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The Inter-communal Poetry of Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā'iġ (1692–1756)[*]

Abstract

After discussing the background to the emergence of several noted Christian writers in Aleppo around 1700, this article presents the life and work of one of them, Niqūlāwus a ṣ - Ṣ ā ' i ġ (1692–1756), a Greek Catholic monk who was mainly responsible for establishing the Shuwayrite Basilian Order in his Church. While most of his poetry is religious, a few poems are dedicated to secular and non-Christian personalities, most of them political notables on whose support the Order depended. The article examines in detail a panegyric of members of the Druze Abī al-Lam' family and a poem in reply to one of A ṣ - Ṣ ā ' i ġ's friends, a Šī'ī religious dignitary, showing how A ṣ - Ṣ ā ' i ġ works within the conventions of Arabic poetry of his time. It is noteworthy that he refers to the religious and historical heritage of the addressees of his poems, while at the same time reminding them that he himself is a Christian monk.

A noteworthy feature of 17th and 18th century Arabic literature is the increasing production by writers from the Christian communities in Greater Syria of texts composed in established literary genres and capable of appealing to the literate public as a whole. This development has been seen as a forerunner of the cultural revival (*nahḍa*) of the 19th

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century in the Arab world[1] and traditionally explained by contact between Arab Christians and Western European missionaries.[2] Undeniably such contacts played a part, at least for the Maronites, yet this literature repays study in its own right as a significant expression of Arab intellectual and cultural life of the period apart from European influence.

To explain the cultural revival among Christians at the end of the 17th and early 18th centuries as simply due to the efforts of the Catholic missionaries ignores existing evidence that far earlier some Christians were able to hold their own in contact with well-educated Muslims. The rulers of Tripoli in the 16th and early 17th centuries had Christian secretaries,[3] and had these men not had a sufficient command of the literary conventions of the time to communicate appropriately with Muslim counterparts, they would not have been given such important positions. Moreover, Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox and later also Maronite hierarchs in the major cities of Syria were in frequent contact with the Ottoman authorities and needed secretaries who could put forward their opinions and defend their interests eloquently and effectively.

A certain tradition of Arabic literary culture among at least some Christians can be inferred from these elements. It needs to be borne in mind, together with other factors, such as Aleppo's economic importance and trade with the rest of Syria, Iran, Anatolia and European Turkey, and also its role as a flourishing centre of the book trade,[4] as the background to the further development of literary activity among Christians in the early 18th century. Nor should the efforts at cultural revival undertaken by three remarkable (Arab) Greek Orthodox hierarchs during the 17th century be ignored in this context. These factors all contributed to the emergence of several memorable Arab Christian writers around the turn of the 18th century.[5]

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[1] The title of Mārūn ʿ A b b ū d's *Ruwwād an-nahḍa al-ḥadīṯa*, Beirut 1952, which discusses several writers of the 18th century, clearly expresses this view. See also for instance Salma Khadra J a y y u s i, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, Leiden 1977, pp. 13–14.

[2] Some older studies of literature by Arab Christians in this period are discussed in Hilary K i l p a t r i c k, *Brockelmann, Kaḥḥāla & Co: Reference works on the Arabic literature of Early Ottoman Syria*, "Middle Eastern Literatures" 7 (2004), pp. 36–42, with further bibliographical references.

[3] K.A. P a n c h e n k o, *Tripolisskoe gnezdo. Pravoslavnaya obshchina g. Tripoli v kulturno-politicheskoi zhizni Antiochiiskogo patriarkhata XVI – pervoi poloviny XVII veka* (The 'nest' of Tripoli. The Orthodox community in the cultural and political life of the Patriarchate of Antioch in the 16th and the first half of the 17th centuries), "Vestnik Pravoslavnogo Svyato-Tikhonskogo Gumanitarnogo Universiteta" III:1 (15), (2009), pp. 43–45.

[4] See Hilary K i l p a t r i c k, *Arabic private correspondence from 17th century Syria: the letters to Edward Pococke*, "Bodleian Library Record" XXIII (2010), pp. 20–40 and especially pp. 21–23, 27–28 and 39–40 for information on this.

[5] These hierarchs are Milātiyūs Karma, Archbishop of Aleppo 1612–34 and Patriarch of Antioch 1634–5, Makāriyūs Ibn az-Zaʿīm, Archbishop of Aleppo 1634–47 and Patriarch of Antioch 1647–72, and Aṯanāsiyūs al-Dabbās, Archbishop of Aleppo 1694–1720 and Patriarch of Antioch.1685–94 and 1720–24. See Georg G r a f, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (henceforth *GCAL*). Vol. III: *Die Schriftsteller von der Mitte des 15. bis zum Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts. Melchiten, Maroniten*, Vatican City 1949, pp. 91–4, 94–110 and 127–34 respectively; and Joseph N a s r a l l a h, *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'église melchite du Ve au XXe siècle* (henceforth *HMLEM*) Vol. IV(1): *Période ottomane. 1516–1724*, Louvain 1979, pp. 70–86, 87–127 and 132–146 respectively. More recent overviews of the cultural situation of Christians in Aleppo in the 17th and early 18th centuries are given in Kristen B r u s t a d, *Jirmānūs Jibrīl Farḥāt* and Hilary K i l p a t r i c k, *Makāriyūs ibn al-*

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One such writer is Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā'iḡ, regarded as the most gifted Christian
poet in Arabic of the early 18ᵗʰ century. Most of his poetry treats religious themes, and
this comes as no surprise, given his life history.[6] He was born in Aleppo in 1692 into an
Orthodox family of goldsmiths, that is, élite craftsmen, and he studied with both Christian
and Muslim teachers; those mentioned in accounts of his life are the Orthodox deacon
Mīḫā'īl Baḡaʿ, the Maronite priest Buṭrus at-Tūlawī and the Muslim shaykh known
in writings on Christian culture of the period as Sulaymān an-Naḥwī.[7] It is likely,
however, that among his acquaintances there was a greater familiarity with Arabic literary
culture than is often assumed, when the facts mentioned above are taken into account.

Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā'iḡ was of a spiritual bent, and like the Maronites Ḡirmānūs
Farḥāt and ʿAbd Allāh Qarā'alī a generation earlier, he felt drawn to monastic
life; the death of his brother in 1716 strengthened his sense of vocation. He set out for
Lebanon that same year and joined the small community of the newly founded Dayr Mār
Yuḥannā at Aš-Šuwayr. He was ordained priest in 1719, elected assistant to the superior
the next year and in 1723 became superior of the monastery. He also spent some time
in other monasteries which the Šuwayrite Basilian Order was establishing. Four years
later he was chosen as Superior General of the Order, continuing in this position until
his death in 1756 except for an interruption of two years. He was an extremely capable
administrator, a pastor and a man of conciliatory disposition, and he left a considerable
oeuvre in prose: sermons, devotional works, letters and rules for his Order. But he
became famous because of his poetry, the popularity of which is attested to by the many
manuscripts and printed edition of his *Dīwān*.[8]

Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā'iḡ collected his poetry at the end of his life, although the
published *Dīwān* also contains a few poems which he had not included but which were
added later. The *Dīwān* is arranged in alphabetical order of rhyme, traditionally one of
the systems for ordering Arabic poetry. Introducing many poems is an indication of their
subject or the occasion which gave rise to them, which is also traditional, but unusually
this indication often includes a date and sometimes a place of composition. For instance:
"He [composed this poem], may Almighty God have mercy on him, mentioning the fall
of the morning star and praising the Virgin Mary and her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ,
when he was in the Monastery of Mār Ilyās an-Nabī in the village of Al-Muḥaydiṯa in

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Za'īm and Būlus ibn al-Za'īm in: Joseph E. Lowry and Devin J. Stewart (eds.), *Essays in Arabic Literary
Biography 1350–1850*, Wiesbaden 2009, pp. 242–251 and 262–273 respectively.

