. The mice also gather to celebrate
Their wedding moment, in the Christians era.
230. Their bride-washer was but the cat, imagine that!
How could such celebration have been held, without the presence of the
Christians!]
231. [How could this bride and her maids
Have been conveyed, if not thanks to the Christians?]
232. [I have also witnessed some dogs standing in line
Being sold out, in the era of the Christians.]
233. [It was the hare which was making the offers.
It was the hare which bought them, thanks to the Christians.
234. He makes bad offers, because he is at liberty
And he publicly flaunts (his) penis, thanks to the Christians.
- [235. Here, in some town-ward, one would chance on a Buzu
His turban over his mouth, thanks to the Christians.
236. The Fulani in vacant stare and mouth ajar [stares at him]
As he (Būzū) would hiss: “You can’t escape; now here are the Christians”.
237. The Fulāni then would say: “I have no business with you,
Your father is emboldened now, thanks to the Christians!”]
238. And also the cockroach confronts the hen,
Jeering openly at her, thanks to the Christians.
239. Even the toad dares abuse the black-hooded cobra
And punching it, because the Christians are here.

240. What I have said in form of illustration
Is a reflection of worldly life during the era of the Christians.

241. For it is a life that does not impair principles of law
Because it absolves no one: that is the Christian.

The significance of employing this device is most revealing of 'Umar's artistic skillfulness as narrator and oral performer. It also demonstrates his innovativeness as African-Arabic poet as well as the heterogeneity of his poetic style. From ancient times until today artists have exploited the rich artistic characteristics of the fable as efficient discursive tool of satiric representation. Although it is generally maintained that fables are predominantly "primitive" literary genres, their uses are nevertheless adaptable to all human societies (George Test 1991, 4). Indeed it is the primordial literary genre in African traditional societies where it is quite often employed in proverbs, aphorisms, allegories, maxims and, of course, story-telling. In their seminal study of the adaptation of the qaṣīdah genre beyond Arabia, Sperl et al (1966) discuss how the qaṣīdah has been effectively appropriated in various cultural contexts across the world and how it has been enriched through synthesis with features, styles and distinctive thematic elements of local culture. 'Umar's Ajami qaṣīdah clearly attests to this assertion, and his incorporation of the fable makes his qaṣīdah a unique creative achievement. It is, however, important to point out that 'Umar employs fables here to satirize his new society. According to Hodgart (172):

... the animal fable is the basic type [of fable] used by the satirists: it corresponds most usefully to the satirical device of reduction, of revealing the non-human drives behind human pretensions of grandeur. Animal stories are found in all primitive literature: [while] some are etiological ... many of them are trickster stories, ..."

And we should point furthermore that satire is a universal phenomenon in human societies, as George Test (4) affirms:

Satire, whether literary or oral, whether expressed through ceremony or in art forms, seems to occur in all societies and conditions of humanity, in all periods and stages of history, at all levels of society. While it may seem reckless to assert that satire is universal, there is much evidence of the extremely widespread existence of various forms of housebroken, usually verbal, aggression. Satire in its various guises seems to be one way in which aggression is domesticated, a potentially divisive and chaotic impulse turned into a useful and artistic expression.

'Umar's satire is levelled against mannerisms displayed by members of subordinate classes of society such as slaves as well as all those who felt oppressed in way or another by aristocracy and the privileged class. What we are witnessing in these social mannerisms is a cathartic effusion of various emotions of anger, infuriation, resentment, indignity, soreness and angst that have finally found expression due to the conditions of safety and freedom assured by European colonial suppression of those former tyrannical forces of society. In any socially stratified community such as was predominant in precolonial Africa, people of low social hierarchies were subjected to all sorts of indignities, abuses, derogations, as well as physical torture with regards to slaves especially. The absence of any legitimate institution of justice capable of controlling these arbitrary malfeasances makes the situation even more exasperating and insufferable for its victims. Consequently, with the passage of time, this tyrannous social condition gradually transforms into a hegemonic²³⁴ culture of passive compliance. Psychological aggression becomes internalized, channelized and rendered innocuous; and over time, often this process will lead into psychological canalization where successive generations come to view it as normal and natural. That is the reason why it is sometimes, only at the juncture of traumatic upheavals in societies that people can be roused

²³⁴ I am using this term here in all its Gramscian undertones; with regards to its cultural manifestations see Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *Caste, Culture and Hegemony: Social Dominance in Colonial Bengal* (New Delhi; Thousand Oaks; London: Sage Publications, 2004) Conclusion, 231 – 247; and Fontana Benedetto, *Hegemony and Power: On the Relation between Gramsci and Machiavelli* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1993), chapter 8, 139 – 162.

from such mental comatosity. Release from such condition is also usually accompanied by an exaggerated effusion of animosity and the desire for revenge. Consider, for instance, reactions of populace to coup d'états, across the world or to such revolutionary changes as the fall of the Soviet Union in December, 1991.

'Umar presents us with a pair of animals who are usually considered adversaries by their natural disposition towards one another. The first member of the pair represents the weaker and often victim of the powerful predatory second member: dog – hyena; she-cat – wild-cat; hare – lion; dog – lion; baboon – leopard; hen/chicks – kite/hawk; billy-goat – jackal; mouse – cat; cockroach – hen; toad – black cobra. There is in addition one human representation which incidentally reflects the contemporary ethnic relations of animosity, specifically between Buzu (Tuareg) and Fulani that really extends to other ethnicities as well. The Fulani aristocratic rule had come to be resented by almost all their subjects within the Caliphate. So we should not miss 'Umar's evasive attitude of dispassion and clever nonchalance. The Hausa were in fact those who were most bitter about Fulani overthrow of their sovereignty during dan Fodio's jihad. The rulers of Kebbi especially ('Umar's native land) had continuously demonstrated their defiance towards Fulani hegemony.

It is possible to view 'Umar's satire from two critical perspectives. On one hand, the satire reflects a realistic social attitude being exhibited by former oppressed groups towards fallen oppressors in the aftermath of the British coup de force. The dramatic encounter between the Buzu and the Bafillāce (Fulani man) is realistically portrayed by 'Umar.

235. *A nan wani unguwā aka iske Būzū*
Fa yā yi amāwalā domin Naṣārā
236. *Yanā tallākace bākin Filāni*
Yanā ce: In ka sheka, gā Naṣārā
237. *Filāni yanā fadī: Nī bā ruwānā*
Ubanka shinā da karfī don Naṣārā

[235. Here, in some town-ward, one would chance by a Buzu
His turban over his mouth, thanks to the Christians.

236. The Fulani in vacant stare and mouth ajar [stares at him]
As he (Būzū) would hiss: “You can’t escape; now here are the Christians”.

237. The Fulāni then would say: “I have no business with you,
Your father is emboldened now, thanks to the Christians!”]

Note the deictic construction: “here” as well as “in some town-ward,” which both specifies and localizes the encounter, grounding it in a frame of realistic social discourse. The Būzū is described as turbaned with his mouth muffled in the lower part of the turban cloth. He does this, ‘Umar declares thanks to the Christians. This indicates probably that the Būzū were forbidden to muffle their mouth during the Fulani reign and perhaps only the Sultan could wear his turban muffling his mouth, a practice which is still exhibited in official appearances of sultans and other members of Hausa-Fulani aristocracy in Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon up to today. Note further how ‘Umar adds realism to the drama by saying “*Yanā tallākace bākin Filāni*” (literarily “he drops the jaw”), describing the Fulani’s bewilderment at the sight of this Būzū walking freely turbaned imitating the aristocrat. Then the latter teasingly yells, “There no room for escape for you.” Perhaps he is alluding to the fact that the British have been able to contain Fulani power and deposed them. Those who have resisted were killed. Now power is no longer in their hands and the British rule absolutely everywhere. There can be therefore no way out for the Fulani. And he has to endure subordinate status as they used to do. With no more recourse to power, the Fulani could only respond humbly and with resignation.

The second possible perspective for examining ‘Umar’s satire is to view it as an underlying critical expression of ironic lampoon directed towards his society. As he observes

this outward demonstration of boldness and cockiness, he seems to be inwardly ridiculing it as absurd and ludicrous. He has come to realize that with respect to Europeans Africans are not distinct from one another. What does it matter, whether you are a king, aristocrat, commoner or slave? Europeans were disposed to use any African to serve their economic interests regardless of their social rank or status. He indirectly alludes to this in verses 252 and 253,

251. Forbear, your pride! They know you well, fool!
For no favor would waive the punishment of Christian law.

252. Forget your money, or your power
Or your learning, the Christian law does not give a damn.

Neither class status, ancestry, money, nor power could exempt a person from being subjected to European authority. The targets of his satirical criticism might, however, be oblivious of the pointlessness of their affected vanity. Present triumph, however hollow it might seem to others (like 'Umar), was significant for them as it affords satisfaction of witnessing their oppressors' lose self-importance and power and being reduced to sharing their plight. For us, what 'Umar's satire provides is not just this critical historical view of African societies in the aftermath of European conquest, as they try to adjust to the new situation, but above all the playfulness of the drama, its sense of "gamemanship" (where no one wins) that amuses us at the same time that we are also conscious of the tragic ambiance in which it is all played out. 'Umar's artistic skill in reducing this satire to a tableau of fables makes his criticism poignant and effective. George Test (17) underlines the artistic potency of satire in which we can discern the accomplishment of the dual poetic objectives of "entertainment and instruction, when he says,

Northrop Frye has called satire "militant irony," thereby affirming the aggression that is distinctive to it as well as isolating satire's most potent and widely used weapon. From its uses of wit, charactonyms (sic), and other verbal devices to its comprehensive animal worlds, and preoccupation with "truth" and "reality," satire exploits the ability of irony to expose, undercut, ridicule, and otherwise attack indirectly, playfully, wittily, profoundly, artfully.

In the concluding part of 'Umar's narrative, he presents us with a critical appraisal of the new established European system of justice, in comparison to the contemporaneous Muslim judicial system of the Hausa-Fulani Caliphate. 'Uthman dan Fodio's main purpose of embarking on his famous jihad, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, was to purge Hausa society (particularly) of religious decadence and corruption and establish shari'ah. After almost hundred years of its implementation and practice within the Caliphate and prior to the European invasion, however, the system has lost its legitimacy in the eyes of the populace, owing, mainly to the unscrupulous conduct of the judicial establishment. In the manuscript of his short autobiography which he composed for the satisfaction of his German "friend," the colonial administrator, Adam Mischlich, 'Umar recalled of having personally witnessed the public execution of a number of Muslim magistrates by order of the Sultan. The situation seemed to have become so deplorable that when the English appointed magistrates to provide parallel administrative justice to the Muslim one, 'Umar declares,

242. In respect to the Muslim magistrates, they are corrupt
So it is better for me to see the Christians' judge.

Let us draw attention, at this stage, to this critical transformation in 'Umar's *Weltanschauung*. It is crucial to understand that the above assertion does not necessarily imply 'Umar's insensitivity and disaffection towards Muslim law or its relevance. How could that be when as Muslim scholar he lives to implement and perpetuate Islamic morality among

the community? As has been proven clearly throughout this narrative, ‘Umar has always maintained a critical attitude vis-à-vis life. He is a realist through and through, and his religious faith had never hindered him from evaluating issues on the basis of their relevance and practicality in human life. In other words, he is not a person who believes that “men are made for laws” and not “laws for men.” Strict rigidity in religious praxis and blind adherence to orthodoxy would not have made it possible for a great Muslim scholar such as ‘Umar to discern the relevance of those aspects of European colonial administration that could effectively promote human welfare. Indeed ‘Umar was an exponent of Maliki jurisprudence, and this attitude distinctively derives from some of its fundamental moral precepts such as “practicality or praxis of life during the time of the prophet and his companions”; *Maslahah and ‘Istislāḥ* or “Public interest” and “the seeking of public interest.”²³⁵ In the implementation of sharī‘ah in African societies, Maliki scholars are prone to incline towards what serves general human interest as long as it does not contradict the fundamental spirit of Islam.

After expressing criticism of the Muslim judicial establishment, ‘Umar could not conceal his preference for the British justice system. Thereupon he proceeds to a description of a number of social manifestations of this system among Africans and the extent of its impact upon their new sense of social justice and equity. Once again ‘Umar reveals his realistic frame of mind by pointing out that while “there is comfort” in the new system, it does not lack in “frustrations.”

243. There is comfort in this rule of theirs,
As well as frustration, in the rule of Christians.

²³⁵ See Muḥammad Ibn-Bahādur Az- Zarkašī and ‘Abd-al-Qādir Al- ‘Ānī. *Al- Baḥr Al-muḥīṭ Fī Uṣūl Al-fīqh*. Vol. 8 (Al-Kuwait: Wizārat Al-Auqāf Wa-’š-Šu‘ān Al-Islāmīya, 1992), 85 -88; and Aḥmad Raysūnī, *Imam Al-Shatibi's Theory of the Higher Objectives and Intents of Islamic Law* (London; Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2005).

244. Both common man and his town chief stand to seek justice
Before the Commissioner in the Christian court.
245. People acquire respect; take note of this my dear brothers!
People are honored, in the era of the Christians.
246. The slave master stands in equal trial with the slave.
Indeed there is (in)discipline under the Christians' rule.
247. [When the slave feels persecuted, he quickly runs
To his father, that is the Christian.]
248. When women feel oppressed by their husbands,
They are arraigned before Christian authority.
249. Adults and children are [treated] as equals in their presence;
Everyone stands by himself before the Christians.
250. They express neither fear, nor feel ashamed.
They speak out bluntly before the Christians.
251. Forbear, your pride! They know you well, fool!
For no favor would waive the punishment of Christian law.
252. Forget your money, or your power
Or your learning, the Christian law does not give a damn.
253. The English have a tender character.
They are sympathetic towards people, the mighty Christians.

'Umar brings this dramatic narrative to an appropriate closure by providing us with glimpses into the socio-political spectacles of African communities awakening to a dawn of the new era. Africa and Africans would never be the same again after Europe has intruded into their lives. But to be sure the above scenarios portray the fact that Africans are already being ushered into the new world order of capital economy envisaged by Europeans. Although it would be about fifty years later (i.e., 1948) that the famous Declaration of Universal Human Rights would be ratified by the "young" organization of the United Nations, most of its major

principles of “equal justice before the law” were being introduced into African societies. Ironically, only two African nations would be among the signatories of that declaration, while the remainder of the continent was still subjugated to the yoke of colonial bondage.

‘Umar’ s testimony ends on a positive evaluation of European colonial practice as he concludes his narrative he mirthfully declares,

254. For my part, I am thankful to God, in their era
For they have treated well, these Christians.

255. As much as I am concerned, may their rule last forever!
Because I live a life of prosperity, under Christian rule

For as he seems to say and invite his audience to share and appreciate with him, life is worth living, under whatever system it is, as long as justice (being treated well) and prosperity can be guaranteed. We should also remark that this concluding narrative symbolically expresses the re-aggregative nature of this phase in which Africa and its people emerge transformed from a precolonial world into a new social, political and economic world of global capitalism.

CHAPTER VI

6. Conclusion

6.1 The Poetics of Africa's Colonial Transformation

This study has critically examined three poems composed by Alḥājj 'Umar b. Abī Bakr (popularly known as Alḥājj 'Umar Krachi) from the last decade of the nineteenth century to the first decades of twentieth century to give account of the European conquest and subsequent occupation of the African continent. Prior to this historic European military invasion of Africa, Arabic literary culture (through Islam) had flourished through networks of well-organized schools and learning centers established across the continent from as far back as the twelfth century. From centers in Timbuktu (Sankore, Jingarayberi) and Jenne, as well as those in Ngazargamu (in Kanem-Borno), Kano and Sokoto, Bonduku and Futa-Jalon or Mombasa, the traditional Islamic sciences were being assiduously taught by dedicated local Muslim scholars to thousands of students. In addition accomplished literary and religious contributions were made by scholars from these centers which were highly acknowledged throughout the Muslim world.²³⁶ By the nineteenth century, a wave of religious ferment, led in the most part by Fulani scholars, engulfed the West Africa regions specifically in a series of jihads that resulted in establishing Islamic polities here and there. The advent of Europeans, however, brought this crusade to a stop. In effect, it was thought by many that the ancient rivalries between Christian Europe and Islam were once again finding outlets on the African continent. This was how our poet, Alḥājj 'Umar, definitely came to understand it. His qaṣīdahs are the literary narrative account of the cultural confrontation between Europe and Africa or the religious confrontation between Christianity and Islam.

²³⁶ See Hunwick, 2003, 1 – 6.

The three qaṣīdahs that form the subject of this study were composed by ‘Umar between 1899 and 1906/7. They embody a common thread of narrative that is however, constructed in three different poetic styles corresponding to three historic transitional moments of ‘Umar’s experience with the colonial conquest of Africa by Europeans. By virtue of their diachronicity we are able to follow ‘Umar’s psychological evolvment through time *à travers* the linear unfoldment of his narrative accounts of colonial conquests across Africa territories. Each of these three qaṣīdahs provides us with a decisive interstitial glimpse during which ‘Umar’s personality becomes transformed in reaction to external events progressively unfolding around him. The narratives reflect at one and the same time ‘Umar’s personal experience as well as that of the whole continent. The thematic developments across the qaṣīdahs reveal the nature, scope and denouement of the dynamics of general transformation manifested in his personal as well as the general *habitus*. ‘Umar’s choice of the classical Arabic qaṣīdah genre to convey this phenomenon is both ingenious and effective. Its inherent structuralization makes the qaṣīdah form functionally appropriate to represent the progressive change that was imposed upon the continent through European conquest. The qaṣīdah is the oldest Arabic literary form that, like a sonnet, exhibits a fixed functional structure. This structure, to which we have already alluded in preceding analysis, consists of a tripartite form long identified by Arab critics as *nasīb* (prelude), *raḥīl* (journey) and *gharaḍ* (the final section which may be of several sorts).²³⁷ Stetkevych’s (1993) useful analysis and critical application of this paradigmatic structure as symbolic of ritual transformation has been the guiding principle for my analysis of ‘Umar’s three qaṣīdahs. The tripartite structure of the qaṣīdah is found to be analogous to the tripartite structure of the ritual ceremony of the rites of passage (a universal phenomenon) enacted in various

²³⁷ See Stetkevych 1993, 4, where she mentions some of these sorts as *fakhr*, *madīḥ* or *hijā’*.

guises to introduce people into new social, political or cultural roles. van Gennep, and after him Victor Turner, has categorized the successive ritual ceremonial process into three phases as *preliminal, liminal and postliminal*, which Turner in turn designated as the phases of *separation, liminality and aggregation* respectively. I have used both of these theoretical designations to analyze 'Umar's three qaṣīdahs from a double perspective.

