



Artistic and Semantic Developments in Prophetic Praise Poetry: A Comparative Study of the Classical and Modern Periods

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Abstract:

This study addresses the importance of prophetic praise in Arabic poetry and traces the development of this art form from classical to modern times through the personality of the Prophet (peace be upon him), who has served since the early years of the Islamic mission as a central focus of Arabic poetry, one of the oldest and most prestigious Arab arts.

The personality of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has consistently been a primary subject of one of the most important Arabic poetic genres: religious poetry, which deals with themes of divine oneness, divine love, and praise of the Prophet and his household. While the beginnings of prophetic praise date back to the early years of the Hijra, this art form evolved over time through the works of numerous poets across Islamic history, eventually becoming an independent genre with its own characteristics and methods. Today, prophetic praise constitutes one of the most significant literary arts in modern Islamic societies.

Keywords: Prophetic Praise Poetry, Artistic Development, Classical Period, Semantic Analysis, Modern Period.

Introduction:

Praise (al-madh) is one of the prominent poetic purposes in Arabic poetry. It is considered one of its largest and most significant genres, as praise in the Arabic ode represents a lasting document that reflects the noble qualities and virtuous traits that characterized the Arabs. (Qāsim al-Qaḥṭānī, 2009, pp. 47-48).

Prophetic praise (al-madh al-nabawī) emerged early with the birth of the Messenger of God ﷺ. It later spread with the rise of the Islamic call and the poetry of the Islamic conquests, eventually becoming associated with Sufi poetry in the works of poets such as Ibn al-Farid and others. However, Prophetic praise did not truly flourish, prosper, and leave a profound mark until the later poets, particularly the poet Al-Busiri in the seventh century AH. His famous ode marked a turning point in this genre and was imitated and opposed by many poets of his time and those who came after him. It is also important to acknowledge the significant contributions of Moroccan and Andalusian poets in this field, who played a major role in the development of Prophetic praise poetry, especially since the establishment of the Marinid state. There is a divergence among researchers regarding the origins of prophetic praise poetry. Some maintain that it is an ancient poetic creation that emerged alongside the Prophetic mission and the Islamic conquests, represented by the Companions such as Hassan ibn Thabit—known as



the “Poet of the Messenger,” for whom a pulpit was set up to recite poetry and praise—as well as Ka‘b ibn Malik, **Ka‘b ibn Zuhay**, and **Abdullah ibn Rawahah**.

Others argue that prophetic praise is a later, innovative genre that did not fully emerge until the seventh century AH with poets such as Al-Busiri and Ibn Daqiq al-‘Id. (al-Jarrār, 1982, p. 141) This disagreement gives rise to the central problem of the study, which revolves around the reference frameworks of prophetic praise poetry and how it evolved historically and artistically between the classical and modern periods. The aim is to examine the body of poems that were inspired by and derived from the original Prophetic ode, both among early and later poets, as well as the poetic patterns that emerged from this authentic tradition and the profound influence it exerted on Prophetic praise poetry—until it became, in itself, a model followed by poets both thematically and artistically.

In light of these motivations and objectives, and to clarify the study and illuminate the subject from within while defining its intellectual boundaries, we began by providing a definition of praise in both its linguistic and technical senses, followed by a definition of prophetic praise. We then examined prophetic praise poetry in its classical and modern phases, citing representative poems from each period.

This study required the use of the historical method to trace the development of this poetic genre over time, as well as the descriptive-analytical method to examine prophetic poems and highlight their artistic characteristics.

The Concept of Praise

Linguistically

Arabic dictionaries provide several definitions of praise (al-madh) in its linguistic sense, all of which revolve around the meaning of good commendation and the mention of virtues. In *Kitab al-‘Ayn*, under the root (m-d-h), it states: “Madh (praise) is the opposite of satire (hijā’), and it means good commendation. *Madhah* is a noun meaning praise, and its plural forms are *madā’ih* and *madh*. One says: ‘I praised him’ (*madahtuhu*) and ‘I extolled him’ (*imta-dahtuhu*),” that is, I mentioned his good qualities.³ (al-Farahidi, *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*, arranged and edited by ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Hindāw, p. 126)

In *Al-Qamus al-Muhit*, praise is defined as: “to praise someone (*madaḥahu*)—as in the verbal pattern similar to *mana‘ahu—madḥan* or *midḥah*, meaning to speak well of something.” *Madīḥ* and *umdūḥah* refer to anything by which a person is praised, and their plural forms are *madā’ih* and *amādīḥ*.

Likewise, in *Lisan Al arab* by Ibn Mandour, praise is described as the opposite of satire and as good commendation.