   [6]   The basic references are : *GCAL* III, 201–207; *HMLEM* IV(2): *Epoque ottomane 1724–1800* (Louvain 1989),
pp. 109–111, 268–270. The first 600 pages of Aṭanāsiyūs Ḥāǧǧ's extensively documented history, *Al-Ruhbānīya
al-Bāsilīya aš-Šuwayriyya (al-ḥalabiyya – al-baladiyya) fī ta'rīḫ al-kanīsa wa-al-bilād. Al-Ǧuz' al-awwal: 1710–1833*,
[Juniyeh] 1973/74 are a mine of information about Aṣ-Ṣā'iḡ's life as a monk, his contribution to the establishment
of his Order and the context in which he worked. His life is outlined pp. 585–591.

   [7]   Mīkhā'īl Baja': *HMLEM* IV(1), 249–52; Buṭrus al-Tūlawī: *GCAL* III, 394–400. The shaikh was Sulaymān
Ibn Ṣālid Ibn ʿAbd al-Qādir (d. 1141/1728) (Usāma ʿĀnūtī, *Al-Ḥaraka al-adabiyya fī Bilād aš-Šām ḫilāl al-qarn
aṯ-ṯāmin 'ašar*, Beirut 1970, p. 116).

   [8]   Over 40 manuscripts of it are listed in *GCAL* III, 204; *HMLEM* IV(2) mentions seven printed editions
between 1859 and 1910.

1730”; or: “He [composed this poem], may Almighty God have mercy on him, portraying the Church of Constantinople which had split from the Church of Rome and describing its leaders (*ayimmatiha* [sic]) in 1725”; or: “He [composed this poem], when one of his brethren had suggested it to him in 1737”.[9] These introductions, without a copyist’s added *raḥimahu llāh*, must go back to A ṣ - Ṣ ā ’ i ǧ himself. The manuscript of the *Dīwān* dated 1764,[10] that is, 8 years after his death, which I was able to consult already has them.

The main genres of Arabic poetry, *madīḥ* (panegyric), *hiǧā’* (satire), *riṯā’* (elegy), *ġazal* (love poetry), *ḥikma* (gnomic verse), *zuhdiyyāt* (ascetic verse) are represented in the *Dīwān*. But they are mainly used to explore specifically Christian subjects. For instance, several *qaṣīdas* praise the Virgin Mary,[11] others the apostles and St. Joseph. The “schismatic” Church of Constantinople and its leaders are the object of satire. The Maronite archbishop of Aleppo Ǧirmānūs Farḥāt and A ṣ - Ṣ ā ’ i ǧ’s first cousin, the polemicist, printer and painter ‘Abd Allāh Zāḫir, have elegies devoted to them. A ṣ - Ṣ ā ’ i ǧ’s *ġazal*, in the mystical tradition, is addressed to God. His gnomic and ascetic poems are less specifically Christian, for wisdom literature and renunciation of the world have a long tradition in Arabic literature and Christian and Muslim thinking on these subjects has much in common; Abū al-‘Alā’ a l - M a ‘ a r r ī is frequently quoted by a contemporary and friend of A ṣ - Ṣ ā ’ i ǧ, the Armenian Catholic Mikirdīč a l - K a s ī ḥ in his *adab* anthology, *Rayḥānat al-arwāḥ wa-sullam al-adab wa-aṣ-ṣalāḥ* [“The soul’s fragrant flower and the ladder of right conduct and culture”].[12] Among other minor genres represented are *tahāni’* (congratulations), for instance addressed to Kīrillus Ṭānās on the Pope’s confirmation of his election as Melkite Patriarch in 1730, and *ta‘qīd*, versification of a passage from a prose text such as those taken from the *Imitation of Christ*.

Another form very much of his time which A ṣ - Ṣ ā ’ i ǧ practised is the chronogram or *ta’rīḫ*. This is a short poem commemorating an important event which ends with the mention of the date, using the numerical values of the Arabic alphabet; less weighty than a *qaṣīda*, it may be seen as a parallel to a modern-day card of congratulations or condolence. [13]

Niqūlāwus a ṣ - Ṣ ā ’ i ǧ worked within the poetic conventions of his time, and this is nowhere better exemplified than in his *badī‘iyya*. A *badī‘iyya* is a poem praising the Prophet Muḥammad and at the same time integrating at least one rhetorical figure in each line; the genre goes back to the early 8th/14th century poet Ṣafī ad-Dīn a l - Ḥ i l l ī. A *badī‘īya* demonstrates its author’s extraordinary command of Arabic and his philological

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[9] Niqūlāwus a ṣ - Ṣ ā ’ i ǧ, *Dīwān* [ed. Ibrāhīm a l - Y ā z i ǧ ī], Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kāṯūlīkiyya, Beirut 1890, pp. 176, 163, 90.

[10] British Library MS Or. 3627, copied by Anṭūn Ibn Būlus in Aleppo.

[11] These have been published by Ǧūzīf Ilyās K a ḥ ḥ ā l a, *Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā’iǧ wa-aš‘āruhu fī madḥ Maryam al-‘Aḏrā’*, Aleppo 2008. I thank Dr. Carsten Walbiner for making this book available to me.

[12] For this work see Hilary K i l p a t r i c k, *From* Literatur *to* Adab: *the literary renaissance in Aleppo around 1700*, “Journal of Eastern Christian Studies” 58 (2006), pp. 210–212.

[13] Introduced into Arabic literature from Turkish during the Ottoman period, it is discussed by Thomas B a u e r, *Vom Sinn der Zeit. Aus der Geschichte des arabischen Chronogramms*, “Arabica” L (2003), pp. 501–531.

knowledge. It also draws on other domains of Islamic culture, knowledge of the literary tradition expressed in inter-textuality and familiarity with historical events to which it makes allusions. Aṣ-Ṣā'iġ was the first Christian poet to attempt this extremely demanding genre, while adapting it to Christian beliefs.[14]

Among Aṣ-Ṣā'iġ's poems, however, are some addressed to rulers and notables of other communities in Lebanon, Sunnis, Šī'īs, Druze and Maronites, and it is to these that I now turn my attention. In order to understand the context in which he composed these poems, it is necessary to look more closely at the ecclesiastical history of the period.

Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā'iġ's life spans the turbulent period in which, as a result of Roman Catholic missionary activity, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch was split, with some of the faithful recognising Papal supremacy and claims to universal jurisdiction while others continued loyal to the Orthodox Patriarch and tradition. The death of Patriarch Aṯanāsiyūs al-Dabbās in 1724 brought matters to a head. Bishops, clergy and notables in Damascus favourable to Rome elected Kīrillus Ṭānās, the nephew of the long-standing champion of union with Rome, Iftīmiyūs aṣ-Ṣayfī, whose election was confirmed by Rome in 1730. Meanwhile, Aṯanāsiyūs had recommended that his successor should be Silfistrus, a Cypriot by origin who had worked with him in Syria but was then on Mount Athos. After being elected by a synod in Constantinople also in 1724, Silfistrus went to Syria, where he enlisted the help of the Ottoman authorities against the Catholics of Antioch or Melkites, as they became known. Beatings, imprisonments, banishment and confiscation of their property were their lot if they did not recognise Orthodox beliefs. As a result many took refuge in Lebanon, but there, too, the Orthodox and the Ottoman authorities pursued them. Moreover, as was their custom, non-Christian governors and notables exploited conflicts among the Christians to their own advantage, promising support to first one side and then the other in return for money.

