

From Expulsion to Readmission: Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's Rhetorical Technique at the 'Abbāsid Court

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Abstract

At the 'Abbāsid court, the caliph was in need of a poet who could project an image of himself as the legitimate Muslim ruler. Poets, on the other hand, were in need of a caliph who could bestow gifts upon them in return for their panegyrics. However, this caliph-poet relationship was extremely sensitive to shifts and shocks in politics and poetics that could render the poet a persona non grata at court. Relying primarily on Suzanne STETKEVYCH's formulation of the complex relationship between poet and patron in classical Arabic history, this paper will analyze the rhetorical techniques that poets who had been rejected by the caliphate court later employed in their efforts to (re)gain their position. *Taraqatka zā'iratan* ("She Came to You in a Dream, Out of the Blue, as a Visitor") by Marwān b. 'Abī Ḥafṣa (d. 798 C.E.), will serve as a model of successful rhetorical technique. This analysis will reveal how Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's panegyric ode, in its structure, language and imagery, was able to obtain for the poet not only reentry into the caliphate court but also a lavish reward from the caliph.

Keywords: Literature, Allusion, Panegyric, Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa, Legitimacy, 'Abbāsid Caliphate

1. Introduction

In several instances throughout Arabic history, poets committed poetic transgressions that resulted in their being executed by the ruler or, at the very least, in their being expelled from the court. In such instances, we can distinguish between two methods of seeking forgiveness by poets from the political authority for their violations of poetic conventions: one direct, the other indirect. With the direct method, the poet (the speaker) would apologize for his transgression and attempt to clarify his error. The case of Ka'b ibn Zuhayr¹ (d. 645 C.E.), in his conversion poem *al-Burda*, is an appropriate example of the use of this method. Ka'b alluded directly to his previous transgression when he said, in addressing the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632 C.E.):

1 Ka'b was a son of the famous pre-Islamic poet Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā and one of the *Mukhaḍramīn* poets. He is best known for his Mantle ode. When his brother Bujayr converted to Islam, Ka'b wrote a *hija'* sarcastic poem in which he attacked his brother's new religion. As a result of that poem, the Prophet gave the order to kill Ka'b whenever and wherever he could be found. But Ka'b gained access to the Messenger and recited a panegyric ode in which he praised the Prophet and announced his conversion to Islam. The Prophet rewarded him with the holy mantle that he was wearing (*burda*). Thus it is that this poem is known as the ode of *al-Burda* (the Mantle Ode).

I have been told the Messenger of God had threatened me,
 But a pardon is hoped before God's Messenger.
 Go leisurely, guided by the one who gave you the present of the Qur'ān
 in which are exhortations and their details!
 Do not impose blame upon me for my slanderers' words
 I have committed no offense despite the bad rumors about me!² [1]³

However, with the indirect method, the poet composed the poem with the aim of seeking a pardon from the ruler by avoiding any direct indication of his prior violation of poetic convention. An apology with this indirect approach made use of allusions to express the repentance of the poet, avoiding referring explicitly to the core of the message, the previous violation of poetic convention. This type of apology conveyed a message of complete repentance, contrition and submission without any attempt to justify the violation. He employed symbols, allusions, gestures and other non-verbal forms of communication to compose a fully persuasive message. In order to offer this type of indirect apology, the poet composed a panegyric ode that praised the patron on the surface but, at a deeper level, he made a great effort to conceal his previous offence by referring to it only through very indirect allusions.

In examining a panegyric ode recited by the poet Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣā,⁴ who was a persona non grata at the 'Abbāsid court⁵ before Caliph al-Mahdī,⁶ who had dismissed the poet from his assembly, I will demonstrate how his use of indirect rhetorical methods of apologizing succeeded, spectacularly, in changing the negative attitude of the caliph (the audience) toward the poet (the speaker) into a positive one, and resulted in the patron accepting the poet's panegyric ode without blaming him for his previous offense. This extreme shift in the caliph's attitude towards Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣā is depicted in several classical sources such as al-Tanūkhī's *al-Faraj ba'd al-shidda*⁷ and Ibn al-Jawzī's *Muntaẓam*.⁸

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2 All translations from the Arabic in this study are my own. I have followed 'Alī Fā'ūr's version as given in Ka'b b. Zuhayr, *Dīwān* (1997): 65. For a translation and discussion of Ka'b's "Mantle Ode", see STETKEVYCH 2010: 30-65.

3 The numbers in square brackets refer to the original Arabic text included in Appendix 2.

4 Marwān b. Sulaymān b. 'Abī Ḥafṣā (d. 798 C.E.) was a poet in the late Umayyad and the early 'Abbāsid periods. His grandfather 'Abū Ḥafṣā was a freedman (*mawlā*) of Marwān b. al-Ḥakam. He devoted many of his poems to praise the 'Abbāsid family and to protect their claim to the caliphate. It has been said that he was killed by some who opposed the legitimacy of 'Abbāsids.

5 The 'Abbāsid Caliphate was established in 750 C.E. by 'Abū 'I-Abbās al-Saffāḥ (d. 754 C.E.), who descended from the Prophet Muḥammad's uncle, al-'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, and from whom the 'Abbāsids took their name. After taking back authority of the Muslim Caliphate from the Umayyads in 750 C.E., who ruled from Damascus, the 'Abbāsids ruled from the capital Baghdad. The 'Abbāsid Caliphate ended as a result of the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258 C.E.

6 'Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Manṣūr (d. 785 C.E.) was proclaimed the third 'Abbāsid caliph from 775 C.E. to 785 C.E. after the death his father, al-Manṣūr (d. 775 C.E.).

7 al-Tanūkhī, *al-Faraj ba'd al-shidda*, i: 378.

8 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, ix: 70.

Al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī̄ recounted that,

he saw, after the death of Ma‘n b. Zā’ida,⁹ the poet Marwān b. ’Abī Ḥafṣa in the company of a group of poets, among them Salmān al-Khāṣir and others, delivering panegyrics to the ‘Abbāsid Caliph al-Mahdī in his court at Baghdad. After reciting his poem, Marwān was asked by the Caliph: Who are you? He answered: Your poet and slave, Marwān b. ’Abī Ḥafṣa. The Caliph then said: Are you not he who said, lamenting Ma‘n b. Zā’ida:

We remained in Yamāma after Ma‘n
a sojourn that we did not want to come to an end
And we said: Where should we go after Ma‘n
the bestowal is gone; is there no longer to be a bestowal?; [2]

nawāl (the bestowal) is gone as you claimed; so, why did you come to ask for a bestowal from us?! You have nothing here. Then, the Caliph asked the attendants to drag him away by his feet, and they did.¹⁰

The rhetorical effectiveness of Ibn ’Abī Ḥafṣa’s *qaṣīda* rhymed in *lām* that opens “She came to you in a dream, at night, as a visitor” (*taraqatka zā’iratan*) stands, in general, in contrast to his elegy to Ma‘n. According to al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī̄,

Marwān came (to al-Mahdī’s assembly¹¹) a year after that (his expulsion from the caliph’s palace) and succeeded in escaping notice by the guards until he had already entered with the other poets.¹² Poets would make an appearance in the caliphs’ assemblies once a year.¹³ The caliph granted Marwān an audience. Ibn ’Abī Ḥafṣa was the fourth or fifth poet to recite a poem before al-Mahdī.¹⁴

9 Ma‘n b. Zā’ida (d. 768 C.E.) served the ‘Abbāsid family during the period of the Caliph Abū Ja‘far al-Manṣūr. He was famous for his generosity and courage. He was killed in 768 C.E.

10 al-Tanūkhī, *al-Faraj ba’d al-shidda*, i: 378. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, ix: 70.

11 Ya’qūb b. Dāwūd says in describing one of the *majālis* (assemblies) of caliph al-Mahdī that “one day, al-Mahdī called for me to come. When I entered his assembly, I found him seated on a floral print carpet in a garden with trees. The tops of the trees were at the same level as the courtyard of the assembly and the trees were overgrown with peach and apple blossoms. I have not seen anything more beautiful than this garden.” Ibn al-‘Athīr, *Kāmil*, vi: 71.

12 The exact date on which Ibn ’Abī Ḥafṣa recited this poem before the caliph is not obvious. However, the depiction of the patron’s victory over *Rūm* (7/163 A.H.= 3/780 C.E.) in the poem and the death of the patron al-Mahdī (d. 785 C.E.) enable us to establish the date of recitation in the ‘Abbāsid court as being right after the return of al-Mahdī from the war against *Rūm*, or some time between 780 and 785 C.E.