My first approach consisted of examining each of the three qaṣīdahs as an integral momentary metamorphosis from a synchronic perspective. In this regard, the tripartite structural nature of the qaṣīdah has made it possible to correspondingly analyze them in light of Turner's three ritual phases. This has enabled me to examine 'Umar's initial response to the onset of European conquest. This response mirrors the three sections of the qaṣīdah corresponding to the ritual stages of rites of passage progressing from separation, into liminality and finally culminating into aggregation, where he comes to adopt a temporary strategic stance vis-à-vis the invasion. While considering the first qaṣīdah as expressive of a response depicting momentary transformation, it should be understood as only transitory. Consequently, I went on to also analyze it as the first stage of a more durable ritual transformation that would progress through three phases represented this time by the three qaṣīdahs in which each them would correspond to one of van Gennep's three ritual stages of the rites of passage. In this manner, I have analyzed all the three qaṣīdahs correspondingly from these two perspectives: (1) as a temporal integral process of change (2) and as a transitory phase of a more durable transformation being imposed upon the African continent by European colonialism.

Every true product of art emanates from personal experiences of artists. Whether, it be a novel, poem, painting, music, sculpture, it is his inner response to stimuli that engenders the

artist's final work. Symbolically considered, the whole work incorporates dynamic complex emotions of accommodation and adjustment to those stimuli. Furthermore, the process of creation corresponds to a personal moment of transformation in the life experience of the artist. In other words the artist emerges from this creativity a new person enriched in experience. That is why I consider 'Umar's qaṣīdahs as expressive of momentary transformational changes of experience to the colonial conquest of Africa. On the other hand, we can also view the artist's work as expressive of general societal experiences. Although his poems seem to reflect private inner musings, 'Umar nevertheless represents a voice of his entire community. Through his narratives he was able to capture the pains and sufferings of the entire continent. Towns he cites, ethnicities he describes, battles and warriors, these should be understood as depicting types, not specificities. This explains my analysis of the three qaṣīdahs as narratives, descriptive of Africa's transformation under the aegis of European colonialism. These narratives would be understood as emerging from Africa's precolonial (*preliminal*) to progress into colonialism (*iminal*) and ultimately culminating into the neo or postcolonial (*postliminal*). Thus examined, we can perceive how Africans were gradually brought out of their "darkness" by force of guns, how they resisted and suffered for it, and finally when European supremacy in advance weaponry prevailed, the process of Africa's metamorphosis was set afoot.

This poetics of transformation can be clearly observed across the changing stylistics of 'Umar's three qaṣīdahs. In the first place, on examining his first qaṣīdah, one can perceive that at the moment of composition, around 1899, 'Umar apprehended the European invasion through lenses of a devout Muslim cleric and interpreted it as a Christian attack on *dār al-Islam* (the Islamic realm). In the prelude he evokes apocalyptic images of human existence

driven through change to its ultimate end; God is made the agent of this change by His absolute control over the wheel of Time. An allusion is also made to Muhammad (SAW) as epic hero who fought to establish God's religion on earth before he died. It is thus evidently clear that the poet intends to foreground Islam – God, Muhammad – as central to his discourse. This perception becomes more distinctive as the narrative progresses. After enumerating several territories that have fallen before the advancing conquerors, 'Umar saw no way out than counselling for *tawakkul* (surrendering to God),

32. When you ponder upon all that I have said,
Just say: "God is our lord," and add no more.

33. For this is all by his decree,
And power, and wisdom, and knowledge.

34. Seek no way out by your own power;
Resign yourself rather to your creator.

In addition, he advises the religious community to adopt an attitude of *taqīyah* (dissimulation) vis-à-vis the Europeans while they bided their time for an opportunity to rise up. Furthermore, his earnestness and apprehension towards the Europeans can be discerned through his muted tone. In this *qaṣīdah*, he presents himself as religious leader of a community under siege: he counsels, admonishes, pleads and sermonizes. A general feeling of hope and anticipation of a possible divine intervention can also be sensed from his words. He had no doubt of God's absolute control of the situation, and he assures his people of that and that God's will would prevail in the end as the prophet had already foretold. If we are to describe 'Umar's attitude at this stage of colonial conquest, we would say it is *tawakkul*. It is a theological concept that describes the believer's unshakable faith and unmitigated trust in God. No one in Islamic practice has cultivated this concept to its highest possible realization more than Sufis. According to Schimmel (119),

Tawakkul in its interiorized sense means to realize *tauḥīd*; for it would be *shirk khafī*, "hidden associationism," to rely upon or be afraid of any created being. This aspect of *tawakkul* is one of the basic truths in Sufi psychology: as soon as every feeling and thought is directed in perfect sincerity toward God, without any secondary causes, neither humans nor animals can any longer harm the mystic. Thus *tawakkul* results in perfect inner peace.

Besides these literary elements, 'Umar's first qaṣīdah is also distinctive in its descriptive framework. In contrast to the two subsequent narratives, the descriptions are few in number, brief and without much coloration. The narrative focus remains constantly fixed on the narrator. Note, for instance, the total absence of descriptions of the Europeans other than indirect inferences to the impact of their destructive actions.

As soon as we begin reading the second qaṣīdah, however, we discern a vast contrast between it and the first poem. This qaṣīdah was probably composed between 1900 and 1901. While the first poem runs on an apocopated *rajaz*²³⁸ meter and exhibits only internal rhyme between half lines, the second poem employs a full *wāfir* meter²³⁹ and classically rhymes on the letter "mīm." Significantly, *wāfir* denotes fullness and abundance. In addition, the letter "mīm" could also symbolically allude to "Muslim," or "mu'min" (believer), as the poet believes Muslim were under attack; or it could denote "Muhammad," evoking thereby the prophet's name for his *baraka* (blessings) and protection; or it could portend "mawt" (death), as it is the death and defeat of African warriors that the poem depicts. Besides this, the tone of 'Umar's narrative is more earnest here. He is either questioning the Europeans, accusing them of hypocrisy and falsehood, or almost urging African warriors to stand their ground and fight with greater courage and sacrifice than they had been doing. Descriptive scenes are also more elaborate and vivid here than in the first poem. 'Umar takes us right into the heat of

²³⁸ It is specified by 'Umar at the end of the second hemistich of the first verse as *rajaz mashṭūr*.

²³⁹ *Mufā'al(a)tun, mufā'al(a)tun, fa'ūlu(n) X 2.*

battle and shows us gruesome scenes of slaughter and destruction. We are also shown acts of sheer heroism and valor demonstrated by some Africans, side by side the cowardice and effeminate cowering of others before enemies. This time, we also come face to face with Europeans. They are described to us in horrible imageries; their commander is hell itself, while their army consists of human vampires, insensitive brutes that seemed to relish act of killing and razing down towns and farmlands. While 'Umar barely cites sixty towns, cities and people in his first poem, the number of people, towns and localities mentioned in his second poem approaches two hundred. In effect, as we have pointed out in the analysis of the poem, it truly reflects the phase of liminality, where only chaos, noise and destruction reigns. Note that it is the only poem in which hell is mentioned!

Besides all the distinctive features we have pointed out within this poem, it is also significant to signal its distinctiveness in respect to diction, imageries and other stylistic features. As we have remarked, the prelude to the first poem was very short. 'Umar did not tarry much after evoking God's name and some of His attributes; he went directly to mention Muhammad and only alluded to his jihad aspect. By contrast the second poem is introduced through an elaborate prelude in which the fundamental Muslim creed is evoked. The poet seems to contend and proclaim Islam as the chosen path of God, by recalling God's establishing chains of prophets and messengers of whom Muhammad became seal. Even the revelation gets mention, Angel Gabriel signaled as its agent. A parallelism is henceforth also drawn between this pure God-chosen path and "the crooked" path of those who persist in iniquity and evil, those who warred against prophets in order to protect and defend their evil path. The poet's intended theme becomes clearly projected as he sets out to lay the framework for representing the ultimate struggle between forces of good and forces of evil,

between righteous people of God and their enemies, between Islam and Christianity, and between *dār al-Islam* (the harmonious realm of Islam) and *dār al-ḥarb* (the chaotic world of Christian Europe). Throughout the narrative, this parallelism will be sustained through corresponding imageries that represent, on one hand, evil in the form of black birds, hell, dark rainless clouds, predatory animals and scavengers, or acts of horror and human cruelty; and on the other hand, the good and righteous are represented as victims, peace-loving, pious and understanding (like the reverend Mukhtār) or brave warriors, disdaining life and death in their bid to defend the good cause (like Garju).

Historically, 'Umar's third qaṣīdah was composed around 1906/7. Approximately, eight years had elapsed since the composition of the first qaṣīdah. It is in his third qaṣīdah that we truly apprehend the expressive significance of change and metamorphosis embedded structurally in 'Umar's narrative. In composing both the first and second qaṣīdahs, 'Umar had used the classical Arabic language medium as well as its rigid prosody. It is important to understand the significance of this adherence to Arabic culture as an expression of Muslim identity. First of all, let us take note of the fact that Arabic is fundamentally a foreign medium with respect to Sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless it is also symbolically the authoritative language of Islam. While, on one hand, it might serve to confine cultural identification strictly to only Arabs (as native speakers), nonetheless, its capacity of cultural significancation extends to much larger and wider sphere of religious identification. Muslims have appropriated Arabic and identified with it as a linguistic cultural essence of a profound religious affirmation. After all, is Arabic not God's primordial sacred language? And would it not be the only means of communication in the hereafter, as it has been claimed?²⁴⁰ It is from this consideration that one should understand what writing in Arabic means for non-

²⁴⁰There are prophetic traditions (*'ahādith*) in which it is alleged the prophet disclosed this.

Arab Muslims like 'Umar. It is a symbol that affirms their belongingness to a Muslim 'Ummah. What then could have motivated 'Umar to divert from this literary convention and compose his third qaṣīdah in Ajami of his native language, Hausa?

The plausible explanation to this attitudinal shift on 'Umar's part can be understood from psychological influences wrought by passage of time and evolving circumstances around him. From the last decade of the nineteenth century 'Umar had witnessed the winds of change sweeping across Africa with increasing force. Europeans had proved more tenacious and resilient in their campaign to occupy African lands than he had anticipated. Moreover, his hope for divine intervention, to save *dār al-Islam* from infidel attacks, had gradually grown weaker in the course of time. That hope was still alive in the second narrative, however small, when he declared,

164. Their real intention is to fight Muslims
And they would sow discord without a doubt.

With the passage of time, he could discern no decline in European force and capacity to dominate Africa and its people. After eight years had elapsed the fate of Africans only continued to grow worse with every passing moment. Land after land, community after community, fell under European control. The hope he has had in the capacity of African resistance faded away as he witnessed Europeans defeating one leader after another. His faith in divine interference was crushed as the entire 'Uthmānic Sultanate came crumbling down from all sides under European assaults. He could no more continue to live in a fool's paradise and ignore the reality of unfolding events. As these thoughts passed through his mind the Muslim *Umma* ceased to become the locus of his *Weltanschauung*. He has come to discover the real core of his identity: a Hausa, African, and Muslim. The shift therefore from Arabic to

Hausa Ajami can be interpreted as the first expressive symbolic act of 'Umar's transformation.

The evidence of transformation is, however, not only manifested through his shift in linguistic medium. It would more appropriate to interpret 'Umar's transformation, in general, as an attitudinal shift from religious dogmatism to realism. From the onset of colonial conquest, as we have observed before, his whole view regarding the invasion was shaped through the dialectics of Muslim theology. At some stage of the conquest, he seemed to have interpreted the European invasion as heralding the apocalypse. In this third qaṣīdah, however, he has come to adopt a more realistic stance vis-à-vis the colonial encounter. On many occasions, in the course of his narrative, he does not cease to reproach African leaders for failing to demonstrate wisdom and deliberation in response to European presence. On the other hand, he expresses praise and commendation for those leaders who showed prudence in their approach to the situation. This is exemplified in the conduct of Samā, the Kebbi ruler. In spite of incitation from his people, Sama refused to fight the Europeans. Instead, he welcomed them and they appointed him "their gatekeeper." He thus saved his people from ignominy and he was elevated in the process. What this reveals is that 'Umar had come to understand the futility of confronting the European in any fight which Africans were ultimately bound to lose. Not only were the Europeans better armed with more advanced and effective weapons, above all they showed more resilience and sense of purpose than Africans. In the end the Africans were the losers despite their heavy human and material sacrifice. The European forces had proved almost invincible and seemed to be driven by an undaunted will to conquer and dominate Africans. Their prowess and resilience, in the end, won over 'Umar's admiration and praise.

In the long run, when the die was cast and Europeans emerged victorious over the Africans, 'Umar began to see wisdom in their rule. After an elaborate description of defeated African leaders, note 'Umar's transformation manifested through the following verses,

194. Now take a look at these rulers we have named;
They have all fallen under Christian control.

195. Who would dispute our plain account?
As for us, we have surrendered [to the brave Christians.]

196. We pray Almighty God, the Sublime One,
To preserve us from Christian contempt.

197. Know that those who challenge Christian authority,
We care not about them; for us, we support only the Christians.

Call it turncoat if one may, but what would we have him do? Were we in his place, and confronted by such daunting forces, would realism not be a better disposition? The debate regarding Africans' response to colonial conquest shall always defy facile ratiocination. This is because its historic nature would always make it almost impossible for future objective analysis. History shall always be viewed from hindsight, when its reality has become forever drowned in the sea of oblivion. It would perhaps be, sometimes, more prudent to require greater critical insight and objectivism in a spirit of humility before passing sentimental judgments upon the past. How fair have African historians been in describing colonial historical events as heroic resistance, accommodation or self-serving collaboration? The impression one gets in reading the final sections of 'Umar's narrative could easily lead to a judgment of surrender and collaboration. Unfortunately, we hardly know enough about his life, especially in its last stages, to confidently arrive at such a conclusion. Is 'Umar's expression of surrender and declaration of support emanating from sincere conviction? Or is it the demoralized cry of the overpowered?

It may be that 'Umar's concessional declaration of Christian victory was truly a genuine one. He tries to convince us of his sincerity in subsequent verses where he describes how good and profitable, after all, European rule was proving to be. Since the establishment of official European rule across the territories, social order and harmony seemed to have reigned. The old ethnic feuds and chaos had ceased; people were compelled to live more hygienically by cleaning their houses and environs. Moreover, the ancient unjust social hierarchy that designated some people more superior to others has been erased. Now equality predominates and everybody is treated with equal justice. 'Umar considers the European system of justice preferable to Muslim courts of corrupt officials. Indeed he goes on to express elation at the tenderness of Christian heart and reiterates his full support.

253. The English have a tender character.

They are sympathetic towards people the mighty Christians.

254. For my part, I am thankful to God, in their era

For they have treated me well, these Christians.

Finally, the transformation that 'Umar's third and final qaṣīdah attempts to convey can be discerned also in its narrative framework. In general, all three qaṣīdahs are dominated by the narrative mode in performativity frames. Key performative frames can be distinguished from the narrator's attitude towards his audience. He manifests profound awareness of his function as narrator and tries to maintain the channel of communication always open between him and the audience. He is able to achieve this through apostrophes, aphorisms, verbalized gestures, and the use of deictics. We find this extensively employed specifically in the last qaṣīdah, in which one can observe, in this regard, his continuous declarative, "*inā wadda!*" This phraseology is distinctively Hausa in expressiveness and rhetorically conveys wonder, esteem, awe and concern, at the same time. Besides these significant literary features, this

qaṣīdah also makes effective use of the satiric fable as rhetorical tool. The satiric fable is employed by 'Umar to describe the metamorphosis portrayed in people's behaviors in response to colonial administrative dispensation. The use of the fable deeply reflects African narrative influence. Indeed fables are predominant literary genres in African cultures. The nature of their symbolic signification makes them more appropriate in expressing criticisms delicately and more effectively. The dominance of these narrative features as well as those already alluded to in 'Umar's third qaṣīdah underline its rhetoricity as expressive of Africa's transformation.

In conclusion, although these three narrative qaṣīdahs trace the historical experience of Africa's transformation under colonial invasion, it is a transformation that never really culminates into its final successful stage of re-aggregation or re-incorporation. We see this clearly expressed by 'Umar at the end of the first and second qaṣīdahs. In the end Africans have nothing significant to celebrate about and there were no new statuses that they have achieved. Instead they remained caught up in their liminality, unable to go back to their ancient ways and unsure about their future. It is as Kofi Awoonor poetically proclaimed in his "Song of Sorrow":

Dzogbese Lisa has treated me thus
It has led me among the sharps of the forest
Returning is not possible
And going forward is a great difficulty
The affairs of this world are like the chameleon feces
Into which I have stepped
When I clean it cannot go²⁴¹

This study was motivated in part by my desire to draw attention to the literary richness of Arabic literature south of the Sahara that has remained unappreciated for so long. In spite of

²⁴¹ Kofi Awoonor, "Song of Sorrow" in Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier (eds), *The Penguin Book of Modern African Poetry* 4th edn. (London: Penguin Books, 2007), pp. 103-104.

the long history of Arabic writing and its undeniable cultural impact in Sub-Saharan Africa, critical recognition has not yet been accorded to its literary value as a distinctively African literature. One scarcely comes by any related allusion made to it in books and monographs devoted to African literature. In fact there seems to be a general implied consensus among African literary historians and critics in being oblivious to an Arabic literature south of the Sahara. The history of creative literature in Africa according to this prevailing wisdom, dates only from colonialism. Africans acquired the skill to produce literature only after they became proficient in European languages. Contrary to this culture of willful blindness, however, a rich Arabic literature exists across the continent. It is a heritage that has continuously thrived for so many centuries and it is attested by extensive catalogues of extant manuscripts deposited in libraries across the continent. Most of these manuscripts remain unpublished and therefore unavailable to larger public usage. We are made to believe that they are only valuable as religious and historical sources. And as a consequence they are devoid of “literariness.” What constitutes literariness? And what constitutes African literature for that matter? In fact it is a subject which has defied clear definition for African literary critics as well as writers. The ensuing disputes (which were anything but intellectually motivated) revealed unfortunately the reality of Africa’s postcolonial political and cultural fragmentations. This study can only make a passing reference to this controversial issue due to its complex ramifications.²⁴² Suffice it to stress that while African creative writings in

²⁴² These disputes developed from the fifties when African writers first met to discuss issues regarding African literary writings including its very definition. Leading writers such as Cyprian Ekwensi (Nigerian novelist), Christopher Okigbo (late Nigerian poet), Ezekiel Mphahlele (South African writer), Chinua Achebe (Nigerian writer) and later N’gugi Wa Thio’go (Kenyan writer) expressed their opinions variously, and no consensus could be reached. Chinua Achebe’s famous declaration to hold on to his English as God given instrument of literary expression may be clearly projects his opposition to those who called for a complete return to African languages such as the Kenyan writer and critic N’Gugi Wa Thio’ongo. The continent’s cultural divide between White Arab North and Black African South seemed to have created a permanent wedge that has also become a contributing factor in viewing Arabic as foreign in the south. On the other hand the Eurocentric prejudice

French, English or Portuguese would be incontrovertibly acknowledged as African literature, the same is not accorded creative writings in Arabic. One would hope that as more and more research is conducted similar to this study across Africa, there would come to be an Arabophone literature side by side Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone African literatures.

towards Arabic writings persists in the minds of Sub-Saharan intellectuals who continue to dismiss it as “religious” literature. Critical engagements that have discussed these issues are uncountable; but just to mention few of them: the works of the *Bolekaja* Critics (1980) as well as Georges J. Joyaux (1972), Charles R. Nnolim (1986), D. A. Masolo (1991), Daniel P. Kunene (1992), Eileen Julien (1995), Critical writings of N’Gugi Wa Thi’ongo, and also Bernard Mouralis (2001), A. O. Amoko (2001), Janice Spleth (2002), Michael Chapman (2003), Tunde Ojaide (2009). But Ziad Bentahar’s article “Continental drift: the disjunction of North and sub-Saharan Africa” contains important provocative ideas on the subject worth reading.