Thus, the linguistic meaning of praise centers on highlighting admirable qualities and expressing approval and appreciation of virtues.⁴ (al-Zabidi, 1965, p. 111)

This is the opinion of some scholars; however, the correct view is that *madh* is the definition of praise is also **found in *Tāj al-‘Arūs*** as follows:

“*Madḥahu*, like *mana‘ahu, yamdaḥuhu madḥan wa midḥatan*—with kasrah (i-vowel). This is the verbal noun (maṣdar), while *midḥah* is the noun. Its plural is *midah*. It means to speak well of someone and to commend him; its opposite is satire (*hijā’*).” (al-Zabidi, 1965, p. 111)



Our Shaykh stated, "The leading scholars of derivation and linguistics said that *madḥ* (praise) means describing someone with (beautiful qualities), and its opposite is blame (dhamm). (dhamm). (dhamm). (dhamm). . *Itm*. It so (dhamm). c" (dhamm). carries the meaning of enumerating merits, the opposite of which is satire (*hajw*). This was reported by Al-Sayyid al-Jurjan in his marginal notes on *al-Kashshāf*. One may say *amIttdīḥan*, "imta-daḥah d "tamaddaḥahu" (all meaningthim").). "he praised hhimhim").m").).him")

In *al-Miṣbāḥ*, it is sthim").atedM" (dhamm). *adḥan*, like *nafa`a* (in pattern), meanin(dhamm). (dh). 'I praised him for the beautiful qualities he possesses, whether innate (natural) or acquired volitional).'"(volitional).'"(volitional)(volitional).'" For this reason, *madḥ* (praise) is considered more general than *ḥamd* (praise in the sense of gratitude).

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sai(v(volitional).'"(volitional).'"(volitional).'"olitional).'"(volitional).'"(volitional). 'derives from the expression 'inmadaḥaal-arḍ' (when the land expands), as if the meaning of 'I praised him'I were 'I expanded his gratitude (or renown). "It is also reported from Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi that the use of ḥā' (h) is for the absent person, while hā' (h) is for the present. Al-Saraqusṭī stated that *madḥ* is used only in describing a state or condition, as reported by our Shaykh.

Al-madīḥ, *al-midḥah* (with kasrah), and *al-umdūḥah* (with ḍammah) all refer to that by which one is praised in poetry. The plural of *madīḥ* is *madā`iḥ*, and the plural of *umdūḥah* is *amādīḥ*. When *madā`iḥ* is considered the plural of *madīḥ*, it follows an irregular pattern, similar to *ḥadīth* and its plural *aḥādīth*. As Abu Dhu'ayb al-Hudhalisaid (Al-Hudhali, 2003, p. 69) : The expression *tamaddaḥat al-arḍ wa al-khāṣīrah* means "the land and the flank expanded." The pronoun is dual here in reference to "the land" and "the flank," not—as our Shaykh claimed—because each person has two flanks and thus the dual refers to the genus. As for *tamaddaḥat al-arḍ*, it is interchangeable with *tanaddaḥat* and *intadaḥat*, all meaning "it expanded."

Likewise, *tamaddaḥat khawāṣīr al-māshiyah* means "the flanks of the cattle expanded out of fullness," similar in meaning to *tanaddaḥat*.

In Sahih , it is reported that al-Rā`ī al-Numayrī said

—describing (as commonly narrated) a horse:

"When we gave her the 'akīs to drink, her flanks expanded, and the vein of her neck increased in pulsation."

This line is narrated with both the letters dāl and dhāl. However Ibn Buraik clarified that the poem actually belongs to al-Rā`ī, describing a woman who visited him at night seeking hospitality, not a horse. The forms *imtadaḥat* and *ammadaḥat* (with a doubled mīm) are also used, similar in pattern to *addakart* (Mandhor, p. 590).

Terminologically

In terminological usage, praise (*madḥ*) is defined as a poet's beautiful description of another person, highlighting his virtues and speaking well of him. It has been said in defining the term "praise" that it is considered a genre of lyric poetry in which the poet expresses feelings of admiration and appreciation toward an individual or a group, enumerating their noble deeds



and describing their virtues and honorable qualities (Shaqrā, p. 170). Thus, praise signifies admiration, respect, and the appreciation of actions expressed with affection and esteem.

It has also been defined as an art that values great deeds and extraordinary heroism, commends their authors, glorifies them, and portrays their merits in an ideal artistic manner—often elevating acts of heroism beyond their reality and transforming virtuous deeds into ones of even greater excellence and reward. (Shaqrā, p. 155)

In literary and critical terminology, praise is regarded as a poetic purpose whose essence is gratitude, commendation, and the highlighting of the praiseworthy qualities of the one being praised. Abu al-Baqa' al-Kafawi defined praise as: “Commendation by the tongue for what is beautiful in an absolute sense, whether it pertains to favors or virtues, whether voluntary or involuntary; and it is only appropriate in relation to a blessing. For this reason, it is not said ‘I praised God,’ because it is inconceivable that a human description could precede God’s blessing in any respect, since existence itself is a blessing from God Almighty.”¹⁰ (Ṭulaymāt & al-Ashqar, pp. 326-327)

Accordingly, praise implies gratitude and commendation of the praised person, as well as acknowledging God’s blessings through praising Him, since existence itself is a divine favor bestowed upon us.