13 Dominic P. Brookshaw has described the caliph’s *majālis* during the era of the caliphate saying, “Caliphal *majālis* would often be held in the royal palace, usually in an audience hall or assembly room (both often referred to by the term *majālis*) with poets and musicians performing in turn before the ruler, who was seated on his throne, and his courtiers, who were seated according to rank. Umayyad and (especially) ‘Abbāsid caliphs were often veiled from the rest of the court by a curtain guarded by the *sāhib al-sitr*, who would introduce the performers to the caliph and channel his requests to them, a practice evocative of *Sāsānian* court ritual.” BROOKSHAW 2003: 201.

14 al-Tanūkhī, *al-Faraj ba’d al-shidda*, i: 378. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, ix: 70.

Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣā's mistake was most likely not a political mistake but a poetic one. His elegy to Ma'n does not reflect political loyalty to Ma'n, who was the 'Abbāsid governor in Yemen and a famous 'Abbāsid leader. However, the caliph's reaction here to Marwān's elegy to Ma'n, especially his saying, "the bestowal is gone; there is no longer a bestowal," suggests that al-Mahdī had more doubts about what can be described as Marwān's 'poetic loyalty' than about his political loyalty. With this in mind, the present paper will offer a reading of Marwān b. 'Abī Ḥafṣā's *Taraqatka zā'iratan* ("She Came to You in a Dream, Out of the Blue, as a Visitor"), which he composed a year after his expulsion from the 'Abbāsid court in Baghdad in order to praise the caliph, on one hand, but to redeem himself for his previous violation of poetic convention, namely by limiting his bestowal to Ma'n, on the other hand. It analyzes the poetic techniques that Marwān, as a rejected poet, employed in his efforts to gain a position at the caliph's court. The analysis will examine how the structure, language, and imagery of Ibn 'Abī Hafṣā's panegyric ode enabled him to obtain not only re-entry into the caliphate court but also a lavish reward from the caliph.

In the analysis of this ode, a distinction will be made between two types of reference: apparent, or direct; and hidden, or indirect. Making use of direct reference, the poet initiates his poem with the image of a dream and follows it with the traditional theme of a journey before ending the poem by praising his patron. In this direct reference, the poet praises the caliph, addressing both proponents and opponents of the legitimacy of the 'Abbāsids. However, in the indirect references the poet addresses only the caliph in an attempt to negotiate his relationship with him. The point is that the poet does not intend merely to compose a panegyric ode in praise of the Caliph al-Mahdī and support his political claim to legitimacy, but rather his purpose is also to compose an apologetic poem that will redeem his elegy to Ma'n. The function of the indirect reference is not to convince the opponents of al-Mahdī's legitimacy but rather to establish a strong relationship with the caliph. In this context, we can consider the eulogy as the surface level of the poetic text, and the poet's intention to make apology and to establish a bond with the caliph in hopes of entering the court as the subtext.¹⁵

2. Translation and Analysis of the Ode

What will emerge from a close look at the structure of this ode is that Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣā fulfilled his rhetorical challenge by employing an adjusted tripartite structure of the classical Arabic panegyric ode. The two major structural forms of the *qaṣīda*—the bipartite (*nasīb/elegiac prelude and praise/madīh*) and the tripartite (*nasīb/elegiac prelude, journey/raḥīl and praise/madīh*)¹⁶—have been explained at length by S. STETKEVYCH in her

15 The duality of direct and indirect references makes the present study relevant to the field of pragmatics, which focuses on how meaning depends not only on the linguistic knowledge (structure, lexicon, grammar etc.) of the orator and audience, but also on the context of the speech and pre-existing knowledge about that speech. As a consequence, so as to reach a better understanding of Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣā's ode, we cannot ignore any of these three factors: the direct reference, the indirect reference and the context of the panegyric ode. (For more on Pragmatics, see MEY 1993.)

16 When comparing the function of the units of the earlier classical panegyric ode to the panegyrics in the 'Abbāsid period, it is important to keep in mind that the idea of separating completely the three parts of

analysis of two Umayyad panegyric odes by the poet al-Akhtal. She argues that the bipartite structure was often used to praise a military victory of a patron whereas the tripartite structure was employed mostly to supplicate the patron and to change the allegiance of the poet and his status vis-à-vis the patron.¹⁷ Following S. STETKEVYCH's argument, Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's ode can be interpreted in two different ways: as a panegyric ode celebrating the military victory of Caliph al-Mahdī or as a tripartite structured poem that indirectly conveys the change in the poet's status in his relationship with al-Mahdī from that of an expelled poet to that of a poet who hopes to be readmitted to the court.

For the purpose of analysis, the poem can be divided into the following three sections: 1) the Oneiric Prelude (*muqaddima ghazaliyya*), lines 1-6; 2) the Journey (*rahīl*), lines 7-13; and 3) Praise (*madīḥ*), lines 14-38.

Part 1: Oneiric Prelude (lines 1-6)

- 1- She came to you in a dream, at night, as a visitor; so, welcome her dream,
which appeared in whiteness, combining her modesty with her charming beauty.
- 2- She guided your heart until it was broken; girls like her guide,
happily, the hearts of youths so that they may fall in love.
- 3- It seems as if she came to you in a garden
where a breeze was blowing softly and clouds in spring were pouring down heavily.
- 4- She spent the night questioning, in the dream,
a haggard traveler in the desert who never tired of her questions.
- 5- Accompanied by a group of young men who slept peacefully for a while,
after they had become weary of shaking their heads on the night walk and of waiting
(for morning).
- 6- As if their clothes were stuffed with Indian swords
that had become so emaciated that eyes could not notice their glitter.¹⁸

The ode is initiated with an intensive use of the second person pronoun in the opening two lines: "She came to you" and "welcome (you) her dream" (line 1) and "She guided your heart" (line 2). This personal deictic "you" is an important component in our argument. The most common interpretation of this second-person pronoun is that the poet is addressing himself. The classical poets were accustomed to referring to themselves by the pronoun "you" in different poetic themes (*aghraḍ*), such as erotic poetry (*ghazal*), self-praise (*fakhr*), etc. Yet, this deixis, from the point of view of pragmatics, cannot be fully

the *qaṣīda* should be reviewed when discussing such 'Abbāsid odes as Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's. With the advent of the 'Abbāsid era, a number of 'Abbāsid critics were aware of what can be described as "the emotional (rhetorical) unity" between the different parts of the classical *qaṣīda*. For example, the 'Abbāsid critic Ibn Qutayba (d. 889 C.E.) is known for his commentary on the three parts of the classical *qaṣīda* (see Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa'l-shu'arā'*, 20-21). Likewise, poets of the 'Abbāsid period, as J. Stetkevych points out, came to share their awareness of the unified sections of the ode (see J. STETKEVYCH 1993: 9).

17 S. STETKEVYCH 2002: 143.

18 For the text I have followed Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa, *Shi'r Marwān b. 'Abī Ḥafṣa*, ed. H. 'Aṭwān, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1973: 96-99.

understood without additional contextual information. In erotic poetry, for instance, the context supports the classical interpretation of the pronoun “you” to mean “I,” the poet himself, when depicting his suffering from love and separation from the beloved. However, the context of a panegyric ode recited before the patron makes it possible for the addressee (the patron) to interpret the pronoun “you” as if the poet were addressing him directly. An example of this possible interpretation is when Jarīr (d. 728 C.E.) recited the first hemistich of his panegyric ode *'A-taṣḥū 'am fu'āduka ghayru sāḥī* (are you awake? or your heart is not awake!) to Caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (d. 705 C.E.), who was angry at Jarīr because of his previous lack of enthusiasm for the Umayyads. The Caliph immediately interrupted Jarīr saying “*bal fu'āduk!*” (But your heart!)¹⁹ The denotational meaning of this opening section varies depending on the two possibilities of interpreting the pronoun “you” as either “I” (the poet) or “you” (the patron).

Although classical Arab poets were accustomed to initiating their panegyric odes with a depiction of the ruined abodes of the beloved, they initiated other odes with an image of the beloved in a dream (*tayf al-khayāl*). In this latter method, some poets would depict themselves visiting their beloved in a dream, while others would take the opposite method and depict their beloveds visiting them in a dream. They would describe the sudden visit of their beloved in dream in order to express their extreme despair about her return. Ibn Ḥazm describes the purpose of this technique as follows: “He (the poet) has nothing to do but watch and speak loudly.”²⁰ Then the poet would say, “‘To find contentment, I should be satisfied with her visiting me in a dream.’ This usually happens with a memory that cannot be forgotten and a thought that has no end.”²¹ This type of dream reads initially as an expression of yearning for a beloved from the past, but Ibn Ḥazm’s observation about dreams in classical poetry and the poet’s expulsion from the court suggests another interpretation, in which the language and images of the dream provide unlimited metaphorical resources.