Appendix I

Poem I

Mahsra 'u mā'I al-khabar li wāridin 'awradahu bi al-nazar

- بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
صلى الله على من لا نبي بعده
- 1- بحمد من يصرف الدهور
2- وهو الذي يحول الأحوال
3- أزكى الصلاة لنبي الملحمة
4- مع السلام وكذا للآل
5- يا سائلي عما أرى في قلبي
6- تعلمن إذا الأمور قد أتت
7- ألم تروا حلولها يا قومي
8- قد حاطت السودان كل ناحية
9- مبدؤها من فوت تور لا مري
10- إلى مدينة²⁴⁵ مايو أو قل يور
11- ومن هناك قل إلى تنبكت
12- شنقيط، طوبى قل هما بلدان
13- من مراکش، فاس وقد تلبهما
14- لا تنس ماسن^[أ] لها آيات
15- أصابها ما قد أصاب الناس
16- فاعتبرن ولن ترى مفرا
17- سامغ ونغر بلواها تعم
18- بل هذه البلوى أنت غلاسو
19- ما تركت مفارة غرنش
20- بل أرض فنت كلها قد ملكت
21- بالغ ملكهم لأرض أونا
22- أ لا ترى قد ملكوا من منغو
23- كفار برغو كلها قد ملكوا
24- ولا تناس بادهم²⁴⁷ أبيكتا
25- بل ملكوا منها إلى الور
26- رتب وقل قد فتحوا أرض بنو
27- كوكوك، لافياغ لا تنساها
28- وذلك كله بإذن الرب
29- إنني سمعت أنهم قد أخذوا
30- هل ملكوا بوس وأرض ياور
31- ولا تناس أنهم في دور
التقويض
32- إذا تأملت بما أقول
قل ربنا الله ولا تطول
- بدأت هذا الرجز المشطور
ويحكم السرور والأهوال
محمد بناءه لا يهدم
والصحب والأزواج للمال²⁴³
فاصغ لما أرويه عن لبي
مجيئها منذ قديما تبت²⁴⁴
ألم تروا تزيد كل يوم
وعمت البلدان حتى النائية
عمت إلى فوت جل يا سامري
لفوت بند هل لنا سيور
كذا قريها بذا أنبت
كبيرتان كانتا بعد[تي] أن
بنجغر وذنس ها قل فيهما
وكان أهلها لهم آلات²⁴⁶
من البلبات وأعني البأس
في هذه الدنيا ولا مقرا
إلى مرافئ أسنتي قل أكم
ثم غن، بيغ، غمن، فيسو
ولا عمورة كذاك موش
ملوكها صاروا عبيدا هتكت
أغاش، داحم، عكو ثم دنا
إلى وراء برب، تاش فسغو
أسيادهم قد هربوا أو هلکوا
قد قهروها ناطقا وساكتا
يا رب نور قلبنا بالنور
إلى ألوف ملكهم قد يدنو
كذا قريها لمنتهاها
فاعل ما يشاء دون الريب
بعض نفي من أهلها من منقذ
بل ملكوا غنبل بلا تشاور
ياغا، غلاج، ساي بل زنغور

²⁴³ This verse is omitted in IASAR/417.

²⁴⁴ A was added in the text and has been omitted for syntactic reason.

²⁴⁵ مدين in the original text.

²⁴⁶ Variation in IASAR/417 اللواء لهم رايات with a gloss by the side.

²⁴⁷ Perhaps إبادهم the مصدر of أباد to destroy

- 33- فإن هذا كله من حُكمه
 34- لا تطلب الحيلة من قوتك
 35- فاعتبرن بالرأي هل فرار
 36- ولن ترى بينهما من راجح
 37- أمرتكم يا قومنا أن تتركوا
 التوصية
 38- يا مسلمون ظاهرا فانقادوا
 39- أوصيتكم أن تشكروا إن جاءوا
 التنبيه
 40- ولا تشكوا إن دين الله
 41- إن بنا الإسلام لا تنهدم
 42- قد علم الله بما يريدون²⁴⁹
 43- قد أخبر النبي [ب] ما سينالون²⁵¹
 44- لا حيلة من أحد فيما جرى
 تنمة
 45- ورتب القول إلى أدماوا
 46- هل تسمعون ما فعلوا نحو زغي
 47- ومن يكن ذا عقل يعلم ما
 48- ونسأل الله تعالى اليسر
 المحاورة
 49- وسائل يسألني عن شأني
 50- يقول لي سلغ تريد أو هنا
 51- أين تريد المكث يا عالمنا
 52- قلت له [أ] لم تعتبر بما أتى
 53- بل الدنيا كلها ما استوطنت
 54- وإنني حرت في²⁵³ هذا الأمر
 55- ولا أقول في هنا مكثت
 56- أما سؤالك [أل] رجوع [إلى] سلغ
 57- إن صلحت فنعم ما أصلحها
 58- وإن سلغ عندها أشياء
 59- وأهلها ذوو غنى ومال
 60- ولا أريدها ولو سنين
 61- ولا أعودها مدى الدهور
 62- لو ملئت بالطيبات والهناء
 63- لو ألبست سلغ ثياب سندس
 64- تعلمن لا بأس مني فيها
 65- لكننا القلب أبي أن يرجع
 66- لمن يقول إنها مطاعم
 67- أو من يقول إنها روضات
 68- أقوالهم عندهم لصادق
- وقدره وحكمه وعلمه
 بل فَوْض الأمر إلى خالقك
 أنفع عندنا أو القرار
 بل إن كلا منهما كالفادح
 قيل وقال فاسكتوا أو فامسكوا
 فاكتنموا أموركم وكيدوا
 واصطبروا بقلبيكم إن حادوا
 لا يهدمونه وهم كالللاه
 وكل مرتد عنه²⁴⁸ سيندم
 وما يحبون وما يعادون²⁵⁰
 ولا نقاس عليهم²⁵² إن طالوا
 فالرب قادر على ما قد عرى
 كذا كب، لافي أو نصرأوا
 من غيرهم يحرقها ولو طغى
 أقوله ويعتبر ويفهم
 ومخرجا في كل ما قد عسر
 سرا وجهرا قل له سأكني
 أو هوسا أو عكو كذاك ماسنا
 فأينما مكثت فهو دارنا
 كل المواطن بنا ما ثبت [ت]
 بل زلزلت وهدمت ما بن [ي] [ت]
 لم أدر ما أفعل [ه] في ذا الدهر
 ولا إلى هنالك ذهبت
 بل حبها من قلبنا قد نلغ
 أو ملأت بالخير ينبغي لها
 لذينة وأمرها ضياء
 لكنه ليس [ب] ها²⁵⁴ آمالي
 بالمكث لو طابت كطور سينا
 بنية المكث [على] المشهور
 وإنني لكنتي ماكثا هنا
 لقلت جهرا إننا في نياس
 ولا خصومة لساكنيها
 بوده لنحوها أو يسما
 أو من يقول عندها منافع
 أو من يظن أنها جنات
 لأنها موطنهم موافق

²⁴⁸ In the original text بها

⁷ In the original version يريدوا

⁸ In the original version يعادوا

in the original version ما سينالوا²⁵¹

in the original version منهم²⁵²

"حرت ل" في الأصل وقد ثبتناه ب "حرت في" المناسب تركيبيا²⁵³

"ليس لها آمالي" في الأصل وقد ثبتناه بما هو مناسب للسياق²⁵⁴

- 69- ولا تظنوا قلت ما قد قلت
70- لست بحاسد لأهل الأرض
71- لست بباعض أهل سلغ
72- بل إنني في كتي كنت جالسا
73- ولا تشكوا إنني إن قمت
74- أو قدر الله كتي مقبرتي
75- رب اغفر لأمة الإسلام
76- ولا ألوم من هواها أيضا
77- لأنها موطنهم معاهد
78- يا مسلمون لا تكونوا هوجا
79- بل فامسكوا ب[ال]سنة الغراء
80- فاعتصموا بموثق الرحمن
81- واصطبروا على البلايا كلها
82- فينظر الله إلى أحوالكم
83- يا رب ثبتنا على الإسلام
84- تمت قصيدتي بحمد الله
85- وآله والصحب والأزواج
86- أبياتها فر²⁵⁵ وعام بشرقو²⁵⁶
87- سميتها مشرع ماء الخبر
- تحاسدا أو غاشما قد كنت
لو وجدوا موطننا كالروض
ولا أحب من لهم قد تلغ
إن بقيت خمسة كنت سادسا
من هاهنا لقد ذهبت [إلى] سكتو
ورحمة الله أجلّ طلبتي
طائعهم والعاص ذي الملام
ولا أذم من رآها روضا
منذ صباهم بل بها قد ولدوا
بينهم ولا تكونوا همجا
ولا تميلوا [إلى] طلب السراء
من سنة الرسول والقرآن
ليمحص الله بها أثرها
أتصبرو[ن] أو تجزعو[ن] من ذلكم
في كل فتنة أو الآلام
أزكى الصلاة لابن عبد الله
ما صرف الدهر بأهل التاج
شهر محرم لتسع حققوا²⁵⁷
لوارد أوردتها بالنظر

²⁵⁵ أي 87 بالحساب الجمل

²⁵⁶ أي عام 1316

²⁵⁷ أي التاسع من شهر المحرم

Appendix II

Poem I: English Translation

In the Name of God the Beneficent the Merciful
God's blessing be upon the one after whom there is no prophet

1. In praise of He who rotates the wheel of Time,²⁵⁸
I begin to compose this broken rajaz.²⁵⁹
2. He is the one who alternates the passing years
And determines happiness and sorrow.
3. Most pure blessings be upon the prophet of the epic battle,
Muhammad, whose edifice is indestructible.²⁶⁰
4. Salutation as well upon him and his family,
His disciples, and his wives until eternity.²⁶¹
5. O inquirer, about what I discern within my heart,
Listen to what I recount from my mind.
6. Learn that when events befall,
Their occurrence had been foreordained long ago.²⁶²
7. Don't you see it descending, o my people?
Don't you see it escalating every day?
8. It has engulfed the Sudan²⁶³ from every side
And spread across the lands till the farthest end.
9. Starting from Fūta Tōro,²⁶⁴ no doubt of that,
It stretched to Fūta Jallon,²⁶⁵ o my night companion.
10. Then to the town of Mayo²⁶⁶ say, or Yoro;²⁶⁷

²⁵⁸ الدهور من يصرف الدهور (صرف) signifies among other meanings shifting from one state or condition to another; Lane حرف دال p. 923. Time from the beginning of the world to its end) cf. Lane حرف دال p. 923.

²⁵⁹ الرجز , one of sixteen meters in Arabic poetry. See introduction for elaboration.

²⁶⁰ Reference to Islam as a construction resting on five pillars.

²⁶¹ This formal salutation is included at the beginning and end of writing in the classical Muslim tradition.

²⁶² Reference to God's power of predetermining human actions.

²⁶³ السودان , literally sūdān, abbreviated reference to bilād al-sūdān or "land of the blacks," the term historians and geographers writing in Arabic used to refer to the savanna lands south of the Sahara Desert stretching from the Atlantic to the Red Sea.

²⁶⁴ فوت تور , Fūta Tōro, middle Senegal River valley polity where Fulfulde-speaker reside.

²⁶⁵ فوت جل , Fūta Jallon, highlands Guinea polity where Fulfulde-speakers reside.

- To Bundu,²⁶⁸ is it possible to move on?
11. And from there, say to Timbuktu,²⁶⁹
Thus I was informed.
 12. Shinguit²⁷⁰ and Tūbā²⁷¹ say, they are two towns
Large and far away indeed.
 13. From Marrakesh²⁷² and Fez,²⁷³ followed by
Bandiagara²⁷⁴ and Douentza,²⁷⁵ make mention of them.
 14. Forget not Māsina,²⁷⁶ it has wondrous signs
And its people were standard bearers.
 15. It was afflicted by what afflicted all people,
Of the calamities, and I mean the severe ordeal.
 16. Pay close heed, you will never find escape
From this world, nor a stable home.
 17. Sāmaga²⁷⁷ of Wangara²⁷⁸ was encompassed by the calamity,
Up to the shores of Ashanti²⁷⁹ and Akim.²⁸⁰
 18. Indeed, this calamity has reached Gilāso,²⁸¹
Up to Goune,²⁸² Bigou,²⁸³ Goumne²⁸⁴ and Fīso.²⁸⁵

²⁶⁶ مايو , unidentified town.

²⁶⁷ يور , unidentified town.

²⁶⁸ فوت بند , literally Fūta Bundu, upper Senegal River valley polity where Fulfulde- and Soninke-speakers reside.

²⁶⁹ تنيكت , town and historical Muslim scholarly center at the northern bend of the Niger River in Mali.

²⁷⁰ شنجيط , town and historical Muslim scholarly center in Mauritania.

²⁷¹ طوبى , town and Muslim scholarly center for the Muridiyya Sufi order in Senegal.

²⁷² مراکش , Murrākush, town in Morocco.

²⁷³ فاس , Fās, town in Morocco.

²⁷⁴ بنجر , town in the middle Niger River delta in Mali.

²⁷⁵ دنسها , town in the middle Niger River delta in Mali.

²⁷⁶ ماسن , middle Niger River delta polity where Fulfulde-speakers reside.

²⁷⁷ Town in central Mali.

²⁷⁸ Soninke traders of the Mande group. They are spread across the West African region from Mali to Ghana

²⁷⁹ One of the Akan speaking ethnic groups located in southern Ghana

²⁸⁰ Name used for both the people and language of an ethnic group of the Akan speakers located in the Eastern region of Ghana

²⁸¹ Probably Bobo-Dioulasso second largest city in Burkina Faso.

²⁸² Either of two towns: one located in Togo and the other in Mali.

²⁸³ Town in the southeastern corner of Burkina-Faso close to the Togo frontier.

²⁸⁴ Town in the Upper East region of Ghana, close to the frontiers of Togo and Benin.

²⁸⁵ These two towns are probably located in Burkina Faso.

19. The Gurinshi²⁸⁶ deserts were not spared,
Neither the inhabited lands of Mosi.²⁸⁷
20. Worse still, the Fanti²⁸⁸ lands have been fully occupied;
Their chiefs have become dishonored slaves.
21. Their rule has reached the lands of Awana,²⁸⁹
Up to Agāshi,²⁹⁰ Dahomey,²⁹¹ Ikko²⁹² and Dina.²⁹³
22. Have you not seen how they have occupied the lands from Mango?²⁹⁴
And beyond Barbe,²⁹⁵ Tāsi²⁹⁶ and Sagu?²⁹⁷
23. The *Kuffār*²⁹⁸ of Bargo²⁹⁹ have all been conquered.
Their leaders either took to their heels or were killed.
24. Forget not their destruction of Abeokuta;³⁰⁰
They have subdued all who uttered word or were silent.
25. Indeed, they have occupied all of it, up to Ilorin.³⁰¹
Oh God! Illuminate our hearts with light!
26. Keep list, and mention how they conquered the land of Bono;³⁰²
And their rule has approached Alufa.³⁰³
27. Kokūku,³⁰⁴ Lāfiagi,³⁰⁵ forget them not;
Likewise their surrounding villages up to their farthest limits.

²⁸⁶ Ethnic group situated in Northern Ghana.

²⁸⁷ Largest ethnic group in Burkina Faso living in the central parts of the country.

²⁸⁸ Ethnic group of the Akan speaking people living in central Ghana

²⁸⁹ Another name for the Ewe ethnic group residing on the coastal regions of Ghana, Togo and Benin

²⁹⁰ City in Present day Benin Republic

²⁹¹ Pre-colonial name of the Republic of Benin (W.A.)

²⁹² Another name for the city of Lagos in Nigeria

²⁹³ Another name for Cape-Coast in Ghana

²⁹⁴ Town in the upper northern region of Togo.

²⁹⁵ There are four towns known by this name: two are located in Niger (Barbe Peul, and Barbe Zarma); one in Burkina-Faso and the other in Mali. In all likelihood, the reference might be to either the town in Burkina-Faso or one of the towns in Niger.

²⁹⁶ Town in northern Benin.

²⁹⁷ A village in the Upper West Region of Ghana

²⁹⁸ Ajami Arabic word for disbelievers.

²⁹⁹ A region in Northern Benin.

³⁰⁰ Major city in Nigeria.

³⁰¹ City in the western part of Nigeria.

³⁰² Ethnic group in the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana.

³⁰³ Town in Nigeria.

³⁰⁴ Town in central Niger located in the administrative region of Dosso.

³⁰⁵ Town in the central west Nigeria situated in Kwara State, although there are nine other towns in Nigeria also known by this name.