As the superior of a monastery and later of an Order, Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā'iġ had direct dealings with Lebanese notables, on whose goodwill and protection his community depended.[15] Dayr Mār Yuḥannā at Aš-Šuwayr, the first foundation, lay in the territory of the Druze Abī al-Lam' family of *muqāta'ġīs* (tax farmers), as did Dayr Mār Ša'ya in Broumana and Dayr Mār Ilyās at Al-Muḥaydiṯa. Zūq Mīkā'īl, in the territory of the Maronite Mūsā al-Ḫāzin and his descendants, [16] was the site of the women's monastery. The overlords of all these *muqāta'ġīs* were emirs of the Sunnī Šihāb family, Ḥaydar, after his death in 1730 his son Milḥim and from 1754 Milḥim's brother Manṣūr. Dayr as-Sayyida at Ra's Ba'labakk fell under the authority of the Šī'ī Ismā'īl Ḥarfūš, whose overlord was the governor of Damascus. The establishment and maintenance of Melkite

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[14] This *badī'īya* is discussed in K i l p a t r i c k, *From* Literatur *to* Adab, pp. 214–218.

[15] For this section see Ḥāǧǧ, *Al-Ruhbānīya al-Bāsilīya aš-Šuwayriyya*, passim.

[16] The Ḫāzin šayḫs had their economic base in the prosperous district of Kisrawān. With their authority confirmed by the Maronite clergy, they had legitimacy to represent Maronites in contacts with external actors, and they thus achieved considerable prestige within the *muqāta'a* structure (Richard v a n L e e u w e n, *Notables and Clergy in Mount Lebanon. The Khāzin Sheikhs and the Maronite Church (1736–1840)*, Leiden 1994, 240.

communities in these places was threatened by the opposition of the Orthodox and the cupidity of some notables, as the following two examples show.

When in 1722 Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā'iğ went to Ra's Ba'labakk to take over Dayr as-Sayyida, the previous superior complained to Patriarch Aṯanāsiyūs al-Dabbās's representative in Damascus. Aṣ-Ṣā'iğ succeeded in appeasing him, but after the schism the local Orthodox bishop enlisted Ismā'īl Ḥarfūš's support against the Melkites, and they were forced to leave Dayr as-Sayyida. Shortly afterwards, however, Ismā'īl Ḥarfūš was in difficulties with the governor of Damascus and retreated to Mount Lebanon. There his son and daughter-in-law fell ill and were cured by a Melkite monk from Dayr as-Sayyida, whereupon he promised to protect the Melkite community after his return to Ba'labakk. He kept his promise and had the Orthodox bishop removed, and Niqūlāwus was restored as superior of the monastery in 1725.

The next year complaints about the behaviour of Buṭrus, the superior of the monastery of Dayr Mār Ilyās at Al-Muḥaydiṯa were made to the local notable, Nağm al-Lam'ī, but Buṭrus avoided any sanctions by offering him a bribe. He suspected that Niqūlāwus and his community were the source of the rumours and complained of them to Nağm, who tried to extort money from both sides, allotting the monastery first to one, then to the other. Niqūlāwus appealed to the Ḥāzins, but finally he and his monks had to leave their monastery of Dayr Mār Yuḥannā. Nağm accused them to Ḥaydar Šihāb of leaving the monastery without permission and stealing its contents, but the Ḥāzin shaykh pointed out that the Šuwayrite monks had built up the monastery. Disobeying Ḥaydar's orders, Nağm refused to leave the monks in peace, so Niqūlāwus appealed directly to *al-amīr al-akbar*, as Ḥaydar was known, in Dayr al-Qamar, after which the monastery was returned to the community on his authority, and at a price, in 1728. Intrigues and unrest continued, however, until 'Assāf al-Lam'ī, who unlike his brother Nağm was well-disposed towards the community, offered them a safer monastery.

Eleven poems in the *Dīwān* are introduced as being addressed to members of non-Melkite communities,[17] and they are the subject of the following remarks.[18] (It is noteworthy that in the British Library manuscript of the *Dīwān* which I consulted none of them appear; the copyist in Aleppo apparently did not find them interesting or see them as conforming to his image of the poet Aṣ-Ṣā'iğ) They fall into two main groups, seven composed between 1725 and 1732, and four composed between 1743 and 1756.[19] In the first group are panegyrics of the emirs of the Abī al-Lam' family (1725), Ḥaydar Šihāb and a judge in the Druze country named 'Abd al-Laṭīf (both 1727), a reply to a poem addressed to Niqūlāwus by a Šī'ī shaykh (also 1727), a poem commissioned by an emir in difficulties with Ḥaydar (1730) and two poems addressed to 'Assāf al-Lam'ī when

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[17]   Strictly speaking, the polemical poems against the Orthodox could also be included. But since they are addressed to *frères ennemis* and concentrate on dogmatic controversies they belong to a theological world remote from the inter-communal sphere of the poems here under discussion.

[18]   At least one other poem falls into this category, a *madīḥ* of which only the date, 1737, is mentioned in the introduction. As the text makes clear, the addressee is Aḥmad aš-Šihābī.

[19]   See the accompanying list for the details of the poems.

he had quarrelled with his brother Ḥusayn (1732). The second group includes a poem commissioned to congratulate Milḥim Šihāb on his reconciliation with the Abī al-Lam' family (1743), an appeal to an emir's magnanimity (1749), an elegy of Abū Širwān Mūsā al-Ḫāzin, who as *muqāta'ǧī* of the area around Zūq Mīḫā'īl had consistently supported the Šuwayrite monks (1751), and a panegyric of a ruler, apparently Manṣūr Šihāb, who succeeded his brother Milḥim in 1754 (1756).[20] Besides these long poems are several chronograms, six commemorating the deaths of the Maronite Patriarch Yūsuf al-Ḫāzin and other less prominent members of the Ḫāzin family, two congratulating Ismā'īl Ḥarfūš on the completion of his palace at Ba'labakk, three commemorating public buildings, a fountain in Beirut and a khān endowed by Milḥim Šihāb and a *qayṣarīya* endowed by Manṣūr, and one on the building of the walls of Acre.

To study the oeuvre of any Arab poet of the early Ottoman period is difficult for several reasons. The view is still widely held that the period in general is one of decadence and decline and thus not worth studying.[21] And because poets made extensive use of figures of speech, word play and other rhetorical devices, their poetry is assumed to be artificial and far removed from the concerns of the "real world".[22] Furthermore, the amount of research done on poets of the Mamluk and especially the Ottoman period palls into insignificance beside the books and articles on the first six centuries of Arabic poetry. It is thus difficult to assess to what extent Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā'iǧ, or any other poet of the period, is working within the conventions of his time, and where he is introducing changes.

Against this background, here is a short presentation of two poems, noting some of their salient points. The first is Aṣ-Ṣā'iǧ's earliest panegyric of the Abī al-Lam' emirs,[23] composed after 'Assāf al-Lam'ī had prevented the Orthodox bishop of Beirut from expelling the Šuwayrite community from one of its monasteries. According to the introduction in the Dīwān, it was composed at the request of the then Superior General of the Order.[24]

> ***al-'adlu yabnī wa-l-amānu yushayyidu wa-l-jūru yufnī wa-l-hawānu yubaddidū***
> ("Justice is a constructs and security builds up; tyranny deals destruction
> and humiliation tears down")

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[20] This last is not found in the original *dīwān* which Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā'iǧ himself collected and the introductory note does not name the addressee although it gives the date, perhaps as a *terminus ante quem*. But "Manṣūr" is mentioned prominently in the poem.