The Concept of Prophetic Praise (al-Madīḥ al-Nabawī)

Jamīl Ḥamdāwī defines praise poetry as that form of poetry devoted to praising the Prophet (peace be upon him) by enumerating his physical and moral qualities, expressing longing to see him and visit his (grave) and the sacred places associated with his life, while also mentioning his material and spiritual miracles, versifying his biography, highlighting his battles, his exemplary attributes, and invoking blessings upon him out of reverence and veneration.¹¹ (Ḥamdāwī, 2011)

In this type of religious poetry, the praising poet often reveals his shortcomings in fulfilling his religious and worldly duties, confessing his faults, slips, and numerous sins in this life. He turns sincerely and fearfully to God, imploring Him and seeking repentance and forgiveness. He then turns to the Prophet (peace be upon him), hoping for his intercession and mediation on the Day of Judgment. Prophetic praise poetry often overlaps with Sufi poetry and poems celebrating the Prophet’s birth (known as *Mawlidīyyāt*)¹² (Ḥamdāwī, 2011)

In linking the term “praise” (*madḥ*) with “prophetic” (*nabawī*) within the expression “religious praise,” Zaki Mubarak defines religious praise as: “a genre of poetry popularized by Sufism; it is a form of expressing religious emotions and a branch of refined literature, for it springs only from hearts filled with sincerity and devotion.”¹³ (Moubarak, p. 17)

It is well known that this pure Prophetic praise is unlike the kind of praise that was called gain-seeking flattery, directed toward sultans, princes, and ministers. Rather, this praise is devoted exclusively to the best of creation, namely Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). It is characterized by sincerity, love, loyalty, devotion, sacrifice, and immersion in mystical experience and divinely inspired spiritual (love).



The Development of Prophetic Praise in Arabic Poetry between the Classical and the Modern Periods:

Before delving deeply into the poetry of Prophetic praise, it is necessary to examine the direct and indirect intertextual references that shaped the vision of poets in this genre, both classical and modern. It is also essential to identify the intertexts or poetic sources—ancient and modern—upon which poets relied in composing their Prophetic odes. Clarifying this background knowledge is indispensable for understanding the poetic text and achieving its coherence and consistency, as it serves as a strategic mechanism in the analysis and deconstruction of literary texts.

A reading of Prophetic praise poems and collections throughout their historical and artistic development reveals that they primarily drew their creative material and Islamic vision from the Holy Qur'an first, and from the noble Prophetic Sunnah second. Another important source in the weaving of Prophetic praise poetry lies in the books of Qur'anic exegesis that elaborated extensively on the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). This is clearly evident, for example, in the Tafsir of Ibn Kathir. In addition, there are the books of Sīrah (biography), which consist of a body of documents and works written about the life of the Prophet, whether classical or modern. Among them are *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah* by Ibn Hisham, the Sīrah of Ibn Ishaq, *Al-Raheeq Al-Makhtum* by Safi-ur-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri, and *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah* by Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi.

Prophetic Praise in the Early Islamic Period:

1 – What was said during the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him):

The earliest signs of prophetic praise poetry appeared at the time of the Prophet's birth. One of the first expressions of this praise is attributed to Abdul Muttalib, who compared the birth of Muhammad (peace be upon him) to a radiant, shining light that illuminated the universe with joy and happiness.¹⁴ (al-Ibshihi, 1419 AH, p. 142) He said:

"And when you were born, the earth shone, and the horizon was lit with your light. Before your coming, you dwelt in shadows and in a repository where leaves were kept."

Similarly, what is attributed to his uncle, Abu Talib, includes the lines (al-Nabhani, 1996, p. 53):

"Who among people is like him? A sign of hope when rulers measure worth."

The first Arab poet to praise the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in this period was Al-A'sha. He composed his *Qasidah Dalīyah*, extolling the generosity of the Messenger of Allah, beginning with the lines¹⁶ (Al-A'sha- Maymun ibn Qays, 1993, p. 49):

*"Did your eyes not close one night?
And return as they returned to the sleepless Salim."*

This demonstrates that even during his lifetime, the Prophet inspired admiration and poetic tribute, reflecting both personal reverence and recognition of his noble qualities.

In reality, Al-A'sha's poem cannot be considered part of Prophetic praise (*madāḥ nabawī*) because it is completely devoid of religious sentiment, and the poet did not express it with sincere intent to honor the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Evidence of this is that he refrained from meeting the Prophet when Abu Sufyan approached him, offering money and



tempting him with a hundred camels on the condition that he would not return until he saw the outcome of the truce the Quraysh had established, which aimed to overcome the noble Prophet. If they prevailed, Al-A'sha was to remain in his home, and if the Prophet triumphed, he was to face him. Al-A'sha accepted the offer and returned to his town, but when he reached the plains of *Manfūkha*, his camel threw him off, killing him.¹⁷ (Al-Khudārī, p. 163) This story shows that his praise of the Prophet was merely an attempt, like other poets seeking personal gain, and his poem contains nothing of the spiritual and religious emotion that elevates true prophetic praise poetry.