If we compare the image of the beloved in a dream and the *nasīb*, we can see that in the *nasīb* the image is produced by a daytime memory, while nocturnal image is produced by a dream. Both images remind the poet of his past, which produces a mixed emotion of happiness and sadness as a result of the conflict between a happy past and a sad present. However, the poet in the *nasīb* recalls images of the past that he lived through, while in the dream the images are fabricated. Similarly, both the *nasīb* and the dream recall a real beloved and, mostly, an abode; but the behavior of the poet and his beloved is real, as the poetic speaker within the text presents it, while in the dream of the poem’s narrator it is fabricated behavior. What is more significant to the argument here is the difference between these two images of the *nasīb* and the dream insofar as it constitutes a transition from the static state of the *nasīb* or dream to the dynamic state of the journey in the classical *qaṣīda*. As for the *nasīb*, the transition of the poetic speaker is from memory (consciousness) to reality (consciousness), which means that the poet was and will be conscious of his behavior. On the other hand, the transition of the poem’s narrator in the

19 Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, lxxii: 90.

20 Ibn Ḥazm, *Tawq al-Hamāma*, 104.

21 Ibid.

dream is from the imaginary in the dream (unconsciousness) to the real (consciousness) on his desert journey, which means that the poet was not conscious of his past behavior but is now conscious of it in his journey to the patron. In the poem at hand, this latter transition from the unconscious past to the conscious present is appropriate for the theme of pardoning in which the one seeking a pardon separates himself from his past action and promises to act differently in the future.

Another factor that may have encouraged the poet to describe his beloved in a dream rather than in the *nasīb* is the need to avoid any kind of misinterpretation by the audience. In the *nasīb*, the poet, in an elegiac mood, laments his past with his beloved and their abodes. But Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa attempts to isolate himself from any type of yearning for the past and its elegiac mood that could be misinterpreted by the caliph and lead to another expulsion, and does so in order to reveal his hopes for the future. Consequently, the narrative of a dream that does not have a specific time or place will achieve the purpose of the *nasīb* without the risk of the poet being expelled.

Furthermore, the symbolic nature of the dream provides the poet with the capability of sending indirect messages to the caliph about their relationship. In classical Arabic literary sources, Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's ode is presented in the context of the narrative described above, which is about the expulsion of the poet from the court. The initial image of the beloved visiting the poet is relevant to the historical context of the poem and to Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's hope to return to the 'Abbāsid court. In this context, the pretty visitor depicted in the opening section of the poem might be interpreted as the poet's beloved, which is a familiar image in the classical *qaṣīda*. However, given the context of the dream in which this beloved is depicted, a reinterpretation is needed to understand the dream itself symbolically rather than literally. In this context, the beloved, the garden, the traveler and the companions carry symbolic rather than literal force. The first step in interpreting these symbols is to identify the real subject of the dream.

The relationship between the poet and the beloved in this *qaṣīda* differs, to some extent, from its counterpart in the classical *qaṣīda*, which suggests another possible interpretation of the image of the beloved in this ode. In contrast to many classical images of the voiceless beloved who visits the poet in a dream and then disappears, the visitor in the poem at hand does not disappear but spends the night talking to a traveler. In line 4, the persistence of the female visitor or enquirer in asking an audience who is listening tirelessly to her repeated questions encourages the reader to doubt the nature of the visitor. Additionally, the intensive use of the second-person pronoun in the first two lines—"She came to you" and "welcomed (you) to her dream" (line 1) and "She guided your heart" (line 2)—is significant. In fact, the three elements of this initial image (the female visitor, the dreamer, and the haggard audience) can be read allegorically, if the philosopher Wolfgang Iser's concept of the "implied reader" is applied, which refers to the reader, or readers, to whom a given work was intended to be addressed.²² The presumed reader of Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's poem was Caliph al-Mahdī. With all these elements in mind, we can argue that, at a deep level, this female visitor can be interpreted as a symbol intertwined with the

22 "The Implied Reader" is a term developed by Wolfgang Iser to denote the hypothetical figure of the reader to whom a given work is addressed, see ISER 1974.

context of the poet's earlier expulsion from the court. For example, the visitor might be intended to represent the panegyric ode at hand that insists upon meeting the caliph, as indicated by the pronoun "you," in order to guide his heart. The visitor spends the whole night talking to and questioning the poet, who is represented as a haggard man tirelessly listening to her with the aim of being accepted into the court. This initial dream increases the openness of the text's references and decreases the possibility of the text having a single meaning.

Although the initial five lines function as the *nasīb* in the classical panegyric ode, this prelude does not reflect the normal mood of past loss and yearning, which is the main theme of the *nasīb* section. In contrast to the *nasīb*, the poet does not call upon his companions to shed tears over the past and the ruined abode, but instead evokes a mood of hopefulness with the repeated questions of the beloved and the dreamer's fervor to hear them. The evocation of the poet's experience in al-Mahdi's court helps to understand another motivation beyond his preference for initiating his panegyric ode with a dream rather than with the theme of the *nasīb*. He was ambitious and anxious when he recited his poem before the patron because of his hope to achieve recognition by the court. Accordingly, this initial part of the poem reflects the internal conflict in the poet's mind between a painful past and an optimistic future. Therefore, although the theme of the *nasīb* evokes a yearning for the past, it does not express the opposite emotion of hope. The antithesis between whiteness (*bayḍā'*) and darkness (*taraqa*, 'to visit at night') in the opening line reproduces the emotional antithesis and conflict in the poet's mind between the hope of regaining a position in the Baghdad court and receiving the caliph's gift on one hand and, on the other hand, the fear of undergoing once again the painful experience of being expelled from the court.

The poet's anxiety over the caliph's response to the poem becomes unmistakably more obvious when we consider that he recited the poem first to Bashshār b. Burd (d. 783 C.E.) to solicit his opinion about it. According to al-Madā'īnī, Marwān says, "I visited Bashshār to get his opinion about my poem '*Taraqatka zā'iratan*' ('She Came to You in a Dream, Out of the Blue, as a Visitor')", and he replied, "You will go to Baghdad and receive a hundred thousand for it!"²³ Moreover, Marwān, according to al-'Aṣma'ī, recited the same poem to the grammarian Yūnis, who told him, "O, go ye now and display this poetry, for your poetic skill is greater than al-'A'šhā's in his poem '*Umayya has departed*'.²⁴" Thus, Marwān made certain beforehand that his panegyric ode would meet the high standards of the critics and that it should be accepted by the patron.

Line 6 provides a transition from the oneric prelude *tayf al-khayāl* to the theme of the journey, *rahīl*, to the patron. It depicts the poetic voyage of the passengers to the patron within the text and, probably, Marwān's actual journey to the caliph. Marwān succeeded in entering the palace despite the watchfulness of the guards. Their eyes could not see Marwān because of his emaciation in reality, just as they could not see the travelers in the poem. If we note the similarity between the situation of Marwān in his attempt to enter the court and the image of the emaciated traveler in line 6, especially his saying "wa aghfalat

23 al-İsfahānī, *al-.ActionListener*, iii: 219.

24 al-Hamawī, *Mu'jam al-'Udabā'*, vi: 2852.

al-Uyūn" (eyes could not notice their glitter), it is possible to read the image allegorically as a message designed to call the poet's suffering to the caliph's mind without referring to it explicitly.

Whether the poet's intention beyond initiating his poem with a dream is to imitate the classical tradition of the *qaṣīda* in the *nasīb* in the first section or to use the dream as a metaphor to deliver his real message to the patron, the function of this initial section was motivated by the poet's aim to influence the patron by pleasing him. Similar to the *nasīb* in the classical *qaṣīda* as explained by Ibn Qutayba,²⁵ the oneiric prelude in the ode at hand is designed to win the sympathy of the audience before moving on to the theme of the journey and then to the eulogy.

Part 2: Journey Section (lines 7-13)

- 7- They have fixed their howdahs on the backs of swift, speedy camels whose ribs have been broken, and who are suffering from bodily wounds and weariness.
- 8- Seeking the Commander of all believers; thus, after walking in night, they continued walking the whole day from dawn to dusk.
- 9- The camels were yearning for you, so, they hastened to you in extreme thirst crossing through the hard and sandy soils of the wilderness.
- 10- They were following a fleet she-camel whose neck and head shook because of its galloping pace
- 11- hastening recklessly, moving swiftly from one hill to another like a rebellious beast whose little ones are terrified
- 12- breaking into a run if the herd of camels started moving, resembling an ostrich rushing to protect its offspring before darkness falls
- 13- They came to you (Commander of all believers), quickened in their movement as an unleashed arrow, and, when you fill its saddlebags, it might look like a tower.