[21] Recently, however, scholars have begun to criticise the traditional view and address the period seriously. See Lowry's and Stewart's *Introduction* to *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography* (as in note 5), 1–8, and Thomas Bauer's review of Roger Allen and D.S. Richards (eds.), *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period. The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, Cambridge 2006, in "Mamlūk Studies Review" 11 (2007), pp. 137–167.

[22] This view also to some extent reflects the views of 19th Arab writers justifying their own innovations.

[23] *Dīwān*, pp. 84–88. Metre *kāmil*.

[24] The texts of this and the following poem are given in the Appendix.

Introduction, ll. 1-13
> ll. 1-8: the importance of justice and firm government
> ll. 9-13: the present is a time of misfortune where envious men and tyranny hold sway

Transition (*riḥla*), ll. 14-20
> ll. 14-17: the poet has abandoned his friends to go to a monastery but enemies still surround him
> ll. 18-20: during a night journey the poet proclaims the caravan's destination, the Abī al-Lam' emirs

Panegyric (*madīḥ*), ll. 21-65
> ll. 21-32: general praise of the Banī al-Lam', their origins, numbers, qualities, achievements
> ll. 33-49: evocation of the battle of 'Ayn Dāra, where the Banī al-Lam' fought on the side of the victorious Ḥaydar Šihāb[25]
>> ll. 33-37: the ravages of the bloodthirsty sword
>> ll. 38-40: the crushing of the Yamanīs
>> ll. 41-49: the Banī al-Lam''s heroic qualities
> ll. 50-53: the Banī al-Lam''s superlative virtues and inborn ability to govern
> ll. 54-58: celebration of re-established harmony among the Banī al-Lam'
> ll. 59-65: the Banī al-Lam' as leaders of Qays and a refuge for all

Conclusion ll. 66-70
> ll. 66-67: the poet presents his poem as a virgin bride to its addressees, requesting its price
> ll. 68-70: he wishes six named members of the Banī al-Lam' a long life

This poem conforms to the conventions of the *madīḥ* (panegyric) in its post-'Abbāsid form. Not surprisingly for a monk, Aṣ-Ṣā'iġ does not attempt the *nasīb* (evocation of a lost beloved) at the beginning of the poem, preferring a more impersonal tone. He begins with maxims (*ḥikam*) about good governance, focussing in l.1 on justice *('adl)* and security (*amān*), contrasted with tyranny (*ǧūr*) and humiliation (*hawān*). In l. 2, sincerity (*ṣidq*) is paired with truth (*ḥaqq*), in l. 3 decisiveness (*al-ḥazmu fī l-aḥkām*) means verdicts which end conflicts (*ḥukmun fayṣal*). *Fayṣal* often designates a sword by metonymy, and ll. 4 and 5 pick up this idea: power is a sword (*sayf*) in the hands of those who exercise it; only sharp swords (*suyūf*) can ward off the hands of those who desire power in this age (*dahr*). The next three lines emphasise the importance of sound judgement and discernment in the ruler, before the poet turns to speak (l. 9) of the chronic tyranny of his own times (*zamanin zamīnin ǧā'ir*), this last word recalling the *ǧūr* of

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[25] At the battle of 'Ayn Dāra in 1711, Ḥaydar Šihāb at the head of the Qaysī faction crushed the Yamanī faction led by the Druze 'Alam ad-Dīn family. The Banī al-Lam' belonged to the Qaysī faction (*EI* [2], art. *Ḳays 'Aylān: Ḳays and Yaman in the Ottoman period* (G. B a e r and M. H o e x t e r)).

l. 1. He was first tormented (*ankadat*)[26] by a terrible passion, but when he disavowed it, worse was to come: misfortunes, afflictions caused by the envious and threats from oppressors – and all these frequently (*fī kulli yawm*, *bi-kulli waqt*, *bi-kulli ayn*, *bi-kulli ān*) (ll. 12, 13). Worst of all, he was now far from his friends and relatives, but his base and envious enemies had not been left behind. The reference to leaving his family allows the poet to elaborate (l. 15): "We have left this world (*al-ʿālamīn*)[27] to find favour in the world of the Kingdom (*ʿālami l-malakūt*),[28] the goal we have set ourselves."

This is the occasion for Aṣ-Ṣāʾiġ in l. 16 to allude to the *diyār*, the abode of the beloved, one of the standard opening motifs of the *madīḥ*, with a neat play on words: "We have abandoned our abode (*diyār*), its stronghold (*ḥimā*; i.e. the citadel of Aleppo) and its dear people for the sanctuary (*ḥimā*) of the monastery (*diyāra*), whose protection (*ḥimā*) gives greatest succour". Yet he is not safe there: "The evil men's (*al-ašrār*) wickedness (*šarruhum*) has flared up, giving off sparks (*šararan*) and a fire which I think will never die" (l. 17; a nice example of paronomasia).

The transition from here to the panegyric by means of the journey (*raḥīl*) seems abrupt; the poet first begs the night-travellers to stop so that he can take a last look at his loved ones, and then asks who they mean to visit, answering for them himself that they are on their way to the Banī al-Lamʿ. In the panegyric, however, he is on firmer ground. He starts with the youngest generation, born from parents "both of unsullied origin; they have natures made perfect by God's grace even before[29] they are born" (l. 22). The adults "both beardless youths and grey-haired men" (*amradan wa-ašyaban* [sic!]) have always attained heights of glory, both when Time was young and now when it is old ("beardless or grey-haired") (*ašyabu amradu*) (l. 25). Their generosity is indicated with an ingenious word-play: "It is not easy to comprehend "when" (*iḥāṭatu ʿinda*) when they bestow gifts (*ʿinda nawālihim*)" (l. 26) – a generosity which no rational being (*nāṭiq*)[30] may deny (l. 28). True to their word, clement, when they grant pardon it is out of nobleness of heart, for however many people they slaughtered, they would not pay the blood price. (ll. 29-31).

These and the following line bring the Banī al-Lamʿ's enemies on to the scene; they thus serve as an introduction to the passage on the battle of ʿAyn Dāra. Here the bloodthirsty sword is personified running amok, drinking blood, consuming entrails and livers, passing on (*māḍin*) while the taste of blood is still present (*ḥāḍir*) in it (33-35). Aṣ-Ṣāʾiġ paints the carnage of the battle scene in vivid, even gruesome detail

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[26] The dictionaries give the 2nd form of *n-k-d* with this meaning. One of the criticisms levelled at Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣāʾiġ was his resorting to verb forms not attested in the lexicographical tradition.

[27] A Qur'anic term which occurs in the *Fātiḥa* and 71 other times. There it is taken to mean "all creatures" (*Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān,* Leiden 2001–2006, s.v. "World" (Binyamin Abrahamov)).

[28] *Malakūt* is both a Christian and a Muslim term; it is understood in the Qur'ān as "God's dominion".

[29] "*qablan*" for "*qabla an*": poetic license to fit the metre.