The actual prophetic praise poetry began with the advent of Islam, starting with the famous poem "*Tala' al-Badru 'Alayna*" and the works of the Prophet's poets, such as Hassan ibn Thabit, Ka'b ibn Malik, Abdullah ibn Rawahah, and Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, who is known for his famous *Lāmīyah* in which he praised the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). The opening lines of his poem are¹⁸ (al-Ḥasan-All-Sukkarī, 1979, pp. 6-25)

*"Su'ād has departed, and my heart today is wounded,
Enamored by her traces, yet she did not respond, restrained and bound."*

He then continues:

*"The Messenger is a sword by which light is drawn,
Sharpened from the swords of God, unsheathed and bright."*

This demonstrates the emergence of genuinely devotional prophetic praise poetry, distinguished by sincere religious feeling and admiration for the Prophet's virtues.

Up to the end of what he said in praise of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).

This blessed panegyric poem deserved to be called *Al-Burdah al-Nabawiyyah* (the Prophetic Mantle Ode), because the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) clothed its author with his purified mantle as an honor to him and as encouragement for committed Islamic poetry that defends the truth, supports Islam, and spreads the divine religion.

His praise of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) was not born out of love or admiration, but rather out of a desire to save himself after the Prophet had declared his blood lawful. When the earth became constricted for him and he found no escape, he came forth with his poem seeking forgiveness and protection, asking pardon and acceptance from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Nevertheless, this poem has remained firmly rooted in the minds and hearts of Arab poets from that time until today. Regarding it, Abu Ja'far al-Abyari said: "It is the proof of the poets in the path they have taken, and the foundation of their art in what they have mastered. One of our shaykhs in Alexandria related to me, through his chain of transmission, that some scholars would not begin their gatherings except with the poem of Ka'b."¹⁹ (Al-Maqqari-Al-Tilimsani, 1968, p. 688)

Muslims have taken great pride in the poem of Ka'b ibn Zuhayr. They transmitted it from generation to generation, explained it, composed counter-poems in response to it, divided it into halves, and expanded it into five-line stanzas. So much so that Al-Maqqari said, "Poets, from that time until now, have continued to weave upon its pattern and follow its expressions, seeking blessing from the one before whom it was recited and to whom its praise was attributed."²⁰ (Al-Maqqari-Al-Tilimsani, 1968, p. 189)



However, the books of historians unanimously agree that Hassan ibn Thabit ibn al-Mundhir ibn Haram al-Khazraji was the foremost poet of Prophetic praise. He was the only one among the Prophet's poets who had achieved wide fame during the pre-Islamic period. When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) arrived in Madinah, Hassan embraced Islam and excelled in his faith. The Prophet then appointed him as his poet, defending the Muslim community against the poets of Quraysh. It is sufficient honor for him that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) supplicated for him, saying, "O Allah, support him with the Holy Spirit."²¹ ('Alī Makkī, p. 12)

Among the most important poems of Hassan ibn Thabit in praise of the Noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is his famous *'Ayniyyah*, composed in response to the orator of Quraysh, Atarid ibn Hajib (AbdAmhanna, 1994, p. 152), in which he says:

*"Indeed, the noble leaders of Fihir and their brothers
Have made clear a path for people to follow."*

We must also mention his well-known *Hamziyyah*, in which he vividly depicts the bravery of the Muslims, praises the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), commends the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, and satirizes Abu Sufyan ibn Harb. It opens with (brāhīmShams-al-Dīn, 2008, pp. 43-44):

*"The dwelling at Dhāt al-Aṣābi' has vanished, and al-Jiwā',
Up to 'Adhrā', its abode lies desolate."*

Then he says: (brāhīmShams-al-Dīn, 2008, p. 45)

*"No eye has ever seen one more beautiful than you,
Nor have women given birth to one more handsome.
You were created free from every defect.
As though you were created exactly as you wished."*

"These two verses are among the most beautiful ever composed in describing the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Since beauty, by its very nature, is beloved to souls and revered in hearts, God did not send any prophet except that he was handsome in appearance, noble in lineage, and pleasant in voice. As Ali ibn Abi Talib said when he was asked, "Was the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him) like a sword?" He replied, "No, rather he was like the moon." In describing him (peace and blessings be upon him), it was said, "It was as though the sun flowed across his face." (brāhīmShams-al-Dīn, 2008, p. 45)

From such poems came the earliest signs of the widespread emergence of prophetic praise poetry in Arabic literature, until he says: (brāhīmShams-al-Dīn, 2008, p. 45)

*"God said, I have sent a servant.
Who speaks the truth, even when trial prevails.
I bore witness to him, and my people believed him.
But you said, "What shall we answer, and what shall we will?"*