The journey of the travelers here serves as an allegory for the poet's journey to the patron as the emotion of the camels in their yearning for the caliph (line 9) is another allegorical depiction of the poet's emotion for the 'Abbāsid court. This poetic journey is related to the ritual of supplication rather than being a mere attempt at apology. Comparable to the direct and indirect methods of apology, or persuasion, intended to convince the audience of something, the ritual of supplication was used by supplicant poets to force the audience to do something. In this context, supplication works as a ritual method of apologizing based on social forces more than on the force of logic. Hence, the concept of seeking forgiveness when talking about the caliph in the medieval 'Abbāsid court had both emotional and ritual dimensions. The rite of the journey to the patron in the panegyric ode is linked to the pre-Islamic system of *istijāra*, according to which a person who does not have tribal protection can request from one of the clan's members a tribal association in order to receive protection from the tribe. In accepting a request, the whole tribe must treat the *mustajīr* (the person asking for *istijāra*) in conformity with the rules of protection as if he were a member of the tribe, while he, in return, must fight with the tribe as one of its sons. In the

25 See present study, p. 96-7.

case of Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣā's ode, the journey in this second section represents the poet's request for *istijāra* from the 'Abbāsid family in general and from the patron in particular.

Unlike many 'Abbāsid panegyric odes in which the journey section is omitted or reduced,²⁶ in Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣā's ode the *rahīl* forms an important part in the overall development of the *madīh*. The poet borrows some of the pre-Islamic narrative units of a journey in which a she-camel is compared to an ostrich (line 12) to depict the camels during the journey (line 9-11). However, the two significant differences between the journey here and its pre-Islamic counterpart are related to the traveler's companions and their destination. Renate Jacobi notices in discussing the *rahīl* in pre-Islamic *qasīda* that "The desert-journey is referred to so as to stress the poet's courage in lonely, fearful spots, where he is in constant danger of losing his way. The destination of the journey is not mentioned, nor any itinerary given."²⁷ In contrast to the traveler in the pre-Islamic ode in his loneliness and vainglory, the traveler in Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣā's ode is going on a journey with a group of youths (*fitya*, line 5), who know their destination very well and are excited at the prospect of meeting the caliph (line 8). This difference between the traveler in pre-Islamic *qasīda* and its counterpart in Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣā's ode establishes a psychological difference between the two in which we find the traveler in this poem confident and optimistic about obtaining the final aim of his journey without being sorrowful or longing for his past.

In contrast to the ambiguous atmosphere in the classical journey section (*rahīl*), the passengers in this poem follow the rapid she-camel (*al-nājiya*, derived from the verb *najā* 'to come through'), which knows its destination very well (line 10). This collective journey reflects the poet's intense zeal to regain a position in the patron's mind—and court. Furthermore, likening the she-camel to a tower after having its saddlebags filled by the caliph, in line 13, leads us to interpret the whole journey as a psychological one, from despair to hope, and from the pain of being rejected to the optimism of being accepted.

After a brief and general description of the beloved visiting the poet in a dream, he leaves behind this image to regain self-control and depict the journey to the caliph. The poet describes the mounts of the travelers and their sleepless nights while traveling day and night seeking the patron. Within the emotional dimension of the form of the classical *qasīda* and its three parts (erotic prelude, journey and *madīh*), the psychological function of the journey section is to transfer the poet from despair and doubt in the first section to hope and certainty in the final section. The tripartite structure of this poem imitates, to use S. STETKEVYCH's application of Gennep's rite of passage to *qasīda*, the three rites of separation, liminality—or marginality—and aggregation.²⁸ Line 7 marks the passengers' transition from dream to reality, which parallels the poet's transition from a state of irresponsibility in the opening section of the classical *qasīda* to the opposite state of marginality in the journey section of the *qasīda*.

Different from the classical *qasīda*, the separation and aggregation that occur here are not from the past with the beloved to the future with society. In the poem at hand, the transition from separation to aggregation occurs in two contradictory ways: first, the poetic

26 JACOBI 1982: 19-21.

27 Ibid.: 5.

28 S. STETKEVYCH 1993: 6-7.

transition from the happy dream, in the opening section, to the happy reality in the final section; and, second, the real transition from a past gloomy reality and expulsion to the hope of being readmitted to the 'Abbāsid court. This state of separation is reflected in the following choice of words: *taqādhafat* (line 9), derived from the root *q-dh-f* (to throw); *tashuqquhā* and *shaqqa* (line 11) derived from the root *sh-q-q* (to split); *al-qatī'* (line 12), derived from the root *q-t-* (to cut); and the word *kharjā'* (line 12) derived from the root *kh-r-j* (to go out). Despite the traveler's suffering that is reflected in these words, in this liminal phase and the passage of the *rahīl* (journey), it is unusual for a traveler to be fully confident and optimistic in his journey to the patron.

The passenger's confidence in his journey, along with line 8 in which the caliph enters the picture, makes the whole passage about the journey appear as a part of the *madīh* section or an introduction to *madīh*. In doing so, significant changes are to be observed in the structure of this ode, which is to say, it is a poem divided into two sections: prelude (lines 1-7) and praise (lines 8-38). But the detailed presentation of the journey, the travelers and their mounts reduce the possibility of considering it a bipartite poem. In fact, the poet used the tripartite structure (*nasīb* 'elegiac prelude', *rahīl* 'journey', and *madīh* 'praise') as a starting point, shaping it according to his professional necessities in order to obtain the overt goal of praising the caliph and the hidden goal of making an apology.

Marwān knows that he is very likely to be re-expelled from the Baghdad court. His anxiety and the emotional conflict in his mind between hope and fear are reflected in the following words: *murā'ashata* (line 5), derived from the root *r-^csh* (to shake); *nājiya* for the female camel in line 10 and the form *tanjū* in line 12, both from the verb *najā* (to come through); *mirāh* (line 10) from the root *m-r-h* (to delight); *hawjā'* (line 11) from the root *h-w-j* (to fling about); and *turā'u* (line 11), derived from the root *r-w-* (to terrify). Therefore, the first step in his attempt to remove this suffering and to change al-Mahdī's attitude towards him would be to trigger the Caliph's pity. He depicts an extended image of a traveler and young men who are facing the risks of crossing the desert in traveling to al-Mahdī's court. For the poet's passage, this is an emotional attempt to transfer the caliph's attitude towards him from an attitude of rejection to one of acceptance or, at least, of non-commitment.

With line 8 the poet moves more closely to the theme of *madīh* when he reveals the final destination of the travelers. The speed of the travelers and their mounts must be understood as referring to the poet's optimism about the audience's positive reaction. The poet presents the youths as slender as swords (line 6), the camels as wounded and thirsty (lines 7-9), and the she-camel as an ostrich rushing to protect its offspring before darkness falls (line 12), which bestows upon this drama yet another emotional dimension.

This entire passage must be read in light of line 13, in which the relationship between the poet and the patron is formulated. The significance of this transitional line becomes obvious if the duality of death and rebirth is kept in mind. The first hemistich of this line, "they came to you (Oh Commander of all believers), quickened in their movement as an arrow unleashed," represents the travelers' fear, pain, death and strong need for help after this long journey to the patron, while the second hemistich, "and it might be seen as a tower when you fill its saddlebags," portrays the opposite hope for safety, reward and rebirth. The relationship between the poet, in his attempt to convince the patron of his poetic loyalty, and the patron is not a relationship between a persuader and persuaded or

speaker and audience but rather between a supplicant and one being supplicated. According to this latter relationship, the supplicant's plea imposes a moral obligation on the one being supplicated. Furthermore, in the context of S. STETKEVYCH's application of Mauss' rites of gift exchange to the panegyric ode,²⁹ Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣā's poem functions as a figurative gift in the ritual of allegiance, in which the poet offers his poem as a gift to the caliph, while the latter, in accepting the poet's allegiance and gift, must grant the supplicant poet a gift in return.

Yet at this point in this panegyric, after completing the task of the journey to the patron, which functions as a rite of supplication in the classical Arabic *qasīda*, the poet has completed the first process, that of modifying the caliph's attitude towards him from one of rejecting Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣā's presence in the court and reciting his poetry to a different attitude. In focusing on the poet's expulsion from the court, we can consider the ability to start reciting his ode as a success per se. But line 13 indicates that the poet aims not only to avoid another expulsion but also to obtain a lavish reward from the caliph. Thus, the function of the following section of *madīh* is to complete the second process of changing the caliph's attitude towards him to one of acceptance.