[30] Aṣ-Ṣāʾigh may also have in mind the specific sense of *naṭaqa* among the Druze, "to speak of one's former incarnation" (see, e.g. the short story "Al-ʿĀʾid" by the Lebanese Druze author Saʿīd Taqī ad-Dīn). Since Druze individuals believe themselves to be reincarnations of deceased members of the community, a *nāṭiq* would designate a Druze.

reminiscent of some Umayyad and early 'Abbāsid poetry,[31] concluding with "They left the Yemenis felled and bowed down, their hearts sheaths for the swords of Qays" (*tarakū Banī Yamanin ṣarā'ā fa-nṯanū / wa-qulūbuhum li-suyūfi Qaysin aġmudū*) (l. 38). L. 40: "If they growl as they stab, you imagine they are lions brawling to the sound of thunderbolts" (*In yan'amū waqta ṭ-ṭi'āni taḫāluhum / usudan tu'arbidu wa-ṣ-ṣawā'iqu tur'idū*) provides a transition to a series of comparisons of the Banī al-Lam' in which they surpass the object or quality of comparisons, the first of which is: "like edges of swords – except that they are never blunted; like arrows – but they never miss their mark" (l. 41). To begin with the Banī al-Lam' are compared to the warrior's equipment (arrows, coats of mail), but after striking an almost existential note ("[They are] death, but not hated; life, but never burdensome"; *Wa-l-mawtu illā annahum lam yukrahū / wa-l-'ayšu illā annahum lam yankadū*) (l. 44), Aṣ-Ṣā'iġ modifies the tone, introducing objects from nature (wind, fire, shooting stars) as terms of comparison. The section concludes more elaborately, exploiting a familiar antithesis: "Sources of warriors when called on for help, sources of bounty when approached for support" (*Wa-maṣādiru l-fursān immā stundiġū / wa-mawāridu l-iḥsāni immā stūridū*) (l. 49), and rising to a climax in l. 50 with a series of superlatives: "The most generous, most illustrious, the best and most perfect, most noble and glorious" (*al-akramūna l-amǧadūna l-afḍalū / na l-akmalūna l-ašrafūna l-muǧǧadū*).

This introduces praise of the Banī al-Lam' as rulers to whom the rank of emir has come docilely and submissively as though on a leading rein (*Atati l-imāratu naḥwahum munqādatan / fa-ka'an li-ṭā'atihim 'alayhā miqwadū*) (l. 52), without them needing to use force. The subsequent lines celebrate re-established harmony in the clan (… *qad ta'allafa šamluka l-mutabaddidū*[32] (l. 54))[33] and voice *Schadenfreude* towards those envious of the Banī al-Lam' who have been thrown into turmoil (*amsaw wa-'indahumu l-muqīmu l-muq'idū*) (l. 58). Finally the Banī al-Lam' are the support of mankind (*sanadu l-anāmi*), but the word *sanad* gives rise to another, grammatical, image: "as though they [i.e. mankind] are the verb of speech while you are the noun subject" (*ka'annahum / fi'lu l-kalāmi wa-antumu smun musnadū*) (l. 60). But after this fulsome praise, Aṣ-Ṣā'iġ seizes the opportunity to remind the Banī al-Lam' discretely of their responsibilities in a series of rhetorical questions (ll. 62-64), beginning: "Can your shadow provide a refuge, while we are living in fear? Can your abode be a sanctuary when we face expulsion?" (*A-yakūnu ẓillukumu l-'iyāḏa wa-naḫsā / wa-yakūnu raḥbukumu l-liwāḏa wa-nuṭradū*) (l. 62) – a reference to the precariousness of the monks' position in the face of Orthodox hostility. Indeed, Aṣ-Ṣā'iġ and his community find no-one but the Banī al-Lam' worthy

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[31] A similar epic treatment of battlefield scenes with the accompanying praise of the victorious warlord can be found in the poetry which Aṣ-Ṣā'igh's contemporary Ibrāhīm al-Ḥārīṣī al-'Āmilī (d. 1183/1766) dedicated to Šī'ī chieftains defending the Ǧabal 'Āmil against the ruler of Galilee Ẓāhir al-'Umar (Muḥsin al-Amīn, *A'lām aš-Šī'a.* 3rd ed., Beirut, n.d., vol. v, pp. 89–106).

[32] An echo of *yubaddidū* in the opening line.

[33] What precise occasion Aṣ-Ṣā'iġ is referring to here is not clear, but there were frequent conflicts within the clans of *muqāṭa'ǧīs* in Lebanon (Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, London 2007, p. 4).

of a visit (*iḏ kulluhum min dūnikum lā yuqṣadū*) (l. 65). Here in fact is an indirect appeal for the virtues of the just ruler set out in general terms at the beginning of the poem to be applied in a specific case – an appeal based on an important principle of Ottoman society.[34] *Yuqṣadū*, however, also evokes the *qaṣīda* (poem) and so provides a transition to the penultimate motif of this text, that of the poem, the first-fruits of the poet's talent (*bikra l-qarīḥati*) as a lovely maiden. Her bride-price must be paid by those to whom the poem is addressed; part of it (*ṣidāq*) is true protection (*ṣidqu ḏ-ḏimāmi*) while the rest (*mahr*) is "your satisfying us – I would rather not speak of gold" (*irḍā'ukum kaylā aqūla l-'asǧadū*) (l. 67). This bridal motif, while not part of the original repertory of the *qaṣīda*, commonly occurs as a conclusion of post-'Abbāsid panegyrics.[35] Finally A ṣ -Ṣ ā ' i ǧ wishes a long life to the members of the Banī al-Lam' clan for whom the poem is intended, Ḥusayn, Naǧm, Aḥmad, 'Assāf, Fāris and Ḥasan (ll. 69-70).

This poem shows A ṣ - Ṣ ā ' i ǧ standing firmly in the tradition of Arabic panegyric, the diction,[36] elaborate style and conventions of which he masters. Some passages have an epic force, notably the description of the battle of 'Ayn Dāra and the subsequent series of comparisons to the Banī al-Lam''s advantage, which is at the heart of the poem (ll. 41-49). While following the succession of themes he expresses his own preoccupation, his community's need for protection. Thus in praising the Druze emirs he reminds them obliquely that to deserve such laudatory epithets they need to act appropriately.

Except for the reference to leaving the world for a monastery (ll. 15-16) nothing in this poem indicates unequivocally that the author is Christian, let alone a monk. Indeed the bloody details of the battle, which A ṣ - Ṣ ā ' i ǧ may well have heard about from participants or eye-witnesses, and the celebration of the Banī al-Lam''s warlike prowess are hardly fitting themes for one who seeks the Kingdom of God and lives a life of humility. But A ṣ - Ṣ ā ' i ǧ's concern here was to secure protection for his community, and he chose the most effective way he knew to speak to the hearts of the Druze emirs.

The second poem is addressed to a Šī'ī shaykh. The introductory note explains that this was a reply to a poem the shaykh sent to A ṣ - Ṣ ā ' i ǧ; unfortunately the initial poem seems not to have survived.[37]

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[34] The expectation of justice – in the Ottoman case distributed by the state – was widespread in society (Karen B a r k e y, *Empire of Difference. The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*, New York 2008, p. 101). In virtually autonomous Mount Lebanon ensuring it fell to the local notables.

[35] Beatrice G r u e n d l e r, *The Motif of Marriage in Select Abbasid Panegyrics*, in: Angelika N e u w i r t h, Birgit E m b a l ó, Sebastian G ü n t h e r, Maher J a r r a r (eds.), *Myths, historical archetypes and symbolic figures in Arabic literature. Towards a New Hermeneutic Approach*, Beirut 1999, pp. 120–122; 'Umar Mūsā B ā š ā, *Quṭb al-'aṣr 'Umar al-Yāfī*, 2nd ed., Damascus 1416/1996, p. 120.

[36] Occasionally forms are used which do not occur in the dictionaries, or not with the meaning they are intended to convey in the context, e.g. *ankadat* (l. 11), *istaḥkamat* (l. 26).

[37] *Dīwān*, pp. 285–287. Metre *wāfir*.