28. This was all according to God's will.
He does what He wishes without a doubt.
29. I have heard they have taken
Some parts of Nupe³⁰⁶ from its people. Where is a savior?!
30. Did they conquer Bussa³⁰⁷ and the land of Yawuri!?³⁰⁸
Indeed, they have even conquered Gombe,³⁰⁹ without any deliberation.
31. Do not forget that they are in Dori³¹⁰
And Yega,³¹¹ Gilājdi,³¹² Say³¹³ as well as Zangori.³¹⁴

Resignation

32. When you ponder upon all that I have said,
Just say: "God is our lord," and add no more.
33. For this is all by his decree,
And power, and wisdom, and knowledge.
34. Seek no way out by your own power;
Resign yourself rather to your creator.
35. Think about it. Do you see it better
For us to run away, or to stay put?
36. You will find no better choice between the two;
Either of them will lead to shame.
37. I command you O people, to stop
The idle talk; either keep quiet or abstain.

Exhortation

38. O Muslims! Show submission outwardly;
Then conceal your intentions and conspire.

³⁰⁶ City in Eastern Nigeria.

³⁰⁷ Town in Nigeria.

³⁰⁸ Town in the Kebbi state of Nigeria.

³⁰⁹ Town in the Gombe state of Nigeria.

³¹⁰ Town in the district of Tillaberi in Niger.

³¹¹ Probably a town in Nigeria.

³¹² Town in Niger located in the administrative region of Dosso-Bobboye.

³¹³ Town in the district of Tillaberi in Niger.

³¹⁴ Town in the mid-south of Niger close to the border with Nigeria.

39. I advise you to show thankfulness when they come;
And endure with your hearts when they show you prejudice.

Warning

40. Have no doubt that the religion of God
Shall not be destroyed by them; they are like jokers.

41. The Islamic edifice shall never be destroyed;
Any apostate shall come to regret.

42. God knew what they wanted,
And what they desired, and what they stood against.

43. The prophet has foretold what will overtake them;
And we shall not be compared to them however tall they be.

44. No one can be wise about what has come to pass;
The Lord has power over what has befallen (us).

Closure

45. Keep listing my words, up to Adamawa,
As well as Kafi,³¹⁵ Lāfi³¹⁶ a and Nassarāwa.³¹⁷

46. Did you hear what they perpetrated around Jega?³¹⁸
Who else other than them could have burned it, were they even to rebel?

47. He who is wise will know
What I am saying, and then ponder upon it and understand.

48. We ask Almighty God for ease,
And a way out from any difficult situation.

The Dialogue

49. And an inquirer inquired about my situation.
Inwardly and outwardly, say to him, I will give hint.

50. He says to me: “Is it Salaga³¹⁹ where you want to be, or here,
Or Hausa³²⁰ or you prefer Ikko³²¹ or Māsina?³²²”

³¹⁵ There are as many as six localities with this name: one in Niger and the rest in Nigeria.

³¹⁶ There are as many as thirteen localities with the name: one is located in Niger and twelve of them in Nigeria.

³¹⁷ All three towns are located in the Northern part of Nigeria.

³¹⁸ Town in the State of Kebbi, Nigeria.

³¹⁹ Famous ancient slave market in the northern part of Ghana.

51. Where will you like to stay o our scholar?
For wherever you choose to stay would be our home.”
52. I said to him: “Can you not see what has occurred?
All abodes have become unsettling for us.”
53. Nay, our entire world is not habitable;
It has been rocked, and what was built is destroyed.
54. And I am confused about the situation;
And I am at a loss about what to do in this world.
55. I cannot say: ‘Here I would reside,
Or over there either, I would go.’
56. But regarding going back to Salaga, as you asked,
Nay, we have cancelled its love from our heart.
57. If it is restored, it would be wonderful for her;
Or if it is filled with abundance, she sure deserves it.
58. There are sweet things in Salaga,
And her situation is bright.
59. The residents are rich and wealthy.
However, my hopes are not fixed upon her.
60. I would not choose it for abode,
For years to come, even if it became as pleasant there as Ṭūr Sīnīn.³²³
61. And I would not sojourn there for all eternity,
With the intention of staying, speaking generally.
62. Even if it became filled with pleasant things and bliss,
It would be in Kete that I would reside.
63. Were Salaga to be adorned in silk brocade,
I would openly declare my renunciation of it.

³²⁰ One of the major ethnic groups in the northern part of Nigeria.

³²¹ See note 32.

³²² See note 19.

³²³ *طور سينين* The reference occurs twice in the Qur’ān: In Sūra 23 verse 20 and in Sūra 95 verse 2. In the former it occurs as: *وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ طُورِ سَيْنَاءَ تَنْبُتُ بِالذَّهْنِ وَصَبِغٍ لِلَّذِينَ* (Also a tree springing out of Mount Sinai, which produces oil, and relish for those who use it for food.) and in the latter as : *وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرَّيْثُونَ, وَطُورِ سَيْنِينَ* (1. By the fig and the olive 2. By the mount of Sinai) [Both translation from Yusuf Ali. *The Meaning of the Holy Quran*. (<http://www.islam101.com/quran/yusufAli/>).

64. Know that I bear her no ill,
And I have no quarrel with its residents.
65. It is just my heart that has declined
To incline towards her again, or even hear of her.
66. To those who claim it is the object of attractions,
Or those who think it has beneficial things,
67. Or those who clamor that it is full of meadows,
Or those who think it has blissful gardens,
68. Their words sound true to them,
Because it is the abode most agreeable to them.
69. And do not think that I said what I said
Out of envy, or because I was oppressed.
70. I am not envious of people,
Were they even to find an abode like the Rawḍ.³²⁴
71. I do not hate the people of Salaga;
Neither do I love people who smash heads.
72. Nay, it is at Kete³²⁵ that I would stay;
If five stayed, I shall be the sixth.
73. And have no doubt, if I decided to depart from here,
It would be to Sokoto³²⁶ I would go.
74. Or if God decrees Kete to be my resting place,
Then God's mercy is my greatest wish."
75. O Lord, forgive the Muslim *Umma*,³²⁷
The pious, as well as the reprobate sinner.
76. I do not blame those who are fond of it either,
Nor condemn those who find it a meadow,

³²⁴ الروضة this refers to a place within the Prophet's mosque at Media situated between the pulpit and the prophet's room.

³²⁵ Town located near Salaga in the northern region of Ghana, where the poet moved to stay after he left Salaga. It is popularly known as Kete-Krachi.

³²⁶ Capital of the northern state of Sokoto.

³²⁷ أمة Community; here specifically the Muslim community at large.

77. Because it is the abode to which they are bound
Since childhood, nay, that is their place of birth.
78. O Muslims, do not behave irrationally
Among them, and conduct yourself not as savages.
79. But hold fast to the noble tradition,
And incline not towards seeking delights.
80. Fasten your grip upon the covenant of the Merciful,
From the prophet's tradition and the Quran.
81. Bear stoutly all calamities,
That God might purify you through them.
82. God would examine your situation,
Whether you would endure it or despair.
83. O Lord, keep us steadfast upon Islam,
Through every crisis or pain.
84. Thank God, my poem is done;
Purest blessings be bestowed upon the son of Abdul Allah,³²⁸
85. As well as his family, wives and companions;
So long as Time spins the wheel for kings.
86. Its verses are Faz³²⁹ and a year has dawned,³³⁰
The month of Muharram³³¹ has attained nine.
87. I have entitled it, "Arriving at the water gorge
By one who comes to it with insight."

³²⁸ The Prophet Muhammad's father.

³²⁹ Alphabetic numbering mostly used by Muslims scholars. Here ف = 80; ز = 7 totaling 87 verses. Probably the poet has included the opening line (بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم) in his counting.

³³⁰ ي = 10، ش = 1000، ر = 200، ق = 100، و = 6. The verb stands alphabetically for the Hijra calendar. This will add up to 1316 H. The additional و is a poetic convention of expressing the final metrical accent as long. The text also has an added ل which might be a typographical mistake. If counted the date would be 1317. Thus, the date of completing the composition would be 1st Muharram, 1316/1317, which would be equivalent to the 30th of May, 1898, or the 20th of May, 1899.

³³¹ The first month of the Islamic calendar.

Appendix III

Poem II

Nazm al-la'ali bi 'ikhbārīn wa tanbīhi al-kirām

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
صلي الله علي سيدنا محمد وآله وصحبه وسلّم تسليمًا وبالله أستعين

1. باسم الله أبدأ في النظام
 2. مصرف كل دهر كيف شاء
 3. وفاعل ما يشاء كما يشاء
 4. وأرسل رسله بهدي وشرع
 5. وختّمهم بخير الخلق طراً
 6. وأنزل روحه وحيّاً عليه
 7. وجاهد أهل كفر و الضلال
 8. فصلّاً عليه يا من لا يزال
 9. كذاك لآله و الصحب طراً
 10. وبعد فقصدنا نظم اللآلي
 11. لنفع العاقلين نظمت نظمي
 12. وذو طعن وذو جرح يضيع
 13. ومن يك عاقلاً يصغ إليه
 14. وشمس مصيبة طلعت بغرب
 15. بليّات النصارى أريد نظماً
 16. ومبدأ أمرهم جاؤا بسلم
 17. وقالوا إنا جننا لسوق
 18. ومنع الظلم في الدنيا ولص
 19. ولم نعلم بنيتهم جميعاً
 20. يغفرونا بتحفهم قليل
 21. ولم نعلم بأنهم أتونا
 22. لكي يبينوا البوارك في الأراضى
 23. قريباً بدّلوا ما قولوه
 24. وقد كرزوا اللواء بكل مدن
 25. وقالوا لا شراء لكل عبد
 26. ولا حبس بقيد أو بحبل
 27. وأما الحر عندهم كعبد
 28. وقلنا ما بهذا جنتمونا
 29. ولم أر مثل هذا الحكم حقاً
 30. ذليل كالعزيم مع الكرامة
 31. وهذا الحكم ليس له دواء
 32. ولم أر بقعة للهرب منهم
 33. ألم تر أنهم ملكوا الأراضى
- إله واحد رب الأنام
تعالى ربنا محي العظام
تبارك ذو الجلال والإكرام
وآيات مضيئات الظلام
رسول الله أحمد ذي المقام
لكي يهدي إلى دار السلام
ومهدّ دينه فوق الأكام
و سلّم يا سلام إلى القيام
وآل البيت هم أهل التمام
بأخبار وتنبية الكرام
ولم أعبأ بمن هو في اللنام
ولكن للإله مدى المرام
ويفهم ما نويها في الكلام
وأمت للعمارة والموام
وبلواهم أتتتنا كالغمام
وقول لئین حلّو النظام
وإصلاح الطرائق في الطوام
وإحسان وإسقاط الغرام
وقد صرنا لديهم كالطغام³³²
و يعطونا لذيات الطعام
لملك كالملوك ذوي الخيام
مزينة بألوان الرخام
كما قال الإله لدى الكلام
وصار أهيلها مثل الخدام
ولا بيع ولا رقب الأنام
ولا ضرب وجيع ذي الآلام
وعيد عندهم كالحر سام
أ كنتم ناكثي عقد الكلام
عزيز كالذليل مع الملام
فيا عجباً ويا ويح الكرام
سوى صبر وإمساك الكلام
إذا رما الفرار إلى السلام
نواحيها و حافوا³³³ كالجهام

³³² وصرنا عندهم مثل الطغام Variation in NAG
³³³ حاطوا Variation in NAG

- 334 وفي صَعَّ قَاتَلُوا أَهْلَ الزَّحَامِ
 وَقَانَدَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ نُوَ الْأَثَامِ
 كَذَلِكَ بَنَبَرٌ أَرْضِ الطَّعَامِ
 مَدِينَةٌ مَائِي غَطَّتْ بِالْقَتَامِ
 وَمَاسِنِ إِتْهَا أَرْضِ الْكِرَامِ
 وَسَرَفَرٌ سَوَقِ مَلْحٍ لِلطَّعَامِ
 وَقَانَدَهُمْ عَقِيبُ ذُو الْمَلَامِ
 عَلَى قَدْرِ التَّحْمَلِ فِي النِّظَامِ
 وَكُرْتَابِي وَدَاغَابِ النِّعَامِ
 وَتَيَّرَ دَارَ رَعْلٍ أَهْلَ الرِّغَامِ
 صَغِيرٍ أَوْ كَبِيرٍ ذِي الرِّغَامِ
 إِلَى دَكَلٍ وَسُنْدِرٍ فِي الْمَعَامِ
 وَرَنْغُورٍ وَسَائِي كَالْتَوَامِ
 كَذَا بِيَكْنُ وَنَاتَنْغُ الْكَلَامِ³³⁵
 سَوِي نَدْرُ ضَرُورَاتِ النِّظَامِ
 وَيَا دِعْ كُلُّهَا أَرْضِ النَّامِ
 عَلَى بُسْمَا وَصَارُوا كَالْخَدَامِ
 وَبَارِكُهَا مُحِيطَاتِ بَحَامِ
 وَقَدْ فَرَّوْا فِرَارَ الْوَحْشِ هَامِ
 بِهَذَا الْاَوْرُ فَرَّوْا كَالسُّوَامِ
 وَبَيْنَ فَعَّ وَهَذَا مِنْ مَلَامِ
 بَرَايَاتِ وَسَالُغٍ لَا سَلَامِ
 كَذَا لُغُ بَلِّ كِبَجَنْتُوا فِي النِّظَامِ
 وَكُنْبِشِرِي بِهَا سَوَقِ الْمَدَامِ
 أَتَوْا كُنْفَيْلٍ فِي يَوْمِ اللَّثَامِ³³⁶
 بِمَلِكٍ كَامِلٍ هُمْ كَالْخَدَامِ
 وَلَا أَحَدًا يِنَازِعُ فِي الْكَلَامِ
 وَمَاتَ وَأَدْخَلُوهُ فِي الرَّجَامِ
 إِذَا جَاؤَا يَمُوتُ بِلَا سَقَامِ
 وَمُوتَ فِي الْكِرَامَةِ كَالْمَنَامِ
 قَلِيلٍ فِي الرِّجَالِ سَوِي الْكِرَامِ
 وَمَنْ يَبْقَى سِينْدَمُ قِي الظَّلَامِ
 وَفَرَّ أَمِيرُهَا مِثْلَ الْغَلَامِ
 وَبِرِّكَ النَّبِّ وَلَتَأْفُو تَوَامِ
 كَذَا جَكَّغُ وَبِنْدُعُ فِي الظَّلَامِ
 كَذَا يَلُّ أَرْضِ مَلْحٍ لِلطَّعَامِ
 بَرَايَاتِ سَوَادِ كَالْبِئُؤَامِ
 وَمَاتَ مَعَ الْكِرَامَةِ لَا الْمَلَامِ
 وَقَاتَلَهُمْ وَسَارَ إِلَى الرَّجَامِ
 فَنَعَمُ إِمَامُهُ أَيُّ الْإِمَامِ
 جَزَاهُ اللَّهُ قِي دَارِ السَّلَامِ
34. وَمَنْ سَنَسُنْدُ قَلِ صَعَّ ثَمَّ جَنِّي
 35. وَأَمَّا جَنِّي جَاوَهَا بِجَيْشِ
 36. وَمَنْ دَيْبٍ سَنَنْغَرُ يَا أَوْلَاءِ
 37. إِلَى يُورُ وَفُوتَ جَلُّ وَثُورُ
 38. وَشَنْجِيْبُ وَتُنْبُكْتُ وَطَوْبِي
 39. وَبَنْجَعَرُ وَدُنْسُ كَذَا قَرِيْشِ
 40. وَقَدْ مَكْتُوَا سَفَاغَرُ وَمَا يَلِيْهَا
 41. سَنَذَكُرُ كُلِّ أَرْضِ مَلِكُوْهَا
 42. فَتُوْمَا وَمَا حَوَالِيْهَا وَدُوْرُ
 43. وَسَنْوِي كُلِّهَا حَتَّى نَصَارُ
 44. وَقَدْ مَلِكُوَا هُنَالِكَ كُلِّ وَطَنِ
 45. وَحَلُّ فَرَّ وَارِثُهُ لَخَوْفٍ³³⁵
 46. وَيَاغُ إِلَى غَلَاغٍ وَسُرْبٍ أَيْضًا
 47. وَكِرْتَانِشٍ وَكُنْفُ وَنُتْبَلْبُوَا
 48. وَهَذَا كُلُّهَا أَرْضِ الْفَلَاتِي
 49. وَنَلْتَفِتُ إِلَى فُدْعُ وَلَلِّي
 50. أَلَمْ تَرِ أَنَّهُمْ كَرَزُوا اللَّوَاءِ
 51. وَقَدْ مَكْتُوَا بُوْغَدُعُ دُونَ رِيْبِ
 52. وَلَمْ أَرِ ذَا شَجَاعِ أَرْضِ مَوْشِ
 53. ذَكَرَهُمْ أَنَاثَهُمْ سِوَاءِ
 54. أَلَا لَا فَرْقَ بَيْنَ رَوَا لَدِيْهِمْ
 55. وَهَلْ تَسْمَعُ نَزْوَلَهُمْ بِكُوْنِ
 56. كَذَا بَلْسُ وَمَنْ فِيْهَا جَمِيْعًا
 57. وَبِيْرٍ وَتَمْرِيْ دَكِّي سِوَاءِ
 58. وَرَاغُ وَمَا هُنَالِكَ قَلِ بَسَنْغُ
 59. وَأَمَّا أَرْضُ غَرْمٍ فَقَدْ حَوَّوْهَا
 60. وَلَمْ نَسْمَعْ بِهَا أَحَدًا يَحَارِبِ
 61. سِوَى عَرْجُ الَّذِي يَأْبَى الْحِيَاءِ
 62. كَذَلِكَ يَنْبَغِي لِعَزِيْزِ قَوْمِ
 63. حَيَاةٍ فِي الْهُوَانِ كَلَا حَيَاةِ
 64. وَلَكِنْ مِنْ يَجِيْبُ نَدَى الْمَنَايَا
 65. حَبِيْبِنَا عَرْجُ عَزِيْنَاهُ حَقًّا³³⁸
 66. وَبِنَنْتُوْغُ فَسَرًا قَدْ أَتَوْهَا
 67. وَمَادَبُ وَسَنْبَلُغُ وَبُوْتِ
 68. وَسُوْدُ نَمَلِي دَاغُوَا وَمَا هُنَالِكَ
 69. وَكُرْمَمُ كَذَا تَنْدَا تَلِيْهَا
 70. أَلَمْ تَسْمَعْ نَزْوَلَهُمْ بِكُرْرِ
 71. وَابْنِ أَمِيْرِهَا بِسَلِ جَرِي
 72. فَنَعَمُ فِعَالُهُ يَأْبَى الْحِيَاءِ
 73. وَمَنْ يَبْقَى سِينْدَمُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
 74. وَمَاتَ وَلَمْ يَخْفِ فِي الْقَتْلِ أَلْمَا³³⁹