Part 3: Praise Section (lines 14-38)

- 14- The Commander of all believers, Muḥammad, revived
the *sunna* of the Prophet: its forbidden and permitted laws.
- 15- A king whose origins are from Hāshim,³⁰
may God extend their blessings to mankind.
- 16- He resembles a mountain, in whose corners his nation was seeking shelter
And he fought against the mountains of his enemy until they were removed.
- 17- When a great calamity overcame it (his nation),
he was ready to restore things to normal.
- 18- Until he released all the agony of his nation,
He was a great man with many blessings resembling his father in his great deeds.
- 19- A resolute knight against the plights of time, Where he controls
the upheavals of life until he returns things to their natural course.
- 20- The gifts from both of your hands are directed
to your Muslim nation. While their awful deeds have been directed to your enemy.
- 21- Your forgiveness has included all the fearful ones,
So that they became secure, fearless souls.
- 22- You made the vagabonds secure without punishment,
And you also freed the prisoners from their chains.
- 23- You risk your life to protect your nation,
and risk your money to protect their money.

29 For works on MAUSS' gift exchange and the *qasīda*, see S. STETKEVYCH 2002: 18, ead. 2010: 4, al-MALLAH 2003, and ALI 2004.

30 Hāshim b. 'Abd Manāf (d. 497 C.E.) was the great-grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad. He also was the progenitor of the clan of Banū Hāshim of the famous tribe of Quraysh in Mecca. Both political rivals of the 'Abbāsids and Hashemites are affiliated to Hāshim.

- 24- Have you ever heard of a Caliph who preceded him,
And who achieved the goals which he decided to achieve?
- 25- He used to climb mountains rolling up on his leg, ready to fight,
Riding war horses until their hooves decayed.
- 26- The easily driven horses are following his orders
his face shines with light that enlightens the roads for the horses everywhere.
- 27- His sword belt is shorter than his stature,
so the belt maker made it longer.
- 28- So, when the forward unit of his cavalry arrived
at [the water of] the River Jayḥān³¹, he deployed the foremost of them among the enemy.
- 29- While he protected Islamic lands,
all at once, he opened his enemies' meadows and mountains to his army.
- 30- His raids smashed the backsides of his horses and their snaffle bits
and they made their waists thin.
- 31- Nothing remained of his horses' bodies after these battles,
but their torsos and hides.
- 32- Are you trying to obliterate the sky's stars
with the palms of your hands! or veil its new moon?!
- 33- Or are you denying the message of your Lord
which Archangel Gabriel³² conveyed to the Prophet and which the Prophet proclaimed.
- 34- The last verse of *Sūrat al-Anfāl*³³ bears witness
to their legacy, and you wanted to invalidate it!
- 35- So, please leave the lions lying in their dens
and restrain yourself from licking the blood of their cubs.
- 36- The Caliph has pleased me and awarded me
with a blessed hand; I was grateful for its bountifulness.
- 37- I had been envied until it was said, "He became a tyrant,
arrogant and vain in his walk"!
- 38- In dealing with those who obey him and with the others who defy him
You have followed the Prophet's example.

The point with regard to this panegyric ode is that, its structure reflects masterfully the psychological and emotional situation of the poet as it was prior to reciting his poem. After being dragged out of the court, he waited for a year dreaming to be accepted again in the

31 Ibn al-‘Adīm describes the river of Jayḥān saying, “It is a large river that passes from the land of *Rūm* (the Byzantines) to the city of al-Muṣaiyṣa. It runs between it and Kafr Biyya and ends in the sea of *Rūm*” (Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughyat al-Talab*, i: 153). For more on the river of Jayḥān, see LE STRANGE 2013: 506.

32 Gabriel (in Arabic Jibrīl) is the medium through which God communicated with the Prophet Muḥammad and sent the angel Gabriel with the revelation of the Qur’ān to the Prophet.

33 See al-Qur’ān: al-Anfāl, 75.

caliph's court, undergoing the difficult journey to the caliph with his companions before reaching the patron in this third section of his panegyric ode.

Although lines 14-38 fall thematically within the theme of *madīh*, this praise section can be divided into two subsections: the first is from line 14 to 24 and the second from line 25 to 38. In the first subsection, the poet is emotionally located between *rahīl* and *madīh*, fear and hope. He has not forgotten his previous expulsion from the Bagdad court and is aware of the negative effect on the caliph of his elegy to Ma'n.

The passage in lines 16-23 is relevant to the present argument about the two direct and indirect references of this ode. The poet praises the caliph for being, on one hand, a powerful supporter, the rescuer of his nation during eras of crises and, most importantly, a caliph who always forgives the mistakes of his people, gives vagabonds security without punishment, and frees prisoners from their chains. On the other hand, he is a generous caliph who harnesses his wealth to protect the needs of Muslims. Here we find the core of the poet's indirect message to the patron. Within the context of the poem, this passage can well be classified as a eulogy, for the poet is appealing to his elegy to Ma'n. Keeping in mind the poet's situation—first, of fearing another painful expulsion from the court; second, seeking readmission into that court; and, third, hoping to receive a lavish gift from the same court—the passage in lines 21-23 can be described as the closest point between the direct and indirect references of the poem. The insistence on praising the patron for making Muslims safe from fear in lines 17, 18, 21, 22, 23 is a call to establish a bond between the poet and the patron. At this point, the poet alludes to his desire for the transition from being expelled to being rewarded by describing the patron's virtue of bestowing on expelled Muslims the two gifts: his protection and money. It is important to note that he does not explicitly identify the nature of the sins that the patron was accustomed to forgiving. These allusions to a pardon evoke a mood of repentance that dominates similar odes, such as Ka'b's *burda*. For instance, the indication of a pardon in line 21 bears a resemblance to the seeking of a pardon in Ka'b b. Zuhayr's "Mantle Ode" when he says,

I have been told the Messenger of God had threatened me,
But a pardon is hoped for before God's Messenger. [3]

The difference between the two references to seeking a pardon is related to the following formula: the hope of a future in Ka'b's case and the narration of the past in the case of the poem at hand.

In this second subsection of the *madīh*, Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa attempts to celebrate the legitimacy of the patron's rule by linking him, as a descendant, to the Prophet Muḥammad (the Hashemites) (line 15) as well as by reviving the *sunna* of the Prophet: that is, its forbidden and permitted laws (line 14). As S. STETKEVYCH suggests, "to appreciate and evaluate the Arabic panegyric ode, we must first begin to appreciate its function as a ceremony of homage and as a lingua franca for political negotiation."³⁴ During the time of the intense political conflict between the 'Abbāsid family and their opponents, the main function of the *madīh* was to prove the legitimacy of one group for the caliphate over and

34 S. STETKEVYCH 2002: 81.

above all the others. Therefore, it is no wonder then that this section of the poem is devoted to answering an inquiry related to the reasons that go beyond choosing Caliph al-Mahdī to be “the Commander of All Believers.”

The first reason is related to his commitment to the *sunna* (the practices of the Prophet Muḥammad) in line 14. It is an allusion to the saying of the Prophet, “You (all Muslims) must adhere to my *sunna* and the *sunna* of the rightly-guided caliphs. [4]”³⁵ Line 15 indicates another reason beyond choosing al-Mahdī to be the legitimate caliph, which is his affiliation to Hāshim, the grandfather of the Prophet. Furthermore, in addition to being like the mountain that shelters all Muslim nations in line 16 and to possessing the character of a wise rescuer of his people (line 17), reliever of his nation’s dilemmas (line 18), and generous benefactor of his people and destroyer of their enemies (line 20), there are other reasons to believe in al-Mahdī’s political legitimacy. But the considerations of religion, genealogy and character are enough to make al-Mahdī the legitimate Islamic Caliph.

The function of lines 21-23 is to support what can be described as the soft method of convincing the opponents of al-Mahdī’s authority, which is to give assurances to all penitents who fear the caliph’s punishment. The discourse in these lines is directed to the political rivals of the ‘Abbāsids, who demanded the political leadership and asked the ‘Abbāsids to relinquish the caliphate. The message here is that when you (the opponents) return to the caliph, your fears will be turned into safety, your freedom guaranteed, and, most importantly, you are promised riches. The moral qualities ascribed to the caliph in this context are generosity, nobility and equanimity. In contrast to this soft method, lines 25-31 introduce the hard method employed to change the opponents’ attitude to the ‘Abbāsid caliphate, which is war. The caliph, who was able to defeat the strong empire of Byzantium, will be able to eliminate any internal enemy who attacks the legitimacy of the ‘Abbāsids. Line 35 threatens those rivals by examining this last hard method and advises them to abandon their aspirations to the caliphate and to avoid shedding ‘Abbāsid blood. Both the soft and hard methods function to stress the religious and secular power that emphasizes the divine sanction for the caliph to be the Commander of All Believers. However, the indirect function these two soft and hard methods here is to challenge the patron to practice this virtue of protecting remorseful ones, such as the poet himself.