It is evident in the previous verses that praise occupies only a small portion and a limited space; rather, the poet merely mentions some of the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) qualities and noble traits. These lines were composed on the occasion of mourning the Prophet, and the poet appears deeply imbued with Islamic concepts. He skillfully wove into the fabric of these verses a quotation from the Qur'an, incorporating the meaning of the following verse:



“There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; he is concerned over you and, to the believers, kind and merciful.” (Qur’an 9:128)

Thus, it presents a purely Islamic image—the image of the Prophet as a human being in his gentle and tender emotions, flowing with compassion and affection toward the people around him. He embraces the believers with deep concern and intense care, fearing lest any harm touch them, any misfortune befall them, or any hardship, difficulty, or suffering afflict them. All this unfolds within an intimate atmosphere of kindness and mercy that overwhelms hearts and fills souls with joy and delight. It is this very quality that allows those who question to find in him an open heart—one that opens to every inquiry arising in their minds—responding with love, depth, and openness. It also grants those who are astray the opportunity to seek guidance from him without feeling constrained by manner or unsettled by expression. Instead, they are met with a tender gaze, a radiant smile, a kind word, and a gracious gesture. Thus, they draw near to him through this warm and intimate atmosphere before they approach him through profound and suggestive thought. Indeed, this atmosphere itself becomes the gateway through which the idea enters the heart, moves within the mind, and is transformed into a living movement of faith within the soul.

This is precisely what the one who bears the responsibility of calling others to God needs in fulfilling the mission of da‘wah.

2 – What was said after the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him):

Most of the poems of prophetic praise were composed after the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). What is said after death is generally called elegy (*rithā’*), but in the case of the Prophet, it is considered praise, because he did not die in the hearts of Muslims and believers. Rather, he remains alive through their love for him, their emulation of his life, and their following in his footsteps—hoping thereby to attain the honor of seeing him in the Hereafter. For this reason, poets address him as they would address the living.

The purpose of such poems is to seek intercession through him, to draw nearer to God Almighty, to spread the Islamic faith, and to extol its symbol. By contrast, elegiac poetry is usually built upon grief, sorrow, and weeping. The poet Hassan ibn Thabit composed three elegiac poems about the Noble Prophet, in which he speaks of the pulpit, the prayer place, the mosque, and revelation. He mentions the weeping of the earth and the heavens, his longing to meet the Prophet in Paradise, and the guidance, righteousness, and noble (Ibrāhīm Tawfīq, 2010, p. 5) that Muslims inherited from him.

His *Dāliyyah* is considered one of the most deeply moving poems in the hearts of Muslims—a sorrowful, tearful, and powerful composition. It opens with: (brāhīm Shams-al-Dīn, 2008, pp. 79-81)

“Why does your eye not sleep, as though
Its lids were darkened with the kohl of inflammation?
Out of grief for the Guided One who now lies still—
O best of those who ever trod the pebbled earth, be not far away.”



Prophetic Praise in the Umayyad Era:

This era represents one of the most important periods in Muslim history. The era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs was a significant step in establishing, organizing, and advancing the state, as well as in strengthening its influence. The Great Fitna affected the Muslims, causing them to become divided factions. The situation did not stabilize even after the establishment of the Umayyad state; instead, events intensified and became more severe. The art of praise poetry was negatively impacted by these events, appearing limited and constrained, whereas it was hoped to be more developed (Abd al-Qādir, 2012, p. 8). Al-Farazdaq is considered one of the most important poets of prophetic praise in the Umayyad era, especially in his magnificent Meem poem where he praised the Ahl al-Bayt and highlighted the noble character and wonderful virtues of the noble Prophet, peace be upon him. He says at the beginning of the poem: (Al-Farazdaq, 1987, p. 511)

This is the one whose footsteps the plain knows, and the House knows him, as do the sacred and the inviolable.

This is the one whose footsteps are known by the plain, and the house knows him, as do the town and the sanctuary. This is the one whose footsteps are known by the plain, and the house knows him, as do the town and the sanctuary.

Dr. Zaki Mubarak says: It can be said that Al-Farazdaq's praise of the Prophet and his family marks the beginning of sincerity in prophetic praises, because Al-Hassan's praises occurred in a time when praising the Prophet benefited the poet without harming him. However, praising the Prophet and his family in Al-Farazdaq's time opened a door of evil for the poets, as those praises did not please the Umayyad caliphs. How could they please them when they were endorsements of the enemies of those caliphs? (Moubarak, p. 56)

The praise of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) became closely linked with the praise of the Ahl al-Bayt and the enumeration of the virtues of the Banu Hashim and the descendants of Fatimah. This is evident in the works of Al-Farazdaq as well as in the poetry of the Shi'i poet Al-Kumayt al-Asadi, who wrote in his *Ba'iyyah*:

"I was delighted, yet it was not the longing for fair women that delighted me, Nor the playful games of the gray-haired that entertained me."