334 وفي صغ قاتلوا أهل الرحام Variation in NAG

335 وحل فر وارثه لجيش Variation in NAG

336 كذلك كور كنت في النظام Variation in NAG

337 كذا غب هل لدينا من تمام Variation in NAG

338 حبينا غرج عزيناه طرا Variation in NAG

75. أتوا نك لا قتال ولا جدال
76. وقل زُع بَنَقَل وكذاك كُنْدِي
77. ومن غُرْمُ ومن تَأْمُوا بَبْرُغُو
78. وكل رفيع قوم لم يقاتل
79. وي طرح فوق مزبلة عربياً
80. أتوا كَرَكْ كذا وَرِي تَمَّ كَيْكَيْل
81. وكم من عالم قد مات حتفاً
82. ولا عيباً لمن قتلوه يوماً³⁴¹
83. ظننا أن في بَرُغُو أناساً
84. رأينا جفنةً تحمل برأس
85. والآت وأدوية لديهم
86. وهذا كله كذب وزور
87. ولم نرى منهم إلا فرادى
88. سمعنا أنهم قصدوا لشرق
89. وقد سلخوا طريق زَبْرَمَ حَقًّا
90. إلى لُول وكند وضودُ أيضاً
91. أمير كِب سماعيل أتوه
92. نعم قصدوا إلى تَعَزَرُ وَأَرْبِن
93. أعتنا أمة الإسلام طراً
94. أتوا تارَ وغوبِرَ قل مَرَادِي
95. وكم من قرية قد فسدها
96. جنودهم أتت زَنْدَرُ بشرٍ
97. لثار جهنم جاؤا بغيط
98. سمعنا أنهم بلغوا لشار
99. إلى لُعْنِي وَمَنْدَرُ ثم مُسْعُو
100. أتوا في دِكُوا لقتال رَابِ
101. بموضع أخذه سطم الدخان
102. وفي ذا اليوم أمرهم عزيز
103. صروف الدهر من هذا لهذا
104. وما من حادث إلا سيفني
105. وكل الفتن لو طالت مداها
106. ومن فتن تتشأت السحاب
107. ويأحي ويأ قيوم فاصرف
108. وبابيمَ وقريته تَكاسُوا
109. وحاربه وقتله سريعاً
110. دَوَاكِرَ ثم تَبِرَ وقل غِلاسُو
111. وبُوبُولَا كذلك أرض ويدي
112. إلى غَرْبُغُ شَيْبِنُغُ أيضاً
113. بها المختار ذو عزم وحزم
114. سوى التسبيح ثم قيام ليل
- وصار أميرها مثل الحمام
وقل وَسَ بَلْ شَنْدِي فِي الظلام
فقد قتلا على شر الحمام
سيقتل بالبنادق أو حسام
وتأكله الطيور مع الهوام
وما سفكوا بها ملء الحجام
بخوفهم سيرحم في الرجام³⁴⁰
كما قتلوا حمار السود طام
سلاطين القتال بلا ملام
وقوساً كان مسموم السهام
 وأنواع السموم على القمام
وقد طرحوا وفروا كالهوام
حمار السود ثم ابن الكتام
برايات والآت الركام
إلى دُوسُ وَ تَنْبِكِرَ العوام³⁴²
و غِيَوِيْنُ دُمِيْعَ كالتوام
بصلح لا قتال ولا خصام
إلى سَالْمِي سلم بالسلام³⁴³
أجرنا من مصيبيات اللئام
وتأسا وَ أَعِي أرض الكلام
بتخريب وتحريق الطعام
برايات والآت الركام
وفي أبوابها بيض العظام³⁴⁴
بنوا في وسطها دار الرخام
وأرض سَرَ فقلها في النظام
وقد أسروه أخذاً كالغلام³⁴⁵
وجلل أفقهم مثل الجهام
كذلك حال دنيا بالأنام
ومن هذا لهذا لا دوام
إذا بلغ النهاية بالتمام
ستقنى مثل ماجاءت كرام
فماودقت ومرت كالجهام
وادت دهرنا إذ جاء نام
أناه بها جهنم ذو البقام
وغالب كن دُغُو أرض الطعام
إلى لُوب تلي دار السلام
إلى وَرَ كُو بها سوق المقام
إلى دَافِي ووهاب التمام
بطول الليل ليس من النيام
وفي طول النهار من الصوام

³³⁹ ومات ولم يجف في القتل حقاً Variation in NAG

³⁴⁰ بخوفهم سيرفي الرجام (اي القبور) Variations in both Yendi and Abubakar

³⁴¹ ولا عيباً لمن قتلوه عمداً Variation in NAG

³⁴² طريق زيرم قد سلخواه حقاً Variation in NAG الى دوس وتنبكر الطوام

³⁴³ طريقهم الى تَعَزَرُ وَأَرْبِن Variation in NAG الى سالمى يا رب الانام

³⁴⁴ لثار جهنم جاؤا بغيط Variation in NAG لذا قتلوا بها جل العظام

³⁴⁵ وقد أسروه أخذاً كالغلام Variation in NAG

115. على هذا أتوه ولم يهابوا
 116. وذو جُنْدِي بها سُوفَا كَثِيرٌ³⁴⁶
 117. وأما لقبه سَامُورٌ أَيْضًا
 118. له غَيْرِي وَكُنْتُغٌ وَالنِّسَاءُ
 119. إلى أم القرى زعمًا وهربًا
 120. وأين جنود من سكنوا غُرُنْشُ
 121. وقد ملكوا كَسَانٌ وَلَوْ وَبَيْعٌ
 122. كذاك بِشِيٍّ وَمُنْكَرٌ ثُمَّ نُورٌ
 123. ولا تَنْسَ وَنَلَيْبِي ثُمَّ سَكَلُوا
 124. وَكَيْكَيْغٌ فِرَاتِنٌ قُلُوبٌ بَسِيْسُنٌ
 125. وقد ملكوا غُرُنْشُ بلا نزاع
 126. وما قد ضرهم إلا عبيد
 127. عبيد غُرُنْشُ ليسوا آمنين
 128. خصوصًا من إسمالٍ ومن دِغَاتٍ
 129. أتوا ساداتهم حق الإباء
 130. وكانوا قبل ذلك من ملوك
 131. ولم يخطر ببالهم كهذا
 132. وفي ذا اليوم قد لاذوا دَغْنَبٌ
 133. أَعْيِلٌ غَرَّ قَوْمٌ أَسْنَتِي يَا ذَا
 134. أم الأصنام أم ورق وذهب
 135. نعم قد غرهم كذب وزور
 136. عواقب أمرهم موت ذريع
 137. وقد ملك النصار دِنَا أَكْنَفٌ
 138. كذلك غَوَا أَسْنَفٌ وما هناك
 139. إلى تَيْبِي كُنْدٌ أَعْيِي جَمِيْعًا
 140. كذاك أَعْيِي شِيٍّ دَاخَمِيٍّ ما هناك
 141. كذا بَادِنٌ أَيْبِيكْتِ أَرْضٌ يَرْبَا
 142. كذلك لَافِيَاغٌ وما يليها
 143. وبعض نُفِيٍّ وَلا فَيَا أَدَمَاوَا
 144. وَيَاوُرٌ ثُمَّ بُوْسٌ كذاك غُنْبٌ (ب)
 145. كذا بيت الدقيق وحرقوها
 146. وهل حقًا أتوا رَعٌ يَا أَنَسَا؟
 147. ألم تر أن قوم دَغْنَبًا قالوا
 148. وكان أمير يَنْدٌ من الذين
 149. وبِأَقِي قومه حتى بنوه
 150. فلما مات جاءهم بلاء
 151. وقل غُنْبَاغٌ ثُمَّ كَسَاشٌ مَنَعُو
 152. وقل كَتِيٍّ دَارِنَا فِي الْيَوْمِ مَلِكْتُ
 153. وباسارٍ وَكَبُرٌ وما هنالك
 154. كذا سَعْدِيٍّ وَكَرْكَرٌ ثُمَّ فَسُو
 155. وَأَرْجٌ سَالَمَنْعٌ وما هناك
 156. أتاه طويل نصران بحرب
- وصالحهم وصار من الكرام
 رئيسهم يكنى بالإمام
 واسم بنيه أولاد الإمام
 سمعنا أنهم أخذوه عام (كذا في الاصل)
 كذا قد قيل في خاص وعام
 زَبْرَمًا وَآ وَهُوسَاوَا تَوَامٌ
 كذا ك سَتِ دَيْنِ أَرْضِ اللَّثَامِ³⁴⁷
 كذا وَيَ أَنَهَا أَرْضُ الْكَرَامِ³⁴⁸
 كذاك كَيْلُوا وَنَابَلُوا الْكَرَامِ
 إلى نَفَارُو غَنْغَارِي النَّظَامِ
 يميئًا ثم خلفًا والأمام
 رضوا عنهم رضًا دون الملام
 وكلاً لا أمانة للعجم
 كَشِيْنٌ وَكَيْفَرُشٌ كُنْجَعٌ مِنْ نَمَامِ
 وعاقوهم على لس الأدام
 وقد مهدوا البسائط للمنام
 ولو بالحلم في رؤيا المنام
 يَوَافِرُ بِهَا سَوْقُ الْبِرَامِ
 أم الأشجار ملتف الظلام
 أم الأهواء أم شرب المدام
 وجهل ثم حمق في السنام
 وفيمن ينج أظفار دوام³⁴⁹
 وأنكر عندها قوم كرام
 إلى سَنْبَرَفُ أَدَى بِالنَّظَامِ
 كذا أَوْنَا وَ أَيْبٌ كَالْتَوَامِ
 كثير لا يعد على النظام
 إلور أت ألوفا في الكلام
 إلى بِنٌ إِنهَا أَرْضُ الْعِجَامِ
 ومثث كَفٍ وَنَصَرُوا تَوَامِ
 و قل إلوا عندها سوق الخدام
 بنار بل وقصدهم أمام
 وإن صدقًا فنيتهم قدام
 وهل يأتوا إلينا بالسلام؟
 لهم رأي وصدق في الكلام
 فأشرار لهم سوء المقام
 وجاءهم الكتائب من جوام
 وبِزَبٍ وَتَاشٌ فَسَعُ بِالنَّظَامِ
 إلى تَنْنَبٌ كُنْكَنَبٌ اللَّثَامِ
 وكان مقامهم قلع الأكام
 وغافلوا ثم سَمَرٌ كَالْتَوَامِ
 أمير سُبْرُكٌ فَرٌّ مِنْ الرُّكَامِ
 وفرَّ وغادر الدهليز طام

³⁴⁶ وهل جند بها سوفًا كثير Variation in NAG

³⁴⁷ There is a variation in NAG

³⁴⁸ This line is missing in NAG

³⁴⁹ وبالناجين اظفار دوام Variation in NAG

157. ألم تر أنهم حافوا بكور
158. وقد رعا بما فعلوه فينا
159. ألم تر أنهم جاؤا وشيش
160. وهذا من إهانتهم لدينا
161. وإن قلنا لهم ما ذا أردتم؟
162. يقولون أمنكم فيقاتلونا؟
163. ألم تسمع نزولهم أبوجا؟
164. فنيتهم قتال المسلمين
165. وما أدري بما سيكون بعد
166. سمعنا أنهم ذهبوا إليي
167. وقيل أتى رسولهم ليوثي
168. وآدم أرسلوه كئوا بمال
169. رأيت جهنم بفلاة رُوبوا
170. نزولهم زَرَ قل ليس زورا
171. وليس لدهرنا إلا سكوت
172. ومن يك قاتلاً للحق فيه
173. وزينة أهله حمق و كذب
174. ففي ذا الدهر لا يرضى بصدق
175. وصار الحق في ذا الدهر مرًا
176. فيا الله يا رحمان فارحم
177. نعم عُضرو فهم سفه وجهل
178. عروقههم التحاسد والفساد
179. وحب المال جلداهم جميعًا
180. وقال وقيل تسبح لديهم
181. وما نظمي سوى للاعتبار
182. ولا لمودة أهل الكتاب
183. ولم أنظمه فرحًا أو نشاطًا
184. ولم نسمح بمن ينوي الفساد
185. فتحريف المقالة ليس بدعًا
186. وقوم حرفوا التوراة حتى
187. ألم تر من يضل الناس كذبًا؟
188. يفسر آية بهواه زورا
189. وأي الناس أحسد من طلاب
190. وهل في الناس أحقد من قراء
191. ألم تسمع بما نال السيوطي؟
192. وشابه نظمه لعبًا ولهوا
193. وترتيب الأراضي والبلاد
194. وليس كما يظن الغافلون
195. معاذ الله من هذا وذاك
196. وكام مصاعف الخطباء حقًا
- نواحيها ونيتهم أمام
فنيتهم إذا ملك الأنام
بها ملك من أبناء الكرام
و إنهم أتونا كالسمام
أ نيتكم قتال ذوي التثام؟
هلموا فاصبروا دون الملام
كذلك غَوَّ ضَفُورَ كالتوام
بلا شك سيأتوا بالخصام
ونسأل ربنا حسن الختام³⁵⁰
وأعدس كلها أرض الكرام
بأقوال مزخرفة النظام
وحمال الأثاث إلى العظام
بأعمال وقصدهم قدام
وليس لنا سوى رب الأنام³⁵¹
و إلا الصبر عن سوء الكلام
سيحیی في الندامة واللام
وتغريب وتكثير النمام³⁵²
فقائلها له كل المذام
وحلوی فيه تكثير النمام³⁵³
عبيدك من خواص والعوام
دماؤهم مخالطة الملام
عظامهم تباغيض الأنام
وحب رياسة شعر الأنام
ولحم الغير كاللحم السمام
وليس من الحماقاة في النظام
معاذ الله عن هذا المرام³⁵⁴
ولكن نظمه للاغتمام
بتحريف المعاني في الكلام³⁵⁵
ولكن كان قديمًا في الأنام
إله العرش كرر في الملام
يحرّف ما أتانا من كلام
وعند الله تجزية الأثام
وإن حسدوا فإننا في التمام³⁵⁶
وإن حقدوا فلسنا قي اغتمام
جزاه الله في زمر الكرام
و ليس كذاك بل هو لاغتمام
لتذكرة وتنبيه الكرام
للهو أو لتقير الأنام
إلى يوم أسير إلى الرجام
يحاسد هم حسود في الكلام

³⁵⁰ ولم نعلم بما سيحيى بعد Variation in GNA

³⁵¹ Only GNA mentions this line.

³⁵² Only GNA mentions this line. But the line appears in both IASAR/8 and IASAR /139 as the third line below

³⁵³ وصار الحق عندهم كمر وحلواهم غرور في الكلام. Variation in GNA.

³⁵⁴ معاذ الله عن تلك المرام. Variation in both IASAR/8 and IASAR/139.

³⁵⁵ ولم يسمع بمن ينوي الفساد. Variation in both IASAR/8 and IASAR/13.

³⁵⁶ وإحسدوا تكن في الإتمام. Variation in GNA.

197. وهمام الكتاب كما نريد
 198. أيا من يستجيب إذا دعاه
 199. سألتناك النجاة بما أتانا
 200. دعوناك بجاه الأنبياء
 201. وأنفسنا وأهلونا جميعاً
 202. ولا ضر لمن لاذوا إليك
 203. ولا هم ولا حزن وكرب
 204. فإنك كنت تفعل ما تشاء
 205. علامات البلاء بدت لدينا
 206. ونسأل ربنا برجال غيب
 207. وجاه حروف كتب الله طراً
 208. وسورة عنكبوت وعاديات
 209. وسورة يوسف والرعد نحل
 210. وسورة الأنبياء ونور أيضاً
 211. وصافات وداود وزمر
 212. وتوراة وإنجيل تليها
 213. وجاه صحابة والآل جمعاً
 214. على خير الأنام سماً وأرضاً³⁶⁵
 215. وجمع الآل والأصحاب طراً
 216. دهوراً عد أبيات الكتاب³⁶⁷
 217. وأما رمز هجرتها جهير³⁶⁸
- سختمه بأدية التمام
 أسير أو عديم في الظلام
 وتنجينا لنختم بالسلام
 وجاه الأولياء ذوي المقام
 مودعة بكُنُفك ذا السلام
 ولا إضرار يا رب الأنام
 لمن وافا ببابك لا السنام
 وتحكم كيف شئت على الأنام³⁵⁷
 هلموا نسأل بذوي المقام
 وجَيْلي الذي³⁵⁸ قطب الكرام³⁵⁹
 وطاسين وياسين وحام³⁶⁰
 وفاتحة وجاه ألف ولام³⁶¹
 وإسراء تلي ذكر النيام
 وحج البيت والشهر الحرام
 كذا الحجرات والحشر الا سام³⁶²
 زبور ثم بالنون و الاقلام³⁶³
 تعالى ذو الجلال والإكرام³⁶⁴
 صلاة والسلام على الدوام
 ونسأل ربنا حسن الختام³⁶⁶
 رمزنا ها وتمت بالتمام
 شقُّ رَمَزته حتى لعام³⁶⁹

³⁵⁷ وتحكم ما تشاء منح الكرام Variation in GNA
³⁵⁸ وجَيْلي الذي نسأل قطب الكرام Variation in IASAR/139
³⁵⁹ ونسأل بالرجال الغيب طراً وطاسين وياسين وحام Variation in GNA
³⁶⁰ GNA omits this line.
³⁶¹ وجاه الف وفاتحة ولام ونام Variation in GNA
³⁶² كذا الحجرات قل هي من سنام Variation in GNA
³⁶³ زبور ثم قل نور والاقلام Variation in GNA
³⁶⁴ وجاه صحابة والآل طراً وتابع تابعين الى القيام
 ونحمد ربنا وله التناء Variation in GNA. تعالى ذوي الجلال والاكرام
³⁶⁵ على خير الانام مدى الدهر Variation in GNA
³⁶⁶ كذاك للآله والصحب طراً ونسأل ربنا حسن الختام Variation in GNA
³⁶⁷ فأبيات الكتاب اجاء دهر Variation in GNA
³⁶⁸ 1318 IASAR/8
³⁶⁹ وجملة ما ذكرنا فيه بين كورة وبلدة اثنان وثمانون ومائتان IASAR/139

Appendix IV

Poem II: English Translation

In the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful
May God bless Muhammad, his family and his companions and bestow everlasting salvation
upon them. And it is his assistance I seek.