> *a-lā yā dhā l-humāmu l-almaʿīyū wa-yā hādhā l-imāmu
> l-lawdhaʿīyū*
>
> (Oh hero endowed with a keen mind, oh imam, and brilliant
> speaker)

ll. 1-3: The poet asks the shaykh to be tolerant towards his humble self

ll. 4-9: the only true friend is God, the Almighty, source of all good

ll. 10-13: the poet thanks the shaykh for his poem, which he describes
as a lovely girl

ll. 14-21: he disclaims any right to praise, being a humble monk

ll. 22-28: praise of true intelligence, good manners and virtue in general

ll. 29-31: praise of the shaykh's goodness and excellence

This is not a conventional panegyric. It belongs to a much less codified category of Mamluk and Ottoman poems, those addressed to officials, judges or people with whom the poet is on a friendly footing. Such poems may often reflect a personal approach and attitudes.[38] In this case it is impossible to know how far Aṣ-Ṣāʾiġ is simply replying to the shaykh's earlier verses when ordering and developing the themes; in other words, how far is the personal approach here that of Aṣ-Ṣāʾiġ and how far that of his friend the shaykh which he has adopted. At all events, the rhyme and metre correspond to those of the shaykh's poem.

The first three lines immediately establish a contrast between the poet and his friend which runs through the whole poem: the shaykh, who is also an imam, is brilliant and eloquent, while Aṣ-Ṣāʾiġ is mere dust (*turbu arḍin*) (l. 2), condemned to a lowly existence. Who is he to be noticed by the shaykh, a man of note and of generous disposition? Rather, the shaykh should turn to God, the only true and faithful Friend (*al-ḫill al-wafī*) (l. 4). The following lines exhort the shaykh to follow the guidance of God, who is exalted above all mankind, the source of all goodness, gifts and favours. They contain a number of expressions and echoes of the *Qurʾān*: the shaykh should allow himself to be guided by the beacon of God's guidance (*sanā hudāhu*), for he who does not do so is misguided (*ġawiyyū*) (l. 5). No-one except God is exalted – or bears His name (both senses of *samiyyū*) (l. 6). The powerful are merely dust (*habāʾin*), while the Creator alone is truly generous, a stream [of gifts] (both senses of *sariyyū*) (l. 7)[39]; indeed His bounty prevails in every ravine (*bi-kulli faġġin*) (l. 9). It is conceivable that this passage intends to console the shaykh for some disappointment caused by a notable or ruler.

The poet then turns abruptly to speak of the verses the shaykh exchanges with him, using an eloquent image. The shaykh deserves poetry like surging waves, whose themes

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[38] Yūsuf Aḥmad Ismāʿīl, *Bināʾ al-qaṣīda al-ʿarabīya fī al-ʿaṣr al-mamlūkī: al-binya al-tarkībiyya*, Kuwait 2007, p. 91.

[39] *Samī, sarī* and also *ḫafī* (l. 8) all occur in *Sūrat Maryam* as rhyme words (*samiyyan, sariyyan, ḫafiyyan.* In alluding to this *sūra*, Aṣ-Ṣāʾiġ hints at one of the features shared between Islam and Christianity, at least in its Orthodox and Catholic traditions, the veneration of the Virgin Mary.

are vast as the ocean (*luġġatihi*; another Qur'ānic term) and whose shore is its rhyme. Picking up the motif of the poem as a maiden, already familiar from his panegyric of the Banī al-Lam' and probably used by the shaykh too, A ṣ - Ṣ ā ' i ġ describes the shaykh's own poem as a lovable virgin endowed with the beauty of Zaynab (*ḥusnun zaynabiyyū*: a reference to Zaynab bint 'Alī, the Prophet's granddaughter), a girl (*fatātun*) adorned with a sparkling intelligence, who has decorously brought him the shaykh's greetings (ll. 12-13).

At this point A ṣ - Ṣ ā ' i ġ abandons convention, asking his friend to blame him because he is a man (*fatan*, echoing *fatātun* in the previous line) lacking any laudable qualities. In praising him the shaykh resembles someone calling to the desert, with only the echo to answer him. For monks censure is good and humility a central virtue. And A ṣ - Ṣ ā ' i ġ judges himself to be a mirage; his friend should not be taken in with his person, for those who seek a mirage will remain thirsty (*Anā ka-l-āli lā yaghrurka ālī / li'anna l-āla qāṣiduhu ẓamiyyu*) (l. 17). He goes on to describe himself with a series of images expressing disappointment: the lightning in a waterless cloud (*barqin ġahāmin*) (l. 19), dew (*aṭ-ṭallu*) set against a downpour (*wablun*) (l. 20), the stars paling (*taḍ'alu*) when the full moon shines (*ḍā'a*) (l. 21). What he says is to be taken seriously. Hearsay is very different from the experience of an eye-witness (*Mā ḫabarun ka-ḫubrin 'an 'iyānin*);[40] what are illusions when truth is manifest (l. 22)? He goes on: "How many a Dimna has outwitted a lion, though stupid wits were his cunning" (*kam min Dimnatin adhat*[41] *bi-sārin / wa-kāna dahā'ahu l-'aqlu l-ġabīyu*) (l. 23) – an allusion to the famous fable of I b n   a l - M u q a f f a ', *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, in which the jackal tricks the lion for his own short-sighted ends, while the lion believes what the jackal tells him without verifying the information himself.[42]

The subsequent lines affirm that penetrating intelligence (*fahmun ḏakiyyun*) is a prerequisite for virtuous actions (*fi'lun zakiyyun*); they are the noblest qualities anyone can wish for, together with good manners (*al-ādābu wa-l-waġh al-ḥayiyyu*) (ll. 25-6). A man's best adornments are the badge of virtue and unsullied honour, in contrast to the ugly traits of those deceived by this world, dishonourable deeds and evil thoughts (ll. 27-28). This passage of general reflections leads into the conclusion, where these virtues are attributed to A ṣ - Ṣ ā ' i ġ's friend the shaykh. In a splendid flourish, the final two verses play on the meaning of names: first the shaykh's name, Muḥammad, literally "praised, praiseworthy": "Oh, what a Muḥammad in name (noun) and in deeds (verb)" (*Fa-yā li-Muḥammadin fī smin wa-fi'lin*) and then the central figure of Šī'ism, 'Alī , literally "exalted": "you have attained a high position and great prestige, and the

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[40] This is a rephrasing of the proverb *Laysa l-ḫabaru ka-l-'iyān* (cf. e.g. A z - Z a m a ḫ š a r ī, *Al-Mustaqṣā fī amṯāl al-'arab*, no. 1074).

[41] The form attested in the dictionaries is *dahat*.

[42] 'Abd Allāh I b n   a l - M u q a f f a ' (d. c. 139/756), a secretary and prose writer on political issues, translated important Middle Persian texts into Arabic, the best known being the collection of fables of Sanscrit origin known as *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, after the names of the two jackals in the first section.

foundation on which your lofty rank is built is 'Alī (raised high)" ('*alawta makānatan wa-samawta qadran / wa-ussu binā'i rif'atikum 'Aliyyu*) (ll. 30-31).

These two poems show Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā'iġ working within the conventions of Arabic poetry of the early Ottoman period, so far as it is known at the moment. He employs the elaborate rhetorical figures of *badī'* style and alludes to the literary heritage with his references to the fables of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and to proverbial expressions. The religious heritage of the shaykh, the Qur'an,[43] and the secular history of the Banī al-Lam', their participation in the battle of 'Ayn Dāra, are also present. A study of further poems he addressed to notables of communities other than his own, especially the non-Christians, would no doubt bring out further aspects of his familiarity with the Arabic cultural and literary heritage.