The poet's delight, longing, and passion are not caused by attraction to beautiful fair-skinned women, nor by the allure of soft hands dyed with vivid colors, nor by admiration of the ruins of dwellings or the decorations of homes once inhabited by loved ones. Rather, his yearning and overwhelming delight have a different origin, which he reveals in the following lines:

"Rather, it is for the people of virtue and wisdom, The best of the children of Hawwā'—the best is sought. It is for the fair individuals whose love draws me nearer to God. The Banu Hashim, the Prophet's clan, for in them I am pleased and angered."

Here, the poet shows that his affection and enthusiasm are spiritual and moral in nature, rooted in love for the Prophet's family and their exemplary virtues, rather than in worldly or sensual attraction.

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They are the Banu Hashim—his clan and his progeny. It is by their doctrine and their path that the poet aligns himself; through them he believes and commits himself. He approaches them with both his approval and his indignation, extends to them the wing of his affection, and embraces them with profound love. For the sake of this love, he endures the blame of enemies, their anger against him, and their accusations of hostility. As a result, they inflict harm and persecution upon him, overwhelming him with reproach and rebuke. This is what the poet expressed in deeply moving verses that testify to the sincerity of his emotions and the depth of his feelings and sentiments.

Also included within this type of praise is the celebrated *Tā'iyyah* of the Shi'i poet Dhubal al-Khuza'i, in which he praised the Ahl al-Bayt, saying at its opening: (al-Khuzā'ī, 1972, p. 124) They are the Banu Hashim—his clan and his progeny. It is by their doctrine and their path that the poet aligns himself; through them he believes and commits himself. He approaches them with both his approval and his indignation, extends to them the wing of his affection, and embraces them with profound love. For the sake of this love, he endures the blame of enemies, their anger against him, and their accusations of hostility. As a result, they inflict harm and persecution upon him, overwhelming him with reproach and rebuke. This is what the poet expressed in deeply moving verses that testify to the sincerity of his emotions and the depth of his feelings and sentiments.

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"Schools of verses left without recitation, And a dwelling of revelation, its courtyards desolate."

It must be emphasized that Dhubal al-Khuza'i did not confine himself to poetic genius alone. He was not merely a poet; rather, he left behind numerous writings and books that became widespread in his time. He excelled in literature and history, authoring works in both fields. He was also known for his narration of hadith and for his accounts concerning caliphs and



ministers. The news of his book *Al-Wāḥidah* on the merits and faults of the Arabs spread remarkably, and scribes devoted many years to copying and selling it to eager readers.

As previously mentioned, Da‘bal al-Khuzā‘ī was known for his loyalty to the Ahl al-Bayt and for openly proclaiming his love for them. He composed some of the finest and most beautiful poems in their honor. His poetry in praising and elegizing the Ahl al-Bayt is considered among the most refined and elevated works composed in this field.

Al-Sharif al-Radi, for his part, adopted a Sufi-oriented approach in praising the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and in recounting the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt—especially the sons of Fatimah—whom he elevated to a lofty rank of piety, glory, and nobility. In his *Dāliyyah*, he says: (Al-Sharif, 1977, pp. 337-340)

*“Our weeping has distracted tears from the dwellings,
For the weeping of Fatimah over her sons.”*

Prophetic Praise in the Abbasid Era:

Prophetic praise in the Abbasid era followed much the same course as in the Umayyad period, although the imagery and circumstances varied. During this era, the genre began to take on diverse artistic forms due to emerging conditions that contributed to its wide spread. This expansion was driven by several factors, among the most significant of which was the moral decline that accompanied the influx of foreign cultures—cultures that conflicted with the teachings of Islam—alongside other political and social causes that influenced literary life, especially poetry.

Poets thus sought purely artistic themes within the framework of praise, aiming at self-reform and societal reform. New themes emerged, focused on refining the human soul, such as asceticism (*zuhd*) and Sufism (*taṣawwuf*). From this point onward, the Prophetic praise poem began to assume political and social dimensions. An example of this is the long poem of Al-Sayyid al-Hamiri in praise of Imam ‘Ali (may God honor his face), which extended to about one hundred and seventy verses. In many of its lines, he praised the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), weaving elements of his biography into an engaging narrative texture. From this stage, Prophetic praise embarked on its poetic journey alongside political and partisan currents, at times influenced by Shi‘ism and at other times by Sufism. Gradually, it developed and attained a lofty status among the Sufis.

Among the most renowned poets of this era was the Abbasid poet Muhyar al-Daylami, who composed dozens of poems in praise of the Ahl al-Bayt and in extolling the noble qualities and incomparable virtues of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Alongside him stands Ibn al-Farid, Abu Ḥafṣ ‘Umar ibn ‘Ali, famously known as the “Sultan of the Lovers,” who says:

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*“I see every praise of the Prophet as falling short,
Even if every jeweled necklace were strung for him.