1. In Allah's name I begin my composition,
The only God, Lord of humankind.
2. Evolver of all temporality according to His will
Exalted is our Lord, Resurrector of bones.
3. He does what He wishes, as He wished,
Hallowed is He, Glorious and Sublime.
4. He sent His messengers with guidance and law
And signs that dissipate obscurity.
5. He sealed them with the best of all humankind
Allah's Messenger, Ahmad,³⁷⁰ the high-ranking one.
6. He sent His *ruh*³⁷¹ to him with revelation
For guidance to *dār al-salām*.³⁷²
7. He battled against the infidels and the misguided,
And set His faith upon solid ground.
8. Shower your blessings upon him, O Eternal Lord,
And grant him salvation, O Lord of peace, till resurrection day.
9. Likewise upon his family and his companions all together,
And his family members are most perfect indeed.
10. And now, our purpose is to string pearls
For notifying and warning nobility.³⁷³
11. It is for the benefit of wise men that I compose my verse,
And I have no concern for those who are depraved,

³⁷⁰ One of the 201 names of Muhammad

³⁷¹ Literally spirit, but used for the Angel Gabriel.

³⁷² Literally, abode of bliss, another name for Paradise

³⁷³ Title of the poem

12. The slanderous and the malevolent might be thwarting
But unto the Lord is the utmost goal.
13. Those who are wise will harken to it
And will discern the import of our words.
14. The sun of calamity has risen from the west
Aiming for the inhabited lands and deserts.
15. It is of Christians' calamity I mean to poeticize.
Their calamity has descended upon us like dark clouds.
16. On the onset of their mission, they came with peace
And soft spoken words, melodiously composed.
17. They declared: "We have come for trade,
And to restore roads across the lands
18. And to prevent injustice in the world and thievery,
And to promote goodness and exact punishment,"
19. We did not know of their true intents
Until we became like dullards to them.
20. They beguiled us with their paltry gifts
And gave us candies and sweetmeat.
21. We could not know that they came just
To rule like kings in tents³⁷⁴
22. And to construct barracks across the lands,
Designed with colored marble stones,
23. And soon enough they went back upon their words
Just as God has declared in retrospect.
24. They fixed their banners in every town
And the inhabitants were treated like slaves.
25. They said, "No slave should be sold
Or bought and no human being should be enslaved
26. And no one should be confined by shackles or rope
And no harmful beating causing pain."

³⁷⁴ Arab tribal chiefs

27. The freeman is like a slave unto them,
And the slave is treated like a dignified freeman by them.
28. And then we said, “This is not why you claimed you came.
Are you renegeing on your promises?”
29. Truly, I have not seen this sort of rule,
The nobles treated like lowly knaves.
30. The lowly men honored like noblemen.
How odd alas! And woe to nobility!
31. This [sort] of rule is without remedy
Except endurance and holding one’s tongue.
32. And I could see nowhere one could escape to
If we were to flee and [seek] safety.
33. Could you not see how they have occupied the lands
From every side and enclosed it like dark clouds?
34. From Sansandi, say up to Segu and Jenne
And in Segu they fought the mass.
35. Regarding Jenne, they went there with an army
Commandeered by Jahannama,³⁷⁵ the evil man,
36. And from Delebe to Sankore, o audience!
Likewise to Bambara, the land of food
37. Then to Yoro, Fūta Jallo and Toro.
The town of Mayo became covered in dust.
38. Then to Shinguīt, Timbuktu, and Tūba
As well as Mācina, the land of noblemen,
39. And to Badiagara, Dountze, as well as Quraysh
And Sare Fara, market of culinary salt.
40. They stopped over in Sofara and its surroundings.
Their commander was an ignoble lieutenant.
41. We would mention every land they occupied
As much as our composition can possibly muster –

³⁷⁵ Hell.

42. Then to Tūmu and its surroundings and Dōri
And Keur Taïbé and Dingoaba the herds
43. And all across Songhai including Namāri,
Tera and Daragol, lands of proud men.
44. They took possession of all the lands over there
Both large and small of the earth.
45. In Hallou, the prince took flight in fear
To Dakola and Sandire among the mass
46. From Yaga to GaladjI as well as Soriba
To Dyongore and Say, which are like twins,
47. Kirtachi, Kounfa and Loumbou-Loumbou
Likewise Bikoune and Natangou respectively.
48. These are all lands belonging to the Fulani
Except few additions necessitated by our verse:
49. Then we shift to Fadouga and Lalle,
And Yadiga, all inhabited by ignoble men.
50. Did you not see that they have planted their flag
In Bosuama? Then they became like serfs.
51. They stopped over Wagadugu without a doubt
And its barracks are surrounded with security.
52. I could not find any brave men among the Mosi.
They had all fled like stray animals.
53. Their men and their women were all alike.
In this shame they fled like herds.
54. So there is no difference between dancing
And faka³⁷⁶ to them? This is indeed shameful.
55. Have you heard how they stormed Kouna
With banners, and Saligu not in peace?
56. It was likewise with Boulsa, and all its inhabitants,
Lago as well, and Kadjateon respectively.

³⁷⁶ Same as kada “A game of colliding with one another, chest to chest. (= faka; ka'diya; cf. ka'bba; ka'de I.1(d). [On-line Bargery Hausa-English Dictionary; <http://maguzawa.dyndns.ws/>; *Ka'da*, III,{2. n.f.} (b)]

57. Bere and Nevri, and Dakaye were treated alike
And Kombisiri which has a wine market.
58. Then Zaga and the people there, say the Busanga,
They marched on Koupela on an ominous day.
59. As for the land of Gurma they surrounded it;
In complete occupation, they are now like slaves.
60. We did not hear of any one who fought among them
And none who disputed [their rule],
61. Except Garju who disdained to be shamed.
He died [fighting them] and was interred.
62. That is how honorable men should behave:
When they descend, he should die without illness³⁷⁷ [not in vain].
63. Life in abasement is like death
And death in honor is like sleep.
64. But those who could answer death's call
Are few among men, except the noble.
65. We loved Garju truly, and truly we mourn him,
But those left behind shall live in regret.
66. And Bankatatougou they invaded with force
Its chief took flight like a child.
67. Then Madouba, Sambalgou, and Bouti
As well as Pergbalembiro and Taffo, the twin towns,
68. Then Sowadoubila, Dago, and all around
As well as Diakougou, Bendougou respectively.
69. Then Karimamma likewise followed by Tanda
As well as Yalou, land of culinary salt.
70. Have you heard how they stormed Korere
With black banners like crows?
71. Its prince was fearless and courageous too;
He died with honor without any shame.

³⁷⁷ Arab warriors prefer death on the battle field than dying on sick bed.

72. How wonderful his deeds were! He disdained shame.
He battled them and died and was interred.
73. Those who were left shall live and regret.
How great a leadership he showed, no leader could.
74. He died without cowardice fearing no pain in battle.
May God reward him in Paradise.
75. They came to NikkI meeting no fighting or dispute.
The chief became docile like a dove.
76. Then followed Djougou, Bankarou likewise Kandi
And add Ouesse and Sinende respectively.
77. Those in Gurma and Tamu also fought;
They were terribly slaughtered.
78. And all eminent men who refused to fight
Died slaughtered by guns or swords.
79. They were thrown naked on the garbage dump
To become food for birds and scavengers.
80. They went to Kereku, and Waria and Kekele
But they shed no blood on arriving there.
81. How many scholars just died without cause
For just in fear of them and was interred?
82. They did not care about killing anyone;
It was for them like killing wild ass.
83. We thought in Borgou there were valiant men
Warlords without reproach;
84. We saw them carrying magic bowls on their heads
And bows and poisonous arrows.
85. They claimed they had weapons and medicines;
And poisons of various types filled in bottles.
86. This proved to be all false and utter lies;
They threw them away and fled like flocks.

87. No one stood firm except a few of them.
They turned into black donkeys and wild foxes.
88. We then heard how they set out towards the east,
With flags and lots of weaponry.
89. They took the road towards Zabarma land
To Dosso as well as Tombokire in the wild,
90. Then to Lou'lou and Kanda and Douchi
As well as Giwayan and Doumega, the twin towns.
91. They came to Ismael, the chief of Kebbi,
Peacefully without combating or fighting him.
92. Yes, then they went towards Tagazar and Azben
As well as Salameh. Oh may we live in peace.
93. O God, save us together with all Muslim nations.
Protect us from the calamities of the ignoble.
94. They went to Tera, Gobir and Maradi
As well as Tessawa and Agar, lands of noble men.
95. How many were the towns they ravaged on their way
Destroying and burning all foods?
96. Their army went to Zinder with evil intent
Carrying banners and heavy weaponry.
97. To avenge Jahannama (the evil man) they came in rage,
But only white bones were at the gates.
98. We heard when they went over to Shari;
They built a house of marble at its centre,
99. Then to Logoni, Mandara and Musgu
And the lands of Sara respectively.
100. They went to Dikawa to fight Rabeh.
They captured him and tied him like a child.
101. Massive smoke arose at his capture
And covered the sky like heavy dark clouds.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁸ Cf. Dust in the air suspended
Marks the place where a story ended. (T.S.Eliot, "Little Gidding")

102. That day their project was a great success
And that is the nature of world with humankind.
103. Vicissitudes of time from this to that
And then from that to this do not last.
104. There is no condition which will not pass away
As soon as it reaches its appointed end
105. And all crises, however long they last,
Will pass away just as it came like arrow-shot,
106. And from out of crises rainy clouds arose
Without a drop of rain they pass like rainless clouds.
107. O Living God and Eternal Lord, ward off
From us this crisis of our time as it looms ahead.
108. And then Bābīma and its village of Sikāso
Jahannama (the evil one) came there with his hordes.
109. He attacked and quickly defeated it,
And he conquered Kardugu too, the land of food.
110. Then followed Dawakara, Tera and Gilāso
And all the way to Lu'be and followed by Dār al-Salām,
111. Then to Bobola as well as the land of Weydi
To Warkaw, which has a market of wine,
112. Then to Guna, Bitugu and Shibangu too,
To Dafī and Wahhābu completely.
113. It is there that Mukhtār, the valiant reverend, lives
And spends nightlong sleeplessly,
114. Save in reciting litanies and night-prayers
And throughout the day keeping the fast.
115. He was in that state when they arrived, but gave him no reverence,
Although he made his peace with them and gained honor,
116. And a warlord with many regiments
Who was their leader and was known as Imam,

117. But his surname also was Samori
And his children were known as children of Imam.
118. He had Gere and Kuntugi and women;
We heard they captured him trying to escape
119. To Umul Kura pretending but running away –
Thus it was rumored privately and publically.
120. And where are the armies of those who ruled Gurinshi
The Zarma and the Hausa side by side?
121. They have ruled over Kassena and Leo and Paga
As well as Sate, Dabin, lands of ignoble men;
122. Likewise Bishe, Mankru and Nyoro
As well as Waya; it is the land of noble men.
123. And forget not Walambale and Sakalu,
And Kelu, Nabalun as well as all their lands,
124. Kaikanga, Firatan and Basāsan,
Up to Nafaru and Gangari respectively.
125. They had ruled over Gurinshi unchallenged
From right, and front.
126. There were no revolts except from slaves.
They were fully contented with them without blame.
127. The slaves of Gurinshi are not dependable.
Truly there is no trust in barbarous men,
128. Especially those among the Isala, and Dagarti,
Kasem, Kintoshi and Kanjaga, respectively
129. They repudiated their overlords relentlessly
And loathed them for eaten seasoned food.
130. And long ago, they used to [live] like kings
Who would have carpets spread for them to sleep.
131. Something like this has never dawned on them
No, not even in their wildest dreams.
132. On that day, they took refuge with Dagomba

- In Wafuri where there is earthen pot market.
133. Was it the forest that deceived Ashantis?
Or the thick twisted woods covered in darkness?
 134. Or is it idols or money or gold?
Or is it pride or drinking wine?
 135. Certainly they were deceived by lies and falsehood
As well as ignorance and wearied foolishness.
 136. Their outcome was in swift death
And those who had escaped met the claws of fate.
 137. The Christians have conquered Dina-Akyimfo
As far as Accra, where there are noble men,
 138. Likewise the town of Gua Asinfo and all around
Up to Sambarfu in the count respectively,
 139. All the way to Tetemu, Kunda and Agye
As well as Agwana and Ayigbe, which are like twins,
 140. Likewise Ajashi, Dahomey and all around
And many numerous lands uncountable,
 141. Likewise Ibadan, Abeokuta, the Yoruba lands
Up to Ilorin as well as I, Alufa among the list,
 142. And likewise Lafiāge and all surrounding lands
Up to Bunu, lands of barbarians,
 143. And some of the lands of Nupe, Lafiya and Adamawa
As well as Munsu, Kafi, Nasarawa like twins,
 144. Likewise lands of Yawuri, Busa, and Gombe
As far as Illo, in which there is a slave market,
 145. Likewise “the house of floor”, they burnt it down
In raging fire, and they marched ahead.
 146. Could it be really true that they reached Zaga?
If true, then their aim is to march ahead.
 147. Did you see how the Dagomba had wondered
Whether they would come to them in peace?

148. The chief of Yendi was among those people
Who spoke wisdom and truth;
149. As for his subjects, and his children too,
They're all evildoers and of bad reputation.
150. When he died disaster descended upon them.
They were attacked by German regiments.
151. Mention Gambaga, then Kusasi and Mango;
As well as Barba, Tasi, Sogode in the list.
152. Remember Kete, our town, that day how it was occupied
As well as Nanumba and Konkomba, the savages,
153. And the Basare, the Kabre and all the rest
Who used to live in fortresses above hills,
154. Likewise Sogode, and Karkare and Faso
Including Gafilu and Samari, which are like twins,
155. Ans Arju and Salimango and all its environs;
The Chief of Suburku fled among the crowd.
156. The tall Christian came to battle him
He ran away and left the lofty palaces.
157. Have you witnessed how they surrounded Kūna
And its environs and how they marched beyond?
158. We have been horrified with what they did to us.
Their aim is only to control the world.
159. Have you see how they came to Washsīha?
A noble prince reigned there in the town.
160. That is their way of scorning us,
And they swooped upon us like dark swallows.
161. And if we asked: "What do you want from us?
Is it your intent to fight peaceful people?"
162. They scoffed and said: "How can you battle us?
Sit back and endure us without a shame."

163. Have you heard how they descende upon Abuja?
As well as Gua and Dafwar, which are like twins.
164. Their real intention is to fight Muslims
And they would sow discord without a doubt.
165. I do not know how this will come to end;
We ask our Lord to end it well for us.
166. We also heard they went to Illela,
As well as Agadez which are noble lands.
167. They said their envoy came up to Bauchi
To beguile them with ornate rhetoric.
168. They also sent Adam to Kano with some funds,
And men carrying stuff to bribe the lords.
169. I saw that devilish commander, in the wilderness of Rōbuwa
With lots of loads marching to go beyond.
170. Their landing would be in Zar, not false at all.
Well, we have no one upon who to call except our Lord.
171. Silence, we have to keep in these our days
And patience from oppression and abuse.
172. He who would dare to speak the truth aloud
Will live in grief and woe.
173. People bemark themselves in idiocy and lies,
Deception, and retailing in calumnies.
174. Truth in these our days is not approved,
And he who says the truth will be reviled.
175. Truth has become a bitter pill in these days
And propagating lies has become commendable.
176. O God, o Merciful, have mercy
Upon your servants, free or slave.
177. Truly, their gristles are of guff and idiocy;
As for their blood, it's mixed with envy and hate.
178. Their veins are made of chronic grudge and viciousness.

- Their bones ingrained in human hatred.
179. The love for wealth is what they have for skins.
And love of power what they have as hair.
180. Malicious gossip is their litany;
The flesh of others is like flesh of birds.
181. My verses are but for musing and reflection;
Foolishness is not part of poetry.
182. Neither are they meant to seek love from people of the book.
May God forbid us to incline to that.
183. Nor for delight and joy did I my verse compose,
But to express sorrow and grief,
184. And surely we had not heard of a person who intended evil
By corrupting the meaning of words,
185. For corrupting words is not new;
It is something men have done from antiquity.
186. Some men, there were who distorted the Taurāh
That the Lord of the throne mentioned it endlessly.
187. Do you know those who seek to lead astray?
They would distort the words we have composed.
188. He would falsely interpret Qur'ānic verses,
And it is God who shall reward humankind appropriately.
189. Who could be more envious than learners?
But though they envy, we will be absolved.
190. And who could be more spiteful than reciters?
But if they spite us we will not be grieved.
191. Have you not heard what has befallen Sayuti?
May God reward him among the noble ones.
192. His verses too were mixed with jest and jive;
His intent was not that, but to express grief.
193. The chronicling of these lands and towns
Is only meant to warn and rouse the noble-minded.

194. It is not as heedless men might think,
To just distract or try to sway the crowd.
195. May God forbid my doing this or that
Until the day I'm interred in the ground.
196. The eloquent are begrudged for their skills
By envious men who envy them their gifts.
197. Our maundering discourse has fulfilled our aim.
We shall conclude it in perfect finale:
198. O, You who answer the captive when he calls
Or in depths of gloomy night the needy when he hails,
199. Deliver us from what has descended upon us.
Save us to reach our end in peace.
200. We implore you by all the prophets
As well as the sake of saints of lofty rank,
201. For ourselves, our families all at once
Shelter us in your safe bosom, O Lord of Peace,
202. For no harm shall touch those who resort to you
Nor shall they violence see, O Lord of humankind.
203. No worries will he have, nor grief, nor sorrows feel,
The one who stand before you, nor sickness.
204. You always act according to your will.
You rule and judge humans as you like.
205. The signs of pending doom have come to light.
Come all let us beseech men of grace.
206. Let us implore our Lord by the invisible men
And by the grace of Jayli, axis of the saints,
207. And by the grace of all the letters of God's books,
By Ṭāsīn, Yāsīn and Ḥāmīm,
208. And by the chapters of the spider and the running horses,
And by the grace of Fātiḥa and Alif and Lām,

209. By the chapters of Yusuf, Thunder and the Bee,
And the chapters of Ascension followed by the Sleepers,
210. The chapters of the prophets and of Light,
And the chapters of the pilgrimage and holy month,
211. The chapters of Şāfat, Dāwud and Zumur,
The chapters of Hujurāt and mighty Hashar,
212. The book of Taurāh followed by Injīl,
By the book of Zabūr, and by the Light and the Pen,
213. By the grace of the companions and all the family,
Exalted is the Lord, the Mighty and the Glorious.
214. Upon the best of all creatures on earth and high
God's blessings be and His peace forever more.
215. All the family and all the companions too
By all their grace we ask our Lord for good ending.
216. By many ages compute our verses
That is our symbol; and we end our work.
217. But regarding the symbol of its *Hijra* openly
Sh.q. is its symbol till the very year.