How far back one would have to go to find a similarly eloquent Christian addressing non-Christian rulers and prominent personalities I do not know (here again the absence of extensive research on Mamluk literature in particular makes such a question impossible to answer). But in Ottoman times Aṣ-Ṣā'iġ represents a new type of poet, a Melkite ecclesiastic (an identity to which he refers discretely in his poems) addressing notables of other Christian and non-Christian communities according to the conventions of elite Arabic poetry, mostly on matters of fundamental interest to his Order. As will have become clear from the discussion of these two poems, however, there is no direct reflection of European influence in his verses addressed to secular notables, and to seek for glimmerings of the dawn of the *nahḍa* in them is unrewarding. Rather, they are deeply rooted in the realities of 18th century Mount Lebanon. In fact thanks to the information available about the poet's life and his habit of stating where and when he composed these poems,[44] they can be placed in a more precise historical and social context than much other pre-19th century Arabic poetry. They illustrate well how elite poetry functioned at the time. Poets could display their familiarity with the Arabic literary tradition, their mastery of the language and their skill in the use of rhetorical figures, while at the same time using poetry to further their own interests or those of their community and to communicate with other men of letters. As the two poems discussed here show, the *qaṣīda*, as it had developed over the centuries, allowed the Melkite monk Niqūlāwus aṣ-Ṣā'iġ to express praise but also veiled criticism of Druze notables on whose support he depended and to engage in a friendly exchange with a prominent religious dignitary of the Šī'ī community.[45]

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[43] Perhaps, too, the use of the term *nāṭiq* should be taken as a reference to the Druze religious heritage of the Banī al-Lam' (see note 27 above).

[44] By contrast the poems in the *Dīwān* on religious subjects (apart from controversies) are often introduced merely by the traditional *wa-qāla*.

[45] Study of his other panegyrics and elegies, addressed to Sunnī Muslim, Druze and Maronite notables, would undoubtedly provide more insight into the functioning of poetry in this period.

وقال ابضًا رحمهُ اللهُ تعالى يمدحُ امراءً بيتِ ابي اللمع ويهنيهم بالصلحِ والاتفاقِ

وقد امرهُ بها الرئيسُ العامُ زمنَ الاضطهادِ طالبًا لحمايتهم وذمامهم

وهو في ديرِ ماري اشعياءَ النبي سنة ١٧٢٥ مسيحية

والجورُ يُفني والهوانُ يُبدَّدُ	العدلُ يبني والامانُ يشيّدُ
والحقُّ الزمُ ما يُرادُ ويُقصَدُ	والصدقُ اعظمُ ما يُرامُ ويبتغى
تشفى بهِ ناسٌ وناسٌ تسعَدُ	والحزمُ في الأحكامِ حكمٌ فيصَلٌ
قد يُنتضى طورًا وطورًا يغمَدُ	والحكمُ سيفٌ في يمينِ وُلاتهِ
لم تُكفَفْ لباغيهِ يدُ	لولا السيوفُ الباتراتُ لكان هذا الدهرُ
لم يؤتِها الّا الرشيدُ الارشدُ	ان الحصافةَ في العقولِ مزيّةٌ
ما نالها الّا فتًى متأيّدٌ	حسنُ السياسةِ في الرئاسةِ حكمةٌ
يسمو بها الفَطِنُ الاريبُ ويمجَدُ	وكذا الفراسةُ في الامارةِ فطنةٌ
قعدَ الصحيحُ بهِ وقامَ المُقعَدُ	إنّا لَفِي زمنٍ زمينٍ جائرٍ
وسَراةِ قومٍ للرجا لم يَفقدوا	كم من رَعاعٍ مهتطينَ جنائبًا
انكرتِها فلَقيتُ ما هو انكَدُ	قد انكدت لي العيشَ رائعةُ الصِّبَى
وبكلِّ وقتٍ بلوةٌ تتجدَّدُ	في كلِّ يومٍ نكبةٌ أُصَى بها
وبكل آنٍ ظالمٌ يتوعَدُ	وبكلُّ أينٍ مِحنةٌ من حاسدٍ
تَبِنَ الاراذلُ والعُداةُ الحُسَّدُ	بِنّا عن الأصحابِ والقُربى ولم
في عالمِ الملكوتِ وهْوَ المَقصِدُ	ولقد تركنا العالمينَ لحنظي
لحمى الديارةِ اذ حِماها الانجدُ	عِفنا الديارَ مع الحِمى وأهيلهِ
شَرَرًا ونارًا خِلتها لا تهمَدُ	لكنمــا الاشرارُ اضرمَ شرُّهم
أسرَى الركابُ وظلَّ قلبي ينشُدُ	لم انسَ ما طال المَدَى يومًا بهِ
ممـن أُحِبُّ بنظرةٍ اتزوَّدُ	كفُّوا عن الإسآدِ حتى انني

عنهم فؤادِيه والجوارِحِ تشهدُ	فَلِمَن نحوتُم بالسُّرَى فاجابَني
هو بالمآثرِ والفخارِ مشيَّدُ	نسلُ الاماجدِ بيتَ ذي اللمعِ الذي
طبعًا بفضلِ اللهِ قبلًا يولدُ	من كلِّ زاكي النبعتينِ مكمَّلٌ
اشياخُ خُلقًا والمحيَّا والسُّوددُ	لهُم وهم في المهدِ اطفالٌ نُهى الـ
ساغت كما قد ساغَ منهم مولدُ	طابت مواليدُ النِّساءِ لهنَّ لو
طولَ المدى والدهرُ اشيبُ امردُ	حازوا المعالي امردًا او اشيبًا
ما استحكمَتْهُ غادةٌ او اغيدُ	ما غالبينهم صبوةٌ وهواهم
ماذا الفضاءَ إزاءَه والفدفدُ	ضاقت إحاطةً عِندَ عِندَ نوالهم
كلا وهل فيضُ الغمائمِ يُجحدُ	ماساغ جحدُ نَداهم من ناطقٍ
قبلَ الوعودِ كانهم لم يوعدوا	ان عاهدوا حَفِظوا وان وعدوا وَفَوا
كرمًا وان نَقِموا العدى لم يحتدوا	او حاكموا حَلِموا وان حكموا عَفَوا
ان يقتلوا جمعَ البريّةَ لم يَدُوا	قد يصفحونَ تكرُّمًا مع انهم
راعُوا العِدَے وكِلاهما لا يرقُدُ	رعَوُا الانامَ بناظرٍ وبآخرٍ
سكرَ الحُسامُ بها فظلَّ يعربدُ	شهِدَت لهم في عينِ دارةٍ وقعةٌ
ابدًا ومأكلُهُ الحَشَى ولا كبدُ	لن يتقي مسكًا فمشربُهُ الدِما
ناهٍ لهُ الامرُ المُطاعُ الاوكدُ	ماضٍ وطعمُ الموتِ فيهِ حاضرٌ
ماقُ العِدَے حينًا تراهُ نجهدُ	مهجٌ تسيلُ على فِرِنْدِ غِرارِهِ
بخضلٍّ قائمُهُ لِما يتورَّدُ	ريّانَ من الصفحينِ يكادُ ان
وقلوبُهم لسيوفِ قيسٍ اغمدُ	تركوا بني يمَنٍ صراعَى فانثنوا
في الهامِ جاءَنَّهُ الجماجمُ تسجدُ	اموا بهم وغَداةَ صلَّ حُسامُهم
اسُدًا تعربدُ والصواعقِ ترعِدُ	ان ينأموا وقتَ الطِعانِ نخالُهم
والنبلُ الا انهم لم يَصرُدوا	فهُمُ الظُّبَى لكنهم لم يكهموا