After pledging political and poetic allegiance to the ‘Abbāsid caliph, the poet turns from the relationship between the patron and his nation in the first subsection (lines 14-23) to the relationship between the patron and his rivals in the second subsection (lines 24-35). This second subsection is devoted to celebrating the caliph’s martial triumph over the Rūm (the Byzantines) in 780 C.E.³⁶ These six lines function as a visual portrait that serves to legitimize the caliph and to describe his bravery and knighthood.³⁷ This portrait, which includes both narrative and description, tells a story and narrates events in a way similar to

35 al-Nīsābūrī, *Mustadrak*, i: 174.

36 For a historical description of this war, see Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, vi: 60-61.

37 It is worth mentioning what Akiko M. Sumi points out about the Arabic panegyric ode, namely that “it can be assumed that the aversion to painting in Islam helped the *qaṣīdah* tradition to develop and prosper, because the Arabo-Islamic political institution required some means other than visual portraiture to maintain the perfect image of the rulership, by which a sense of its greatness and authenticity could spread throughout the realm. This means was the *qaṣīdat al-madīh*.” SUMI 2004: 93.

the historical narration of the same events. However, the function of the descriptions is to add a dramatic dimension to that historical victory and to celebrate the event. The victory is interpreted as an affirmation of the patron's eligibility for political authority. So, the significance of this triumph is not only the military defeat of the Byzantines but the political defeat of all of the caliph's rivals as well.

The depiction of the victory associates the victor's accomplishment with eternal Islamic triumphs and with the exploits of heroes from the early Islamic past. On a deeper level, lines 25-35, along with the description of the patron's victory, establish this panegyric as a victory ode with a single voice, which is the voice of the victor, the caliph. Although the passage describing the conquest gives no space to the poet's allusions to his apology, it is a complementary way to encode a hidden message about his political loyalty to the patron.

The image of the knighthood of the caliph in these lines links the patron back to pre-Islamic poetic images of the hero taking pride in his knighthood and the defeat of his enemy. In 'Abbāsid poetry, as Stefan Sperl points out, "the old tribal virtues are transferred into an imperial context, and the human ideal they express is represented in the person of the Caliph."³⁸ The virtues affiliated with the patron in Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's poem correspond to the leading qualities of the pre-Islamic hero, who was praised for his individual knighthood and the protection of his tribe, as well as the qualities of the early Islamic leader, who was praised for his heroic leadership of a powerful army to protect his nation. The point of the similarity between these heroes, on one hand, and the patron, on the other, is the idea of protecting their people, which is consistent with the historical context of this ode and the poet's purpose, which goes well beyond simply composing a panegyric.

Compared to the travelers mounting their she-camels and following a single specific she-camel *al-nājiya* in the second section of this ode, the patron is pictured, in this third section, riding his steed and being followed by his army to defeat his enemies. The depiction of the journey of the travelers to the patron and of the patron himself to fight his enemies is marked by speed, patience and durability. The route of the journey in these two passages takes the travelers over high ground and low to cross the land; furthermore, the quality of the beasts being ridden is inalterable despite the suffering of the travelers' mounts from bodily wounds and weariness (line 7) and the suffering of the army's steeds from the hearts of their backsides and snaffle bits (line 30). Regardless of the natural challenge of a route over high ground and low, the geographic remoteness of the destinations, the bleeding of their mounts and, most importantly, the risk of death, the travelers continue their speedy journey so as to fulfill the obligation to the patron, in the case of the travelers (the poet) in the journey section, and the nation's obligation in the case of the patron (the caliph) in the praise section. The similarity between these two journeys is attributed to the self-determination of both the travelers in obtaining their goal of reaching the caliph, and of the patron in obtaining his goal of defeating the enemy.

Lines 32 to 35 establish a political debate between the 'Abbāsids and Hashemites on the one hand, and all other political rivals on the other. Yet in a way related to the theme of *madīh*, we could suggest that this debate is a kind of structural element of the 'Abbāsid *madīh*. Although Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa composes several poems to prove the 'Abbāsid right to the

38 SPERL 1977: 21.

caliphate over the sons of 'Alī,³⁹ in these four lines (32 to 35) he supports the political rights of the sons of 'Alī b. 'Abī Tālib⁴⁰ (d. 661 C.E.) and al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭtalib⁴¹ (d. 653 C.E.) to legitimacy above all other rivals. The claim in line 34 is not only a political claim to legitimacy but a religious claim as well. Al-Baghdādī notes of this line that "he means the sons of 'Alī and the sons of al-'Abbās."⁴² The religious claim addressed to the opponents to the 'Abbāsid right of leadership is this: "If you believe in the Qur'ān, the last verse of *Sūrat al-Anfāl* says (translated into English), 'And those who believed after [the initial emigration] and emigrated and fought with you they are of you. But those of a [blood] relationship are more entitled [to inheritance] in the decree of God. Indeed, God is Knowing of all things.' [5]"⁴³ Ibn 'Abī Hafṣa makes reference to this Qur'ānic verse to prove that the sanction of al-Mahdī is a divine sanction and the 'Abbāsid family, which has a blood relationship with the Prophet Muḥammad, has more right to inherit the Islamic leadership than others.

Being a relative to the Prophet in religion (line 14), blood (line 15), courage (line 15) and leadership (lines 25-31) is clear evidence of the patron's right to the caliphate. Consequently, lines 32 and 33 raise a logical inquiry in the form of a repudiation,

- 32- Are you trying to obliterate the sky's stars
with the palms of your hands! or veil its new moon?!

39 Unlike the poetry of Marwān, in which he praises the two 'Abbāsid caliphs al-Hādī (d. 787 C.E.) and al-Rashīd (d. 809 C.E.) and which is full of political hostility toward the sons of 'Alī b. 'Abī Tālib and their right to the political leadership, this poem goes in a different direction to include the sons of 'Alī b. 'Abī Tālib in his political eulogy (*madiḥ*). According to al-Rayyāsh, "A man asked Marwān b. 'Abī Hafṣa: What has motivated you to attack the sons of 'Alī in your poetry? He replied: by God, what has motivated me is not hatred, and I have praised 'Amr al-Mu'minīn by my poem *Taraqatka zā'iratan*, and he (the Caliph) says about my saying,

- 32- Are you trying to obliterate the sky's stars
with the palms of your hands! or veil its new moon?!
- 33- Or are you denying the message of your Lord
which Archangel Gabriel conveyed to the Prophet and which the Prophet proclaimed.
- 34- The last verse of *Sūrat al-Anfāl* bears witness
to their legacy, and you wanted to invalidate it!
- 35- So, please leave the lions lying in their dens
and restrain yourself from licking the blood of their cubs.

You owe this people (the sons of 'Alī) something" (al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, xiv: 144). The caliph says this to Marwān b. 'Abī Hafṣa because the last verse of *Sūrat al-Anfāl* indicates both the sons of 'Alī and the sons of al-'Abbās.

40 'Alī b. 'Abī Tālib was one of the greatest companions of the Prophet Muḥammad. He was the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet and also the first young male who to accept Islam. 'Alī ruled over the Islamic Caliphate from 656 to 661.

41 al-'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭtalib was the uncle of the Prophet Muḥammad and one of his companions. He protected the Prophet when he was in Mecca before his migration to Madīna and converted to Islam after the Battle of Badr in 624 C.E. His descendants established the Abbasid Caliphate in 750.

42 al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, xiv: 144.

43 al-Qur'ān: al-Anfāl: 75.

The poet uses a persuasive technique based on demonstrative logic to convince all of the opponents of the 'Abbāsid caliphate of al-Mahdī's legitimacy. However, these techniques are not limited only to logic. In line 20,

- 20- The gifts from both of your hands are directed to your Muslim nation
while their awful deeds have been directed to your enemy

the poet emphasizes that the caliph has another method to prove his political claim, which is destructive power. Anyone who is not convinced of the caliph's legitimacy by logic, in which claims are made and evidence adduced to support them, will be forced to accept the caliph's claim by his destructive power. Thus, the antithesis between the acts of the caliph's two hands in line 20 reflects the two sides of al-Mahdī's character, which are his ability to build and to destroy, to give and to take, to reward and to punish.