Appendix V

Poem III

Lābarin Naṣārā (in Hausa Ajami)

English Version of the Hausa Ajami Text

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate;
May God bless our noble Mohammed and His family, His companions, His wives, and His
descendants, (May God) grant them salvation and peace. Amen.

1. This situation that has descended is what we shall compose.
Hearken to the story of Naṣāra.³⁷⁹
2. It is by the name of our lord that we begin
So it will be perfect and pleasing in composition.
3. Our salutation to Muhammad, the foremost of us, [God's] servants,
The disciples and the family, the immaculate ones.
4. We were living our lives in our land
And we had no concern regarding Jews or Christians,
5. When [at some time] they said kola was scarce
[Because] of strife between Ashanti and Christians.
6. Then it was later said, Ashanti was no more.
The whole land has been scattered by the Christians.
7. Slaves became like kids as they rejoiced
Saying: "We shall serve no more due to [the arrival] of the Christians."
8. Every one of them declared his independence,
Carrying themselves with pride because of the Christians.
9. Then soon we learned that Samori had come
With his massive army; who are Christians [to challenge him]!?
10. They consisted of infantry units led by warlords as well as cavalries
Together with accoutrements to torment the Christians.

³⁷⁹ Thereafter, Christians.

11. But in reality, it was not true. For it was he himself,
Whose territory was being routed by the Christians.
12. He was trying to escape and in full flight
Glancing fretfully about to avoid the Christians.
13. It was then that Prempeh got wind [of it],
And sent to inquire about the Christians.
[And then dispatched messengers to him
Saying: “Let us team up and crush the Christians.”]
14. It was then also that the Christians learned of it
So they captured Prempeh by ruse.
15. And then together they bore down on Samori,
French and English, kinds of Christians,
16. And soon Samori fell into [their] hands.
He was captured, he would be taken to the Christian lands.
17. Before this he had committed atrocities and waged war.
Men were slaughtered and while women wailed,
18. They were slaughtered like chickens and guinea-fowls.
Woe! Come quickly, o Christians!
19. Ahmadu, of Segu, was a great man.
It was there, in Segu, that they pounced on him, the Christians.
20. Agibu, his younger sibling, yearned to rule,
So he went and called the Christians [for help].
21. So Ahmadu was chased out from all his land.
He took off as far as dūtsen kūrā³⁸⁰ in Kebbi.
22. It was said that he died. May God have mercy on him!
He was a noble man, true believer and thankful servant (of God).
23. The Zabarmas in the land of Gurunshi were powerful warriors
No one could challenge them, except the Christians!
24. Amariya created a furor out of sheer ingratitude.
He engaged them in war; there were then no Christians.

³⁸⁰ Literally “hill of hyenas’ situated in Kebbi.

25. [And then he heard about the French
And soon he bestowed himself to the Christians.]
26. They (his people) complained that he has mocked them; they have had enough
Of his war, and he aligned himself with Christians.
27. It was then that he betrayed them; they (his people) were being killed.
Evil firearms are possessed by the Christians!
28. [Alas! Fighting against loaded guns was unknown!
Hell is filled in the Christian gun!]
29. It was then that they were invaded (by night). They were being killed.
Devilish firearms are possessed by the Christians!
30. And then their warlord Ali was killed.
[Know that Christian shooting does not miss (its target).]
31. The Zabarma troops had already decamped;
Some of them travelled to the southern lands.
32. Know that their leaders returned to Dagomba land,
In Yendi where the German Christians were.
33. There was Garju, a prince of Gurma;
He behaved insolently towards the Christians,
34. When he prepared to assault (them) with a spear
Hold it! You really think you will reach to the Christians?
35. There and then a gunshot pierced through Garju.
He died instantly; that is the action of the Christians.
36. Now, not so fast! Have you heard how they entered Kandi?
In truth, the Christians have the guts!
37. And so, Saka got prepared, [claiming] he was going to attack;
It was his brains that they blew out, the Christians!
38. The crowd instantly dispersed, everybody screaming:
“Take shelter now, here are the Christians!”
39. Believe me, Saka, son of Kutu, was truly a brave man.
He used to claim that no one could challenge him, even the Christians.
40. When he prepared for battle, he met them face to face.

- It is a frightening thing, to face off with the Christians.
41. Instantly, there and then, he was knocked down flat,
And soon the people of Borgu were declaring that they have submitted to the Christians.
 42. When they arrived in the land of Nupe, [saying] we have come to rule,
Our Abubakar declined to surrender to the Christians.
 43. At once he managed to kill one of them,
But then, it did not augur well killing a Christian.
 44. They soon withdrew and organized themselves.
It was not good a thing, the coming of the Christians.
 45. Unwillingly he moved out and left his town.
He kept running as they chased him, the Christians.
 46. He appeared like a hare half-caught in a trap [trying to escape]
As they raced, [he and] the Christians.
 47. Meanwhile the crowd dispersed, and all scattered out.
Only a few remained. Be sensible, o Christians!
 48. They kept chasing until they took him prisoner.
Be reasonable! How could he resist the Christians!
 49. It was in Lokoja that they finally came face to face.
Up until his death he kept fighting the Christians.
 50. Keep calm! Have you heard about the Germans in Adigbo?
Where the Dagombas encountered the Christians!
 51. Their chief rifleman was not a coward.
He had killed a Christian before they took his life.
 52. The Dagombas are brave and true warriors.
They had assaulted a German among the Christians.
 53. After they killed many Dagombas
They continued to Yendi, the Christians.
 54. [Know (however) that they did not tarry there], in Yendi.
They live an inconstant life, the Christians.
 55. And as soon as the bugler sounds, they set out on their way.

Imagine this reasoning: Christian wisdom

56. The Dagomba were holding meeting at Zongo.
They captured the Yarima of Yendi, the Christians.
57. There and then they killed him, blind though he was.
Then the gathering dispersed due to the Christians.
58. At first they were preparing to fight one another
But soon they reconciled to oppose the Christians.
59. The pagans of Tasi challenged the Christians,
And Mister Graf was a tall Christian.
60. With just few weapons, they (Christians) crushed them all.
Then they dispersed and cried out, “Woe, the Christians!”
61. Know that Yaa Asantewa raised her voice,
Swearing that she would chase out the Christians.
62. When she called out, the pagans gave response
They started gathering, declaring that they were going to kill the Christians.
63. And then they besieged the barracks, all round, with the Governor within
As well as the Hausa [troops] who accompanied the Christians.
64. And very soon, all the officials and the women
Began to die of starvation; here were the Christians.
65. The crisis became intense and severe
As result of the tension between Ashantis and Christians
66. Subsequently the Commander³⁸¹ arose with soldiers
To come to the rescue of the Christian Governor.
67. Hardly had he reached Kumasi, in a state of rage,
There was lot of seething, fuming and hairsplitting, Christians!
68. Than he took control and began to fight.
It was with difficulty that he fought his way to the Christians.
69. Threatening and cursing he finally extricated himself.
Hurray to the Christian black bull!
70. And then the European war-camp set out

³⁸¹ From Accra.

- In large squadrons in the manner of the Christians.
71. When the Ashanti gathering dispersed,
Asantewa ended up falling into the hands of the Christians.
 72. Brave men were killed, in addition to some women.
Soon thereafter the southern forest lands fell under Christian domination.
 73. The Magaji³⁸² of *Keffi* was a true warrior.
He claimed no one could stop him, even the Christians.
 74. He killed an official of high rank
And he was vaunting of having killed a Christian.
 75. It was then that they chased him out of his land.
He was running away trying to escape from the Christians.
 76. And soon enough his troop dispersed all together.
He was reduced to loneliness because of the Christians.
 77. He was crossing the millet-fields hoping to escape.
And reach territories devoid of Christians.
 78. In was in a cemetery that he died, there in Jarwal,
When he met our lord, the forgiving Lord.
 79. In Zinder, Jinjir has indeed committed an outrage
When he behaved senselessly by killing a Christian.
 80. Hell! He had killed a prominent Frenchman,
Sacrefou's very younger brother, the Christian warlord.
 81. Thereupon *Sacrefou* closed in with soldiers
Made up of huge battalions of Christians.
 82. But Ahmadu Jinjiri went to confront them -
It was not a good idea confronting the Christians!
 83. It was there that Jinjiri died a martyr's death.
Then they went on to kill people, the Christians!
 84. Thereupon they took control of cities and villages.
Within Zinder there is no authority today apart from Christians.
 85. There were some pagans, who were known as Munché

³⁸² Warlord.

- Who maneuvered stealthily and killed Christians.
86. At that moment the Christians turned back.
Know that indeed death always accompanies the Christians.
87. And learn that the Christian battle-line knows no retreat -
Birds then began rejoicing as well as hyenas.
88. Where is Kawsau of Zazzaw, the valiant one!
No one could dare challenge him except the Christians.
89. It was here that he was captured and subjected to public humiliation
They pilloried him; how come, o Christians?
90. It was there in Lokoja that Kawsau passed away.
What shall we say concerning the Christians rule?
91. O God, grant him peaceful abode!
Let him dwell in blessings and drink from pure springs!
92. Where is the Kebbi ruler, Sama son of Nabame?
He has kept silent, observing the Christians.
93. The Kebbi people cried out to him, "Oh! Let us prepare [for war]
Let us unite and crush all the Christians!"
94. He responded: "I am not going to behave irrationally, Oh people of Kebbi
And take you to be slaughtered before the Christians.
95. Know that Sama does not play farce or fraud.
He shall remain totally upright even towards Christians."
96. [Sama acted wisely and people were saved.
He served as Kebbi's gatekeeper for the Christians.]
97. The people of Abuja made the mistake and confronted them.
They were vaunting that they would kill Christians.
98. When they gathered, they lurked behind the hills.
There is foolishness in the one who confronts the Christians
99. Upon arrival the Christians fell in battle lines
And soon they shouted: "Fire," in the Christian language.
100. Anguish soon engulfed the mountains.
Smoke rose high from the action of the Christians.

101. The people of Abuja turned and took to their heels.
They kept running, crying: "Oh, Christians!"
102. There are some people of the Kunkuru tribe, there in Maradi.
Ask them [what they know] concerning the Christians.
103. When they challenged them, they realized they had no chance.
There and then, they submitted and surrendered to the Christians!
104. Where are the children of Babari and Soba,
Bawa, and dan Gudi who surpasses all equals?
105. Know that the Gobir people are brave men and valiant warriors.
But for all their valor they avoided the Christians.
106. When they challenged them, they realized they were too strong for them
Such weapons could not reach the Christians.
107. Their weapons, however, could strike at us
Although it is from afar that they aim, these Christians.
108. [So the Gobir people] said: "Brothers, note that
Our fight with them is difficult, these Christians."
109. They soon surrendered and became reconciled.
Today they have come under Christian rule.
110. There was a warlord whose name was Rabeh -
He conquered Borno; at that moment the Christians were not yet here.
111. He committed grievous crimes across the land.
He had boasted of fearing no one, even the Christians.
112. When they came and shortly engaged [him] in battle, they killed him
In a marshy land. There, you have the brave Christians!
113. His authority came to an end in Borno.
There is no trace of him today except the Christians.
114. And then the grandson of Shehu, the ruler of Kantagora -
His father was Nagwamatse, who loved good tidings.
115. Everybody benefited from his father's [generosity]
Men, women, the elderly, as well as children.

116. [He was the son of Atiku, Bello's younger brother,
Rulers of Hausa land, when Christians were not here.
117. Nagwamatse is now dead; (now they are here)
He was waging his wars, then Christians were not here.
118. Then they put him in fear and forced him to flee from his land.
He kept running with Christians in pursuit.
119. It was in this manner that they captured him, there in Maska;
Then they paraded him around, the Christians' fancy!
120. But then after they said to him, "Return to your land!
We shall set you free." Thus you see the coming of the Christians!
121. [There was Murda, true believer, who loved Muslim creed
Warlord of the town of Sada who fails not to settle scores -
122. During the battle of Kontagora he fought like a bull.
They had it tough with him, the Christians.
123. There was our Umaru, son of Salmanu of Bauchi -
They captured him at Yarba, the Christians!
124. No one knew what offense he had committed against them.
Only God knows it, and they themselves the Christians.
125. With regards to Abubakari, the ruler of Zaitakoro,
They had captured him also; he is in the hands of the Christians.]
126. For sure we do not know the cause of their dispute;
Only Almighty God [knows] it, and the Christians themselves.
127. None of us knows the cause of his offense.
Only they know it, the Christian authorities.
128. Look, how they have captured the rulers of Gwandu.
They are kept in Lokoja, in the hands of the Christians.
129. We surely do not know the reason for their capture.
Only they know it the Christian authorities.
130. Could it be for killing enemies, or for their obstinacy,
Or for making them mad, the Christians?
131. Or perhaps it was the delusion of foolish people who deceived them

Saying “Ruler, refuse and stand up to the Christians!”

132. For me I really do not know; they have indicated
That there is nothing forbidden for them, Christians!]
133. Muhammadu son of Haru, ruler of Hadejia,
He was the one who refused to obey the Christians.
134. When he rebelled against them, he prepared for war
Because of (his) ignorance; he lacks knowledge of the Christians.
135. As soon as they met, they killed the ruler of Hadejia:
It was like removing a thorn [for them], the action of the Christians.
136. Look at Sokoto, the walled city of Bello;
It was there that they carried their war, the Christians!
137. They prepared to torment them a lot;
The Christians possess mighty, mighty weapons.
138. The Christians possess evil field guns.
They also have magazine gun; those are the Christian tools.
139. There is also the bugler with his sound-blow of death.
Whenever you hear it, you will see the Christians.
140. [They also have the rocket, with the sound of thunder.
There are weapons of mischief in the possession of Christians.]
141. Quivers, bows, swords or even spears - -
These are playful things before the Christians.
142. Oryx shields, Argungu spears, or even harpoons - -
These are playful things before the Christians.
143. Round shields, large shields, and cuirasses - -
These are comic things before the Christians.
144. [Constructed walled towns], or fences of stakes or stockades - -
These things will not stop the Christians.
145. Even the thick iron gates,
They are like doors covered with grass before the Christians.
146. Soon awhile, horsemen were gathered here, in Sokoto.
People were on the war path to kill Christians.

147. It was under the deleb-palm that they gathered singing war songs.
The Muslims' leader standing face to face with the Christians.
148. When battle lines were drawn, only martyrdom remained
For it is evil to set eyes on Christian demons.
149. Then the lines were broken and realigned for full assault,
Threatening to finish off the Christians.
150. But shortly they cracked and scattered.
They were viewed as terrifying, the Christian demons.
151. [Know also that the Christian is very skillful;
No one can overcome him except a Christian.]
152. The horses were shot dead, as well as the riders.
Then you could only hear calls to flee from the Christians.
153. Where is Aṭṭāhiru, grandson of Atīku,
Saint of God!? They badgered him, the Christians.
154. [So he got ready and departed from his land.
He kept travelling and was fearful of the Christians.]
155. People began to flee the land from towns and villages.
They were crying out: "We do not want Christian rule."
156. Then the Muslims' leader gathered his people and departed.
How dreadful you are, o Christians!
157. [They kept pursuing him as if to claim some debt
Or could he have abused the Christian King?]
158. He kept crossing through millet-fields and towns until he arrived at Bīma.
It was there that they got him by intrigue, the nature of Christian warfare!
159. It was there that they killed him, on Friday,
During prayer time, alas! Christians!
160. It was there that the head of the Muslims was interred
As he died a martyr's death in the hands of the Christians.
161. O God, o Everlasting God,
Be merciful to Aṭṭāhiru, your ever thankful servant!

162. So they came to Kano, only [to subject people] to public ridicule.
The gathering was large, the Christian summons.
163. An officer-Colonel, a Sergeant, a Sergeant-Major,
Soldiers and recruits; these formed the Christian contingent.
164. Include clerks, as well as laborers,
Complete the list with cooks for the Christians.
165. There was the police, include the jailer and add
A superintendent, next the Christian foot soldiers.³⁸³
166. There was also a doctor; he is a medicine man
He cures diseases of Christians.
167. There was a Town-Council-man; he oversees sanitation,
Including the back of houses (toilets?), according to laws of the Christians
168. [There was a bugler, with his death-announcing blare.
When you hear it, you will soon see the Christians.
169. So they came to Kano (with) those things,
Declaring “Fire” in front of them, horror of the Christians!
170. There was machine gun and guns that are pulled (barrage?)
There were also magazine guns; do you see the Christian weaponry?!
171. There was also a rocket that sounds like thunder,
And guns strapped to the belt of Christians.
172. There were also long swords with wide straps being pulled out
And they were shining, in the hands of the Christians.]
173. The ruler of Kano, however, was not present [at the time];
Since he was not at home, the Christians took control.
174. People soon gathered by the city walls shouting,
“[We have no fear] the iron gate will stop the Christians.”
175. It took one assault and the gate was completely shattered.
Then the Christians entered bringing their troubles along.
176. Know that no one was touched by them in an act of kindness.

³⁸³ I do not think the words refer to “preacher, sailor, and prison” as Pliaszewicz has thought. This is because, historically we know Lugard did not allow Christian missionaries in Hausa land. The inclusion of sailors also does not seem to make much sense to me within the context.

- It was to the Kano ruler's palace that they went, the Christians!
177. They plundered the palace in public ridicule
And burned weapons, oh, the Christians!
178. [Then *Sarkin Shanu*] confronted them.
With a single blow they killed him all at once, the Christians.
179. When they completed ransacking Dabo's palace
And exposed its secrets, oh, the Christians!
180. Afterwards they asked, "You, people of this town!
Where did your ruler go to?" Here you have the Christians!
181. "Where is the Kano ruler, the grandson of Dabo,
Aliyu, the indomitable, the progressive leader?"
182. He was getting ready to dedicate his life for holy war and worship of God.
No one could escape him, except the Christians.
183. When they prepared to set in pursuit of him,
He came on his own accord, and there were the Christians.
184. When they engaged in sudden combat, it turned bad
So he was forced quickly to turn away from the Christians.
185. The chiefs, together with his elder siblings,
Took to accusing him of cowardice before the Christians.
186. They vowed to stand and fight;
And succeeded in killing some Christians.
187. [The Christians had shown no fear at all (when they met).
They soon prevailed, mighty Christians.
188. They succeeded in destroying three wards; they do not fail.
After seeing this they reasoned with themselves and became aware of the Christians'
capabilities.
189. On realizing this they said: "We cease to fight.
Let us surrender and submit to the Christians.]"
190. It was there in Gobir that he was overcome and he was captured.
Now he is in Lokoja, in Christians' hands.
191. Thereafter they have regained their safety

And declared: "We will not fight Christians anymore."