وَالأُسْدُ الا انهم لم يُسأموا   والزَندُ الا انهم لم يَصلدوا

والسمُ الا انهم لم يُحطموا   والزَغْفُ الا انهم لم يُسردوا

والموتُ الا انهم لم يُكرهوا   والعيشُ الا انهم لم يَنكدوا

والربعُ الا انهم لم يعطبوا   والنارُ الا انهم لم تَخمدوا

والشهبُ الا انهم لم يأفلوا   والغيثُ الا انهم لم يُفسدوا

والطودُ الا انهم لم يُوطأوا   والبحرُ الا انهم لم يُزبدوا

والروسُ الا انهم لم يُصدعوا   واللحظُ الا انهم لم يهجدوا

ومصادرُ الفُرسان إمّا استنجدوا   وموارِدُ الإحسان إمّا استوردوا

الأكرمونَ الأمجدونَ الأفضلو   نَ الأكملونَ الأشرفونَ الأجمّدُ

ما ساغَ يوماً حَلُّ ما لا حلّلوا   كلا ولا عَقدُ الذي لم يعقدوا

اتت الإمارةُ نحوهم منقادةً   فكأنْ لطاعتهم عليها مِقوَدُ

قد حازها بعضٌ بعنفٍ جاهدًا   لكن هُمْ فيما حظوا لم يجهدوا

بُشراكَ يا بيتَ المفاخرِ والجَدى   اذ قد تألّف شملك المتبدّدُ

جمعت قلوبَ بنيك فيك على الوَلا   تفرّقت عنك العُداة الشرّدُ

مُذ أنّهم وردوا مـوارِدَ وَفْقهم   كرِع المنيّة مفسِدٌ ومفنّدُ

فأحسِنْ بها من فُرحةٍ وأعظِم بهِ   يوماً هو اليومُ الاعزُّ الاسعدُ

وإرحمتاهُ لحُسّدٍ من حرّهم   أمسَوا وعندهم المُقيمُ المُقعدُ

يافخَر قيسٍ يا أولي العَلياك مَن   دُونَ اعتلائهمِ السُهى والفرقدُ

انتم هُمْ سَنَدُ الأنامِ كأنهم   فعلُ الكلام وانتمُ اسمٌ مُسندُ

يا ايها الامراءُ يامَن امرهم   ابدًا يُطاعُ من القلوب ويُحمدُ

ايكونُ ظِلُّكمُ العِياذَ ونخشى   ويكونُ رَحْبُكمُ اللواذَ ونُطردُ

ويكونُ سيفُكمُ الطويلَ نِجادُهُ   ويَرُوعَنا قَدْمُ غدا يتهـدَّدُ

ويكونُ كلُّ منكمُ قرْنَ الضُّحَى   ويُضَمُّنا ليلُ الهمومِ الأسودُ

نشكو من الايام بل من اهلِها   اذ كلُّهم من دونِكم لا يُقْصَدُ

نهدِيـكمُ بِكرَ القريحةِ غادةً   من دونِها الغِيدُ الحِسانُ الخُرَّدُ

فصِدَاقُها صِدقُ الذِمامِ ومَهرُها   إرضاؤُكم كيلا اقولَ الحسجـدُ

دُمْ يا حُسَينُ ابا المكارمِ ـِفي عَلا   شرفٍ ويا نَجمَ السعودِ واحمدُ

وكذاكيا عسّافُ انتَ وفارسُ ال   هيجا ويا حَسَنُ المِهابُ الأمجدُ

ما ردَّدَت في الروضِ هاتِفةُ الضُّحَى   الحانِها وبدا الهَزارُ يغرِّدُ

وقال رحمه الله تعالى وقد بعث بها الى احد ابة شيعة المتاولة جوابًا لقصيدةٍ اهداها له

وهو في قرية الفرزل سنة ١٧٢٧ مسيحية

ويا هذا الإمامُ اللوذعيُّ	ألا يا ذا الهُمـام الأَلمَعيُّ
وهل يسمو الثَّرى وهو الدنيُّ	ترَفَّقْ بي لأني تُربُ أرضٍ
وأنتَ هُوَ الخطيرُ الأَرْيَحيُّ	فمَن انا في الورى حتى تراني
هو المودودُ والخِلُّ الوفيُّ	فغيرُ اللهِ ليس اخا ودادٍ
فمَن لم يرتشد منهُ غويُّ	فكُن مسترشدًا بسَنى هُداهُ
سِواهُ فلا سنيٌّ ولا سيُّ	هو العالي على كل البرايا
فهل من دُونِ بارينا سَريُّ	وما القومُ السَراةُ سِوَے هباءَ
له السِّمات والبِرُّ الحفيُّ	له الافضال عمَّت كل قُطرٍ
له الانعامُ واللطفُ الخفيُّ	له الجودُ العميمُ بكل فجٍّ
له حقًّا وأنتَ بهِ حريُّ	تُطارحُني القريضَ وأنت اهلٌ
كلجَّتهِ وساحلُهُ الرويُّ	قريضٌ كالحُباب له المعاني
لها غَيَدٌ وحُسنٌ زينيُّ	اتتني منك بِكرٌ مُستحبٌّ
فتاةٌ زانها الفِكرُ الوريُّ	فأهدتني سلامك بآحتِشامٍ
فتًى من كُلِّ مَحمَدةٍ عريُّ	رعاكَ اللهُ فآذمُمْني لأنِّي
يبابًا فالجوابُ له الدَويُّ	فانك في آمتِداحي كالمُنادي
لمثلي وهْوَ لي ابدًا حليُّ	فاني راهبٌ والـذَمُّ يحلو
لان الآكل قاصدُهُ ظميُّ	انا كالآكل لا يغرُركَ آلي
ضعيفٌ قد يبارزُهُ قويُّ	وان الشَّينَ ان امعنت فكرًا

فَآمِلُهُ وشائِمُهُ صَدِيٌّ وما الوَسْمِيُّ ان قيلَ الوَليُّ وتَضأَلُ أَنجُمٌ ان ضاءَ بدرٌ فما خَبَرُ كَخُبرٍ عن عِيانٍ فكم من دِمْنةٍ ادهت بسارٍ اذا ما لم يكنْ للمَرْءِ فَهمٌ فأَشرَفُ ما يُرامُ لكل مَرْءٍ وأفضلُ ما يُرَى في كل نوعٍ وخيرُ حِلَى لأَنامِ بلا ارتِيابِ واقبحُ ما يكونُ بذي غرورٍ وعقلك ايها الشيخُ المفدَّى فيا لمحمّدٍ في اسمٍ وفعلٍ علوتَ مكانةً وسَمَوْتَ قَدْرًا

فلا تغترَّ في برقٍ جَهامٍ فماذا الطَلُّ إمّا قيل وبلٌ ويمحوا الظُلمَةَ الصُبحُ الضوِيُّ واين الوهمُ والحقُّ الجليُّ وكان دَهاءُهُ العقل الغبيُّ ذكيٌّ ما لهُ فِعلٌ زكيٌّ ذكاءُ العقل والذِكرُ الذكيُّ هو الآدابُ والوجه الحيِيُّ شِعارُ الفضلِ والعِرضُ النقيُّ شَنارُ الفعلِ والظنُّ الرديُّ عِصاميٌّ وفِعلك عَبْقَرِيُّ فبينهما اشتِقاقٌ مَعْنَوِيُّ واسُّ بِناءٍ رِفْعتكم عليُّ