Can the praiser ever reach the true measure of Muhammad,
Even if the one who extols him exaggerates and multiplies his praise?”*

Such was also the approach of Al-Sharif al-Radi and other Sufi poets, until Prophetic praise reached a point of stability and maturity with the poets of the ninth Hijri century—most notably Al-Busiri, who became a landmark and symbol of Prophetic praise poetry.

Al-Busiri, who lived in the seventh Hijri century, remains one of the most important poets of Prophetic praise and one of the true founders of the Prophetic panegyric ode and the Mawlid poem genre. This is especially evident in his celebrated *Mīmiyyah*, whose opening reads: (Al-Busiri, p. 2)

**“Do you remember the neighbors of Dhi Salm,
You shed tears that flowed from the eyes with blood?
Or did the wind blow from the direction of Kazimah,
And the lightning flash in the darkness of Isdam?”**

This poem has been responded to by many poets, both classical and modern. Among the most notable is **Ibn Jaber al-Andalusi**, in his *Mīmiyyah al-Badi‘iyya*, where he extensively employed rhetorical devices in his poetic counterpoints, beginning with:

**“Descend to Taybah and turn toward the Master of the Nations,
Spread praise for him and scatter the finest words.”**

Among other poets who explored the theme of prophetic praise is **Ibn Nabatah al-Masri**, who left us five poems in praise of the Prophet (peace be upon him). These include his *Hamziyyah*, which begins:



“Lovers have rushed toward her with longing,
And poured their hearts into patience.”

And his *Rā'iyah*, which begins:

“The heart would not awaken without a drifting breeze,
And the lightning of longing flares intensely.”

And his *Lāmiyyah*, beginning:

“The eyes after you are sleepless,
And how many of your kin are near us.”

Prophetic Praise in Maghrebi and Andalusian Literature:

If we move to **Maghrebi literature** to trace the phenomenon of Prophetic praise, we find that Moroccan poets were among the earliest to celebrate the Prophet's birthday (peace and blessings be upon him) and to compose numerous poems in his praise. They enumerated his noble virtues, mentioned his praiseworthy qualities, recounted his blessed biography, and evoked the sacred places upon which our beloved Prophet set foot.

Poets would often begin the Prophetic ode with a Sufi-inspired amatory prelude, expressing longing to behold the Intercessor and to visit the sacred sites and the shrines of the Noble Sanctuary. After this introduction, they would describe the mount and the caravans journeying toward the noble resting place of the Prophet. They would then proceed to depict the holy places and to praise the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), while confessing their many sins and shortcomings, seeking from the generous Beloved his intercession on the Day of Resurrection. The Prophetic ode would typically conclude with supplication and blessings upon him.

Among the most prominent Moroccan poets renowned for Prophetic praise is Malik ibn al-Marhal, particularly in his famous *Mīmiyyah*, in which he poetically responds to the celebrated *Mīmiyyah* of Al-Busiri.³⁹ (Lisan al-Din, 1975, pp. 314-315)

Longing, like a fire raised on a banner, ignites among the branches of the lost and the peaceful. And he says in his *Hamziyyah* poem, praising the Prophet, peace be upon him (Ben Taouit, 1982, pp. 339-340):

To the Chosen One, I dedicate my finest praise; so pure is my gift, and so good is my offering.
And alongside Abdul Malik bin Marhal, we mention the Saadi poet Abdul Aziz Al-Feshtali, who says in one of his poetic verses: (Abd al-Aziz, 1986, pp. 420-428)
Muhammad is the best of all the worlds and the master of the people of the earth, both humans and jinn.

As for Al-Qadi Iyad, he left behind numerous works and poems, most of which are in praise of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and express longing for the holy lands, as in his poem *Al-Ra'iyah*. (Lisan al-Din, 1975, pp. 346-350)

Stop at the caravan, for this quarter and home have shone upon us the lights of our beloveds.
Stop the mounts, for this is the dwelling and the abode;
From the beloved ones, lights have shone upon us.”

Among the poets of al-Andalus who were concerned with prophetic praise and the mention of sacred places is **Lisan al-Din Ibn al-Khatib**, who says in his *Dāliyya* poem:



“It shone forth from Najd—so remind me of Najd;
And it stirred within me an intense and burning longing.”

Prophetic Praise Poetry in the Modern Era

Whoever examines the collections of the poets of the Revival and Renaissance movement (the neo-classical or traditionalist trend) finds a considerable number of poems in praise of the Prophet (peace be upon him). These poems are sometimes based on *poetic opposition* (mu‘ārāḍah), and at other times on originality and renewal. Among the poets who excelled in prophetic praise are Mahmoud Sami al-Barudi, Ahmed Shawqi, Hafez Ibrahim, and Mohamed al-Haloui.

Among the poems of Mahmoud Sami al-Barudi is his *Jimiyyah* (a poem rhyming in the letter *jīm*), in which he says:

“O sharp sword of glances, who has tempted you with souls,
That you slay them unjustly and without restraint?”