192. [Then the Christians inquired] "Where is the next in royal line for us to enthrone him?"
And so they appointed a ruler in Kano; the powerful Christians!
193. Ever since, their authority became established in the land.
Who is there to challenge the authority of the Christians?
194. Now take a look at these rulers we have named;
They have all fallen under Christian control.
195. Who would dispute our plain account?
As for us, we have surrendered [to the brave Christians.]
196. We pray Almighty God, the Sublime One,
To preserve us from Christian contempt.
197. Know that those who challenge Christian authority,
We care not about them; for us, we support only the Christians.
198. Listen and take note of this composition.
I want to describe the character of the Christians.
199. The grass in town is weeded and swept away.
This is good indeed among the Christian deeds.
200. Smooth roads have been constructed straight across
And even bridges have been built thanks to the Christians.
201. The markets are swept clean, no refuse can be seen.
And the stalls are repaired; that is the Christians' deed.
202. Safety reigns here, and there is no plundering
And there is no deception in what the Christians do.
203. Anyone who buys your good pays you in cash
But when he refuses [to pay], then go to the Christians.
204. Fighting has also ceased in the era of the Christians;
There is no brawl or punching someone thanks to the Christians.
205. When people fight, they are quickly arrested,
Arraigned and then questioned before the Christians.
206. And when you refuse to sweep [your compound] you are arrested
And locked up in a court-room of the Christians.

207. Then [as punishment] you are made to sweep the burial ground.
All these are good deeds brought by the Christians.
208. Regarding the wars which used to be waged across the Sudan,
As soon as they arrived they have ceased -- the strong Christians!
209. [Where are the rulers of Futa], Borgu and Gurma!
They are all no more; today only the Christians hold sway.
210. [Moreover (in those days) they could only maintain power by waging wars
That has now ceased to be, thanks to the Christians.
211. People used to quarrel among themselves or fight.
That has now ceased to be, (thanks to) the learned Christian.]
212. Today, whoever they chose to appoint a ruler
People must perform comply with Christian authority.
213. And know that in this era there are no more capable men;
There is no sense of self-prowess in this Christian era.
214. In reality self-sufficiency consists in preserving one's dignity;
Why then not enjoy yourself in the comfort afforded by the Christians?
215. In fact whoever deviates [from the law] is dragged before the courts.
He is detained [to stand trial] before the Christian Commissioner.
216. He is fully interrogated and must give a detailed response.
Order reigns in the Christians' court.
217. He is asked to explain the causes of his deed.
The Christian magistrate shows great discerning.
218. The slave-master will be sentenced to prison.
Indeed slaves can see the [effectiveness] of Christian authority.
219. The chief of your town would be locked up in prison
Even at the expense of a commoner; see effects of the coming of Christians.
220. The coming of the Christians we can metaphorically thus describe:
The dog eats up the hyena, thanks to the Christians.
221. The she-cat walks unafraid in the way of the wildcat.
She taunts him, thanks to the authority of Christians.

222. And now the hare also swaggers before the lion,
Berating him with insults; thanks to the Christians' presence.]
223. [Dogs willfully offend and sing songs,
Wagging their tails about, thanks to the Christians.
224. [They even affront the lion, tugging his mane
And now badger him, thanks to the Christians.]
225. And the baboon now takes a club
And trounces the leopard, thanks to the Christians.]
226. Likewise the hen and her brood of chicks --
They now stand and squawk at the kite, thanks to the Christians.
227. They rail at her together with her spouse, the hawk]
[Shouting, "You are no more affrighting, thanks to the Christians.""]
228. [Here is the billy-goat who takes a whip,
And thrashes the jackal, thanks to the Christians.
229. The mice also gather to celebrate
Their wedding moment, in the Christians era.
230. Their bride-washer was but the cat, imagine that!
How could such celebration have been held, without the presence of the Christians!]
231. [How could this bride and her maids
Have been conveyed, if not thanks to the Christians.]
232. [I have also witnessed some dogs standing in line.
Being sold out, in the era of the Christians.]
233. [It was the hare which was making the offers
It was the hare which bought them, thanks to the Christians.
234. He makes bad offers, because he is at liberty
And he publicly flaunts (his) penis, thanks to the Christians.
235. Here, in some town-ward, one would chance on a Buzu
His turban over his mouth, thanks to the Christians.
236. He shushes to a Fulani [when he sees him]
Hissing: "I will kill you," now here are the Christians.
237. The Fulāni then would say: "I have no business with you.

Your father is emboldened now, thanks to the Christians!”

238. And also the cockroach confronts the hen,
Jeering openly at her, thanks to the Christians.
239. Even the toad dares abuse the black-hooded cobra
And punching it, because the Christians are here.
240. What I have said in form of illustration
Is a reflection of worldly life during the era of the Christians.
241. For it is a life that does not impair principles of law
Because it absolves no one; that is the Christian.
242. In respect to the Muslim magistrates, they are corrupt,
So it is better for me to see the Christians’ judge.
243. There is comfort in this rule of theirs,
As well as frustration, in the rule of Christians.
244. Both common man and his town chief stand to seek justice
Before the Commissioner in the Christian court.
245. People acquire respect; take note of this my dear brothers!
People are honored, in the era of the Christians.
246. The slave master stands in equal trial with the slave.
Indeed there is (in)discipline under the Christians’ rule.
247. [When the slave feels persecuted, he quickly runs
To his father, that is the Christian.]
248. When women feel oppressed by their husbands,
They are arraigned before Christian authority.
249. Adults and children are [treated] as equals in their presence;
Everyone stands by himself before the Christians.
250. They express neither fear, nor feel ashamed.
They speak out bluntly before the Christians.
251. Forbear, your pride! They know you well, fool!
For no favor would waive the punishment of Christian law.
252. Forget your money, or your power
Or your learning, the Christian law does not give a damn.

253. The English have a tender character.
They are sympathetic towards people, the mighty Christians.
254. For my part, I am thankful to God, in their era
For they have treated me well, these Christians.
255. As much as I am concerned, may their rule last forever!
Because I live a life of prosperity, under Christian rule.
256. O Protector, o Lord of People!
Preserve us from Christian tyranny!
257. For the sake of Muhammad, Noah and Moses,
As well as Rūḥu Allah, Isā, lord of the Christians,
258. Know that this poem should not induce malaise.
It has no other rhyme other than Naṣārā (Christians.)
259. Our poem is now accomplished, it is fully composed
By the power of Him Who created us, as well as the Christians.

(Tammat wa bi al-Khayri 'ammat
Al-ḥamdu li-Allahi wa ḥusnu 'awnihi)
[It is complete and may it be filled with benefit
Praise be to God for His good support]

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- 2- *Naẓm al-la 'ālī bi 'ikhbārin wa tanbīḥ al-kirām*. The second of poetic triad composed by 'Umar lamenting colonial activities and describing series of clashes between them and Africans in which Africans suffered defeat and humiliations. It is introduced by the verse: بسم الإلاه أبدأ في النظام * إلاه واحد رب الأنام [*Bismi Allah abda'u fī al-nizāmi *Ilāhin wāḥidin rabbi a- 'anāmi*]. Date: 1318/1900-1. MSS: Legon, 3, 8, 139.
- 3- *Wākar al-Naṣārā*. واكر نصارا 'Umar's third narrative poem giving account of colonial conquest of African lands and people as well the eventual establishment of colonial rule and its social impact. It is introduced by the verse: أبغ ديتفو شي زام ثارا*ك سورارا غ [*Abin ga da yatafo shi zā mu tsara * Ku saurāra ga lābārin naṣārā*.] MS: Legon, 43, pp. 32-48 (ajami text with boko transcription), 109(v), 302 (inc.), 370.
- 4- *Ṭal' al-munāfa'a fī dhikr al-munāza'a*. طلغ المنافعة في ذكر المنازعة Narrative account of Salaga civil war, 1892. It is introduced by the verse: " الحمد لله المدبر ذي الغنى*ومصرف " [*al-ḥamdu li Allah al-mudabbiri dhī al-ghinā * wa muṣarrifi al- 'ahwāli wa al- 'azmāni*] MS: Legon, 16(ii).

- 5- *Tarbī' al-zuhd wa al-waṣiyya* Quadrating poetic couplets of Kitāb al-zuhd wa al-waṣiyya of Ali B. Husayn B. Ali B. Abi Talib (Ali Zayn al-Abidin). تربيع كتاب الزهد [tabāraka dhul 'ulā wa al-kibriyā 'i *tawahhāda bi al-kamāli wa bi al-sanā 'i] MSS: Legon, 16(iv); NU/Paden, 120.
- 6- Elegy composed in memory of al-ḥājj Labbu, a son of al-ḥājj 'Umar who died in 1932 introduced by the verse: ما بال هند نأت عنا بغير قلاء* وسارت أنباءها يتلى ملاً وملا [Mā bālu hindin na 'at 'annā bi ghayri qilā *wa sārat 'anbā 'uhā yutlā malā wa malā] . MSS: Legon, 16(v), 109(vi), 138, 239 (iv).
- 7- Poem composed to praise and express gratitude to people of Tetemu for their hospitality towards 'Umar when he paid them visit. It is introduced by the verse: هل ليلي من مرام* أم لهند من كلام [Hal li-Iaylā min marām *am Ii-Hindin min kalām]. MS: Legon, 16 (vi).
- 8- Poem extolling praise of 'Umar's student and patron Mālam Salaw, Sarkin Zongo of Kumasi. It is introduced by the verse: بشرى أتاك بشير* من عند هند بصير [Bushrā atāka bashīrun *min 'inda Salmā baṣīr]. 1 Muḥarram 1342/14 August 1923. MSS: Legon 16(xiii), 127, 168, 239(i).
- 9- Tunkuyaw, تنكيو: poem describing influenza epidemic that attacked 'Umar's community members, probably in 1918/19. It is introduced by the verse: "قفوا واسمعوا" رأيت العجائب في تنكيو [Qifū wa 'sma 'ū al-qawlu fī Tunkuyaw *ra'aytu al-'jā 'ba fī Tunkuyaw]. MSS: Legon, 23, 131, 305; Niamey, 1767(i)
- 10- Tanbīḥ al-'ikhwān fī dhikr al-'aḥzān. تنبيه الإخوان في ذكر الأحزان. Didactic poem addressing social depravity and religious debauchery that was prevalent in 'Umar's

- society. It is introduced by the verse: الحمد لله الذي توحد* في ملكه أموره وكُد [al-ḥamdu li Allāhi al-ladhī tawahḥada *fī mulkihi 'umūrahū 'akkada]. Date: 1322/1904-5. MS: Legon, 27
- 11- *Tarbī' al-Burdah*. تربيع البردة. Quadrating the famous qaṣīdah al-Burdah of the Egyptian 11th century Sufi mystic Abu Abdallah Muhammed b. Said al-Būṣīrī. Introduced by the verse: "أ من تذكر جيران بذي سلم* أرقت ليلا طويلا" [A min tadhakkuri jīrānin bi dhī salami *'Araqta laylan ṭawīlan bāhira al-'alami]. MSS: Legon, 24, 122, 217.
- 12- Sūl al-rāthī. Elegiac composed in memory of the father of al-ḥājj Šāliḥ b. Muhammad, a Dyula Muslim scholar, contemporary and friend to 'Umar. It is introduced by the verse: "هل وابل أم دمع أجفاني سكب* أم هل غراب البين يا قلبي نعب: سؤال الرائي: [Hal wābilun 'am dam 'u 'ajfānī sakab *'Am hal ghurābu al-bayni yā qalbī na 'ab] MS: Legon, 76.
- 13- Poem composed by 'Umar in praise of people of Yendi. It is introduced by the verse: سعاد أو أسماء* أو دأد أو حواء [Su 'ādu 'aw Asmā 'u * aw Da 'du aw Hawwā 'u]. Date: 1335/1916-17. MSS: Legon, 93, 181. The following praise poem for the Yendi community was also probably authored by 'Umar. " أهل يند أهل خير* زادهم رب نوالا " .
- 14- Satiric poem composed to denounce the activities of one Mūsā, a Fulani cleric from Adamāwā in Nigeria, who began preaching religious reform among communities of the Volta Basin and inciting them to rise against Europeans. It is introduced by the verse: إذ رأيت العجائبا يا خليلي فاعجبا* (Yā khalīlayya fā 'jabā *'iz ra'aytu al-'ajā'ibā.) Date: 1322/1904-5. MSS: Legon, 109(ii), 135

- 15- Poem of mixed theme addressed to one Salmānu (who is praised by the poet) informing him of people of Gambāga, ganged against him until he was forced to flee for his life. Leaders of the town, consisting of the chief and the Imam, were bitterly castigated in the poem. It is introduced by the verse: *مي شافتك حتى سرت حيرانا* أو هل تهيم*
بذكرى دأد هيماانا
[‘*Ā Mayya Shāqatka ḥattā sirta ḥayrānā**’aw hal tahīmu bi dhikrā da’da haymānā].
Date: 1326/1908-9. MS: Legon, 117.
- 16- A poetic missive in response to an addressee (‘Umar’s son?) exhorting him and his community to live in harmony and Muslim brotherhood, without discrimination or conceit. It is introduced by the verse: *الحمد لله معطي الصادقين نجا* ومانع الكاذبين الفلج والجحج*
[*al-ḥamdu li Allahi mu’ṭī al-ṣādiqīna najā * Wa māni’i al-kādhībīn al-falja wa al-ḥujaja*]. MSS: Legon, 132, 462.
- 17- A polemical poem composed to deride a person who visited ‘Umar’s school and criticized his pronunciation of al-ḥamd li Allah. It is introduced by the verse: *بحق رب*
يا قوم فانتهبوا فإن في دهرنا هذا أبا ليسا* [bi ḥaqqi rabbi al-warā yā qawmi fantabihū*fa
inna fī dahrinā hadhā abālīsā] MSS: IASAR.121, 237.
- 18- Praise poem composed to express gratitude to people who generously contributed towards the innovation of ‘Umar’s mosque. As usual his patron Mālam Salaw received highest of praises. It is introduced by the verse: *نحمد ربا باسط المهاد* وجاعل*
[*naḥmadu rabban bāsiṭa al-mihādi*wa jā’ila al-jibāli ka al-’awṭādi*] الجبال كالأوتاد
Date: 15 November 1930. MSS: Legon, 9, 161.

- 19- Praise poem composed to extol the virtues and generosity of 'Umar's patron al-ḥājj Salaw, Sarkin zongo of Kumasi. It is introduced by the verse: غادرت سلمى ديارا* لم نجد فيها مزارا [ghādarat Salmā diyārā *lam najid fihā mazārā] MSS: Legon, 133, 239(ii)
- 20- Poem in praise of Mālām Salaw, the poet's patron and former student who became sarkin zango of Kumasi. It is introduced by the verse: فتبارك* رب البرية موهب النعماء الخلاق ذو الآلاء [fatabāraka al-khallāqu dhū al-'ālāi *rabbu al-barīyyati mūhibu al-na'amāi] MS: Legon, 239 (iii).
- 21- Hausa Ajami Poem in praise of 'Uthmān Sarkin Zongo (1905 -19) of Kumase. It is introduced by the verse: Na fara da sunan tafil za ni waka * In taba ḍan azanci kadan in gai da zaki MS: Legon, 292.
- 22- Poem composed in praise of Alḥājj 'Abd al-Qādir Bamba who once reigned as Sarkin Zongo of Yendi, d. c. 1956. It is introduced by the verse: سلام سلام ولا يعدد * للحاج قادر [salāmun salāmun wa lā yu'dadi * li al-ḥājj Qādir ba'īdi al-madā]. MS: IASAR/469.
- 23- *Kitāb sarḥah al-wurayqah fī 'ilmi alwathīqah*. كتاب سرحة الوريقة في علم الوثيقة. A guide on epistolography composed by 'Umar in the early part of his career for the benefit of the literati. Date: probably around late Ṣafar 1294/mid-March 1877. MSS: Legon, 313, 378, 381; Ibadan (UL), 380, 410I; Jos, 366,. 637; Kaduna (NA), A/AR4/15, L/AR20/1, L/AR58/2; NU/Falke 25, 465; Timbuktu (MMHT), 417, 651 (K. al-tarsīl); Zaria, MAH, 6/58.
- 24- *Wākar talauci da wadāta*. واكر تلوكي دوداتا. Hausa Ajami Didactic poem describing the adverse social effects of poverty and how it transforms human relations. "منا سو مواكا "

- تثيا [munā so mu wāka da sūnā na Allah *murādīnmu tsāri na ḥalin tsiyā]. MSS: Legon, 109(iv), 171, 371.
- 25- Didactic poem in Hausa Ajami warning against impiety and describing utterances that could lead to kufr (atheism). Is introduced by the verse: *كلموم مياغو نكي سو زاني زانا** [Kalmomi miyāgu nike so zani zana * Danjinā musulmi ku saurārā ku jīyā.] MS: Legon, 109(i).
- 26- A didactic poem in Hausa Ajami drawing attention to the dangers and temptations inherent in the world. It is introduced by the verse: *بسم الله نا فارا د جل أبغزي* [Bismilāhi nā fāra ga jalla ubangiji]. MS: Legon, 109(iii).
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EDUCATION

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- 2008-** Certificate: Striving for Excellence in the Teaching of Arabic as a Second Language. (UCL- Santa Barbara)
- 1986-1988:** M.A. in Teaching Arabic as a Second Language International Institute for Arabic, Khartoum University (Sudan)
Courses include: Advanced Studies in Arabic, Arab-Islamic Culture, Sociolinguistics, Semantics & Lexicology, Psycholinguistics, Methodology of teaching Arabic to Non-Arabic speakers, Educational Technology, Contrastive Linguistics, History of Arabic Language.
- 1979-1984:** B.A. (Combined Honors in Arabic & French) University of Ghana, Legon.
Arabic courses include: Language & Translation, Classical Arabic Poetry, Modern Poetry & Drama, History of Islam in Africa, Arabic Historical & Geographical Texts II.
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EMPLOYMENT

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