This final subsection up to line 35 has focused specifically on praise of al-Mahdī's virtues and the confirmation of his legitimate political authority in the face of the claims of his rivals. Line 35 sums up the passage that praises the caliph and threatens his rivals by likening the 'Abbāsids to lions that prey on whoever tries to attack them. Then, the shift that occurs in the final three lines of this panegyric ode is from the relationship of the patron with his nation in the first subsection of the *madīh* (lines 14-23) and of him with his rivals in the second subsection (lines 24-35) to the relationship between the patron and the poet in the final three lines.

With regard to two direct and passing references in this ode, the word *nawāl* has a significant importance in the context of this argument. The poet's violation of poetic convention was to affiliate generosity (*nawāl*) with Ma'n alone and to depict his death as the death of generosity. Hence, he now aims to redeem this mistake by affiliating *nawāl* in lines 20 and 36 with the patron. Repeating the same word at the end of this final section now adds another dimension to the whole *qaṣīda*, which is the challenge. The caliph was made angry by the poet because he limited the bestowal (*nawāl*) to Ma'n. At this point, the poet completes his poetic task and challenges the patron to prove his ability to outperform Ma'n in his *nawāl* generosity and gift-giving.

At the end of the ode, the poet reveals the negotiating dimension of his poem and the core of his purpose, which goes beyond composing an ode, which is to establish a bond with the caliph. What S. STETKEVYCH has noticed about the *qaṣīda* can be applied here to Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's poem. She says,

What transpires in the ritual presentation of the *qaṣīda*, then, is really what we are familiar with from all negotiations. When they break down, the one offering to negotiate—even though this appears as a weakness—gets the upper hand and the positive public relations, while the respondent must either agree to negotiate, and therefore necessarily concede or compromise, or lose face and be accused of hostility and intransigence.⁴⁴

The poet's previous attempt at negotiation failed. So, he started another process of negotiation with the hope of success.

44 S. STETKEVYCH 2002: 18.

It should be noted here that the poetic text, with respect to the negotiation between the poet and the patron, falls into two parts of unequal length: the task of the poet (lines 1-35) to praise the patron, pledging his political and poetic allegiance to him; and conversely, the task of the patron (lines 36-38) to reward the poet for completing his task. Having completed his task and recited his panegyric ode before the caliph, the shift that occurs in lines 36-38 is from the relationship between the patron and his rivals to the relationship between the patron and the poet. The poet presents himself before the caliph as a helpless supplicant who journeyed to the caliph and as a strong loyal poet who devotes his poetry to the 'Abbāsid family and defends their political legitimacy. At this point in the ode, the poet introduces himself to the audience as one who has the valuable gift of the panegyric for the recipient, the patron. S. STETKEVYCH in explaining similar ritual practices in the classical *qaṣīda* says that "the recipient loses face or status if he does not accept the gift (the poem) and repay it with interest".⁴⁵

The significance of the final three lines will become clearer when compared with the two opening sections of this ode. We find an obvious antithesis between the image of the poet traveling with a group of young men who are as thin as if their clothes were stuffed with Indian swords and whose camels were passing through the desert extremely thirsty in the opening two sections, on one hand, and the converse image of him pleased after receiving the gift of the patron on the other hand. This antithesis is relevant to the main purpose of this ode since it depicts the fate of two kinds of people: first, those who defy, whose fate is to be abandoned, poor and anxious (the traveler and his companions in the first two sections); and, second, those who obey him whose fate is to be pleased, possessed of wealth and envied (the poet in the final three lines). These lines deliver a clear message to the first kind of people (the opponents of the caliph) that if you want to be like the second kind (the followers of the caliph) you must make a journey to the 'Abbāsid court.

The challenge for the caliph in line 38 is to imitate the Prophet Muhammad in his manner of rewarding those who obey him and punishing those who defy him. This challenge evokes in the recipient's mind the story of Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, who was punished for his poetic attack on the Prophet; but then, after obeying the Prophet's commands, he received an unprecedented gift for his *madiḥ* to the Prophet—safety and the symbolic gift of the *burda* (mantle). It is a religious challenge to be added to the previous ritual and emotional challenges that prompt the Caliph al-Mahdī to bestow a gift on Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa in return for his poem.

In considering the story of Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's expulsion from the court of al-Mahdī, it is significant that the historians and critics who narrate the story do not comment on the poem itself and do not mention even its *maṭla'* (first line). This inattention and ingratitude for that ode is one of the problematic aspects of the poet-patron relationship. As S. STETKEVYCH notes in discussing these problematic aspects, "If the panegyrist is a bad poet, no amount of virtue and heroism on the part of the patron will enable him to produce a good poem, and as the poor or mediocre poem is consigned to oblivion, so, too, is the renown of the patron."⁴⁶ Before his expulsion from the court, Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa was, in the caliph's eyes, a

45 Ibid.: 115.

46 Ibid.: 184.

bad poet. Except for the quality of his ode, the poem was consigned to oblivion and the poet was expelled. Thus, the function of line 38 is to remind the patron of the Prophet's way of dealing with those who obey him. The poet's act of allegiance and praise must produce a reciprocal act from the patron to prove that all moral qualities and virtues ascribed to the caliph in the panegyric ode are his real virtues and his likeness to the Prophet is a real likeness.

According to Abdul Allah Ibn Musa, "when Marwān had recited the three lines (32-33-34), he saw al-Mahdī moving from his seat pleased with the *qaṣīda*. Then, he asked Marwān: How many lines is it? Marwān said: a hundred lines"⁴⁷? He gave the poet a hundred thousand dirhams,"⁴⁸ al-Tanūkhī adds, "it was the first hundred thousand dirhams to be given to a poet in the 'Abbāsid period."⁴⁹ This generous reward stresses Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's success in his task of changing the caliph's attitude from one of rejection to one of acceptance. The poet, in the first two sections, employs poetic and emotional techniques in order to trigger the caliph's pity. The function of these two opening sections is to prepare the audience to listen to the third section, in which the poet intensifies his poetic and political praise of the patron.

3. Conclusion

With regard to the poetic techniques that Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa was able to apply to change al-Mahdī's attitude towards him, there was the possibility of composing a panegyric ode that focused only on praising the caliph or an apologetic poem that expressed merely a sense of regret and an apology for the poet's mistake. Neither the former nor the latter techniques would have succeeded in realizing the poet's hope of achieving a position and recognition in al-Mahdī's court because the poet had been previously expelled from the court after reciting a panegyric ode in which he praised the caliph. On the other hand, the technique of a direct apology would typically have succeeded if the poet had a strong relationship with the patron and was intending to rebuild that relationship, but this was not the case with Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa and al-Mahdī. It was a third technique based on a combination of the structure of the panegyric ode and apologetic allusions that was used by Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa to obtain his purpose of being readmitted to the 'Abbāsid court.

If we look back at this analysis of Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's panegyric ode, we can see that what makes this panegyric ode so effective and powerful is the poet's effective use of allusions. Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's success is a tribute to his way of appropriating the language, structure and content of the classical panegyric ode to perform the two purposes of praising the caliph,

47 Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's ode, as it is narrated in many classical sources, includes only thirty-eight lines. However, his saying "a hundred lines" might be interpreted as an exaggeration by the poet to praise his own ode. It could also be considered as something added by the narrator or as simply a sign of the incompleteness of this version of Ibn 'Abī Ḥafṣa's ode as narrated in many sources. Regardless of the real interpretation of this contradiction between the narration and the text, this poem is regarded by classical sources as the ode that paved the poet's way to enter the 'Abbāsid court.

48 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, ix: 70.

49 al-Tanūkhī, *al-Faraj ba'd al-shidda*, i: 378. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, ix: p.70.

on one hand, and offering his apology for his previous mistake of restricting the bestowal to Ma'n b. Zā'ida, on the other hand, by employing the technique of allusion or indirect reference. He effectively employed a variety of allusions—the dream, journey, and the poet's virtues of forgiving the other's mistakes, protecting his Muslim nation, imitating the Prophet in his way of dealing with the obedient people, etc.—to refer indirectly to another apology beyond the context of a eulogy.