This poem is, in fact, an opposition to the poem of the Abbasid Sufi poet Farid, whose opening verse reads:

“Between the clash of glances and souls,
I am the slain one, without sin and without blame.”

Among other poets who composed in the manner of al-Burda is **Ahmed Al-Hamlawi**, in his poem which he also entitled *Minhāj al-Burda* (“The Method of the Burda”), opening with:

“O Forgiver of sin, out of generosity and grace,
Accepter of repentance from sinner and offender.”

Likewise, Ahmed chawki followed the path of al-Bārūdī in opposing the classical poets and composing eulogistic poems celebrating the virtues of the Prophet (peace be upon him), enumerating his miracles and noble qualities, as in his celebrated *Hamziyyah*, which opens with (Ahmad Shawqi, 2020, pp. 41-46):

“The Guide was born, and all creation became radiant;
And in the mouth of time there was a smile and praise.”

Among the finest poems composed by Ahmad Shawqi in praise of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is his **Mimiyyah ode**, in which he emulated the famous *Burda* poem by Al-Busiri. It opens with the following verse (Ahmad Shawqi, 2020, pp. 259-273):

*A gazelle on the plain, among the ban trees and the banner,
Has made my blood lawful, even in the sacred months.*

Among contemporary Moroccan poets who praised the Prophet (peace be upon him), we may mention the Marrakesh poet Ismail Zuwairiq, who devoted two books to the Prophet’s biography under the title “*Alā al-Nahj*” (“On the Path”) (Zuwairiq, 2004), in which he engages with and responds to poets of prophetic praise.

Among the poems he composed in praise are the following:

- The poem “**Bānat Su‘ād**,” in which he emulates the famous poem of Ka'b ibn Zuhayr:
*Su‘ād has departed—what respite is there for sorrow?
Tears flow freely, and the body grows frail.*



- The poem “**Al-Burda, O Complainer of the Bān Trees,**” in which he emulates the Burda of Al-Busiri:

*O, you who complain of the bān trees, how much sickness lies in separation?
Your complaint flows like a melody, overflowing with pain.*

- The poem “**In the Sanctuary of Medina,**” in which he emulates Al-Busiri’s Hamziyyah:

*Bring it forth—for the soul finds no substitute for it.
Longing has drawn me when remedies have failed.*

- The poem “**The Sīniyyah in Praise of the Best of Creation,**” in which he emulates the Sīniyyah of Al-Buhturi. It opens with:

*Separation proclaims what my soul conceals,
And it has given me to drink the cup of courage after cup.*

Conclusion:

From the foregoing, it is clear that poetry in praise of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is sincere, free from flattery or personal gain. It combines both literal, sensory meaning and spiritual, Sufi significance. This poetry is situated within the Islamic religious vision, drawing its language, expression, rhythm, imagery, and stylistic devices from classical Arabic poetic heritage. This, however, often led to repetition, banality, and reiteration, due to emulation and influence from earlier poetry in terms of form, meaning, and intent.

Despite this, some poets excelled in composing prophetic praise, such as Mahmoud Sami Al-Baroudi, Ahmad Shawqi, and the Moroccan poet Ismail Zuwairiq in his long, sequential poetic collection *‘Alā al-Nahj* (“On the Path...”).

Thus, prophetic praise poetry is a religious genre that focuses on the biography and luminous virtues of the Prophet (peace be upon him). This poetry accompanies his birth, migration, and mission, and continues through his victories and the love for his household, blending into Sufi poetry to become an independent art form with poets such as Al-Busiri and Ibn Daqiq al-‘Id. In the modern era, it has been associated with religious occasions and the Prophet’s birthday, while simultaneously subject to direct and indirect forms of opposition.

The life and journey of the Prophet (peace be upon him) have remained an enduring source of inspiration over the years, influencing modern Arabic poetry as profoundly as classical poetry. Modern Arabic poetry, however, has been richer, more refined, and widely disseminated across the Arab world, with poets experimenting with both the form and content of their verses.

The themes of prophetic praise have also varied across eras, from enumerating the Prophet’s qualities, merits, and miracles to expressing longing to visit his sacred shrine. They also include celebrations of his birth, prayers upon him, and supplications for his intercession.

The field remains open for further research. We recommend revisiting these poems to examine the presence of the Prophet’s personality in contemporary poetry, whether in **Tafīlah verse** or **free verse**, and to determine whether it reflects the same image found in classical heritage poetry. Alternatively, modernity has prompted poets to reinterpret traditional forms: the *Nahda* poets sought a new rational and scientific understanding of the Prophet’s timeless message (as



in the works of Al-Rusafi), whereas the *Tajdid* (renewal) poets anticipated a revival of the Prophet's militant spirit to awaken the Arab nation (as in Al-Sayyab).

This represents a legitimate and rich area for scholarly inquiry, deserving of a dedicated, comprehensive study—one we leave, God willing, for future researchers and scholars.

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