Appendices

1. Ibn 'Abī Hafṣa's Arabic texts

بَيْضَاءُ تَحْلِطُ بِالْحَيَاةِ دَلَامًا
قَادَ الْفُلُوبَ إِلَى الصَّبَا فَأَمَلَهَا
سَحَّتْ بِهَا دِيمَ الرَّبِيعِ ظَلَامًا
بَالسِّيدِ أَشْعَثَ لَا يَكُلُّ سُوَالَهَا
سَيْمُوا مُرَاعَشَةَ السُّرْرِيِّ وَمِطَالَهَا
نَحَّلَتْ وَأَعْفَلَتِ الْعَيْنُ صِيقَالَهَا

طَرَقَتْ رَائِرَةً فَسَخِيٌّ خَيَالَهَا
فَادَتْ فُؤَادَكَ فَاسْتَفَادَ وَمِسْلَهَا
وَكَانَ طَرَقَتْ بِنَفْحَةِ رَوْضَةٍ
بَاتَتْ ثُسَائِلُ فِي الْمَيَامِ مُعَرِّسًا
فِي فِتْيَةٍ هَجَّعُوا غِرَارًا بَعْدَمَا
فَكَانَ حَشُو شِيَاهِكُمْ هِنْدِيَّةً

* * *

شَكُوكُ گُلُومَ صِفَاحَهَا وَكَلَامَهَا
بَعْدَ السُّرْرِيِّ يُغْدِوَهَا آصَالَهَا
تَطْويَ الْفَلَّاَةَ خُروَّهَا وَرِمَالَهَا
بَعْدَ النُّحُولِ تَلِيلَهَا وَقَدَالَهَا
شَقَّ الشَّمَوسَ إِذَا ثُرَاعُ جَلَالَهَا
خَرْجَاءُ بَادَرَتِ الظَّلَامَ رَئَالَهَا
كَالْبُرْجِ تَمَلُّ رَحْلَهَا وَحِبَالَهَا

وَضَعُوا الْخُدوَّدَ لَدَى سَوَاهِمْ جُنَاحَ
طَبَّابَتْ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَوَاصَلَتْ
نَزَعَتْ إِلَيْكَ صَوَادِيًّا فَتَنَادَفَتْ
يَتَبَعُّنَ نَاجِيَّةً يَهُرُّ مِرَاحَهَا
هُنْجَاءَ تَدَرُّغُ الرُّثَبَا وَتَسْقُهَا
تَسْنُجُو إِذَا رُفِعَ الْقَطِيعُ كَمَا بَحَثَ
كَالْقَوْسِ سَاهِمَةً أَنْتَكَ وَقَدْ ثَرَى

* * *

سُنَنَ النَّبِيِّ حَرَامَهَا وَحَلَامَهَا
مَدَّ الإِلَهُ عَلَى الْأَنَامِ ظَلَامَهَا

أَحْيَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مُحَمَّدًا
مَلِكُ تَقْرَعَ تَبَعُهُ مِنْ هَاشِمِ

- رَادَى جِبَالَ عَدُوُّهَا فَأَرَاهَا
إِلَّا أَحَالَ لَهَا الْأُمُورَ بَحَالَهَا
أَلْفَى أَيَاهُ مُتَرْجًا أَمْثَالَهَا
مِنْ صَرْفِهِنَّ لِكُلِّ حَالٍ حَالَهَا
لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ وَفِي الْعُدُوِّ وَبَالْهَا
أَدْهَبَتْ بَعْدَ مَخَافَةِ أُوجَالَهَا
وَفَكَكَتْ مِنْ أَسْرَائِهَا أَعْلَامَهَا
وَجَعَلَتْ مَالَكَ وَاقِيًّا أَمْوَالَهَا
أَجْرَى لِغَایَتِهِ الَّتِي أَجْرَى لَهَا
بِالْحَسْبَلِ مُنْصَلِّتَانِ يُجِدُّ نِعَالَهَا
نُورٌ يُضِيءُ أَمَامَهَا وَحَالَهَا
وَلَقَدْ تَحْفَظَ قَيْنُهَا فَأَطَالَهَا
حَيْحَانَ بَثَّ عَلَى الْعُدُوِّ رِعَالَهَا
وَأَبَاخَ سَهْلَ بِلَادِهِمْ وَجَبَانَهَا
عَازَّاتُهُنَّ وَلَحْقَتْ آطَالَهَا
إِلَّا خَائِرَهَا وَإِلَّا آلَهَا
بِأَكْفَكُمْ أَمْ تَسْتُرُونَ هِلَالَهَا
جِبَرِيلُ بَلَعَهَا النَّبِيُّ فَقَالَهَا
بُشِّرَاثُهُمْ فَأَرْكَذُمْ إِبْطَالَهَا
لَا ثُولُعَنْ دَمَاءَكُمْ أَشْبَالَهَا
بِيَدِ مُبَارَكَةِ شَكَرْتُ نَوَالَهَا
فِي الْمُشْبِي مُتَرْفَ شَيْمَةَ مُخْتَالَهَا
نَعْلًا وَرَثَتْ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ مِثَالَهَا
- جَبَلٌ لِمُتَتِّهِ تَلُودُ بِرْكَتِهِ
لَمْ تَعْشَهَا إِمَّا تَخَافُ عَظِيمَهُ
حَتَّى يُفَرِّجَهَا أَغْرُ مُبَارَكُ
ثَبَتَ عَلَى رَلَ الحَوَادِثِ رَاكِبُ
كِلَّتَا يَدِيكَ حَعْلَتْ فَصَلْ نَوَالَهَا
وَقَعَتْ مَوَاقِعُهَا بِعَفْوِكَ أَنْفُسُ
أَمْتَتْ عَيْرَ مُعَاقِبِ طَرَادَهَا
وَنَصَبَتْ نَفْسَكَ حَيْرَ نَفْسِ دُوكَهَا
هَلْ تَعْلَمُونَ حَلِيفَةً مِنْ قَبْلِهِ
طَلَعَ الدُّرُوبَ مُشَمِّرًا عَنْ سَاقِهِ
ثُوَدًا ثُرِيَّ إِلَى أَغْرِ لِوْجَهِهِ
فَصَرُوتْ حَمَالَهُ عَلَيْهِ فَقَلَصَتْ
حَتَّى إِذَا وَرَدَتْ أَوَائِلُ حَيْلَهِ
أَحْمَى بِلَادَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ عَلَيْهِمُ
أَدْمَتْ دَوَابِرَ حَيْلَهِ وَشَكِيمَهَا
لَمْ تُبْقِي بَعْدَ مَقَادِهَا وَطَرَادَهَا
هَلْ تَطْمِسُونَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ بُجُومَهَا
أَمْ بَجْحُدُونَ مَقَالَهُ عَنْ رَيْكُمْ
شَهَدَتْ مِنَ الْأَنْقَالِ آخِرُ آيَهِ
فَذَرُوا الْأَسْوَدَ حَوَادِرًا فِي غَلِيلِهَا
رَقَعَ الْحَلِيفَةُ نَاظِرِيَّ وَرَاشِنِيَّ
وَخَسِدَتْ حَتَّى قَيلَ أَصْبَحَ بَاغِيًّا
وَلَقَدْ حَدَوَتْ لِمَنْ أَطَاعَ وَمَنْ عَصَى

2. Other Arabic texts

- والعَفْوُ عَنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ مَأْمُولٌ
الْقُرْآنِ فِيهَا مَواعِيظٌ وَتَفْصِيلٌ
أُذْنِبْ وَقَدْ كَثُرْتْ فِيَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ
مَقَامًا لَا تُرِيدُ بِهِ زِوْلًا
- وَقَدْ ذَهَبَ التَّوَالِ فَلَا نِوْلًا
- والعَفْوُ عَنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ مَأْمُولٌ
عَلَيْكُمْ بِسْنَتِي وَسُسَّةِ الْحُلَفاءِ الرَّاشِدِينَ الْمَهْدِيَّينَ بَعْدِي عَصُوا عَيْنَهَا بِالنَّوَاجِذِ
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ وَهَاجُرُوا وَجَاهُدُوا مَعَكُمْ فَأُولَئِكَ مِنْكُمْ وَأُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَى
بِعَضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ
- [1] - أَنِّي ثُمَّ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَوْعَدَنِي
- مَهْلًا هَدَاكَ الَّذِي أَعْطَاكَ نَافِلَةً
- لَا تَأْخُذْنِي بِأَقْوَالِ الْوُشَاةِ وَمَمْ
[2] - أَقْمَنَا بِالْيَمَامَةِ بَعْدَ مَعْنَى
- وَقُلْنَا أَيْنَ تَدْكَبَ بَعْدَ مَعْنَى
[3] - أَنِّي ثُمَّ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَوْعَدَنِي
[4] - عَلَيْكُمْ بِسْنَتِي وَسُسَّةِ الْحُلَفاءِ الرَّاشِدِينَ الْمَهْدِيَّينَ بَعْدِي عَصُوا عَيْنَهَا بِالنَّوَاجِذِ
[5] - وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ وَهَاجُرُوا وَجَاهُدُوا مَعَكُمْ فَأُولَئِكَ مِنْكُمْ وَأُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَى
بِعَضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

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