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The Micro-Qaṣīdah

A Formal Experiment from the 8th / 14th Century

Thomas Bauer

1 Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah as a poet

Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah is more famous for his anthologies than his poetry. This is not only true today, but was already the case in the Mamluk period. It is certainly no accident that his most famous anthology, the *Dīwān aṣ-ṣabābah*, has come down to us in a large number of manuscripts, whereas we only know of three manuscripts of the Dīwān of his own poetry.[1]

A remark by Ibn Ḥiǧǧah al-Ḥamawī (767-837/1336-1434) about Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah is also helpful for an appraisal of Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's poetry. In his famous *badīʿiyyah*-cum-commentary-cum-anthology entitled *Ḫizānat al-adab,* Ibn Ḥiǧǧah mentions Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah several times, mainly positively. He considers him one of those who had taken Ibn Nubātah (686-768/1287-1366) as their paragon and "walked under the Nubātian banner".[2] On the other hand, Ibn Ḥiǧǧah quotes conspicuously fewer poems by Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah than by popular poet al-Miʿmār or by Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's contemporary al-Qīrāṭī (726-781/1326-1379), who was considered Ibn Nubātah's successor as the leading poet.[3] Ibn Ḥiǧǧah even expresses a slight doubt about the quality of Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's poetry, saying that for the sake of quantity, Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah contented himself with "cheap" poetry (*kāna yarḍā li-aǧli l-kaṯrati bi-r-raḫīṣ*).[4] Indeed, most readers will admit that in many of Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's poems one can find original, elegant and well-formulated verses side by side with clumsy and cumbersome lines. Nevertheless, even if Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's poetry is of uneven quality, it is still very interesting indeed.

For a first overlook of Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's Dīwān, the following chart displaying the length of the poems in the Dīwān may be useful:[5]

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1 There are two editions of Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's *Dīwān* (see bibliography). I will quote the ed. by Bahǧat and Muḥlif as "ed. ʿAmmān", the ed. by Ḥulwah as "ed. Cairo". Both are based on the manuscript Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah 1525 *adab*, which I also use and quote as "ms.". The ed. Cairo uses also the manuscript 1127 *šiʿr Taymūr* and knows a third one, which the editor does not regard, all in the Dār al-Kutub.

2 Ibn Ḥiǧǧah al-Ḥamawī, *Ḫizānat al-adab wa-ġāyat al-arab*, ed. Kawkab Diyāb, 5 vols., Beirut 1421/2001, 3:366.

3 Ibn Ḥiǧǧah, *Ḫizānah* 3:366.

4 Ibn Ḥiǧǧah, *Ḫizānah* 3:444.

5 It is based on the ed. ʿAmmān, where similar statistics are given on p. 58. Note that poem no. 439, apparently a seven-liner, consists in fact of two poems, one in three, the other in four lines. The statistics have been adapted accordingly.

Number of lines	∑
2	281
3	18
4	9
5	3
6	6
7	52
8	3
9	2
10-30	38
30-49	22
50 or more	15

During Ayyubid and Mamluk times, epigrams comprising two or three lines made an unprecedented career.[6] It is small wonder, then, that two- and three-liners (*al-maṭānī wa-l-maṭālīṭ*)[7] comprise exactly two-thirds of Ibn Abī Ḥağalah's entire Dīwān. The 75 poems of ten lines or more, mostly qaṣīdahs, amount to 17% of the Dīwān. This seems a comparatively small number, but a number of longer poems exist in sources outside the Dīwān.[8] Poems of four, five, six, eight or nine lines play a minor role, which is no surprise. Most striking, however, is the number of seven-liners in the Dīwān. There are 52 poems of seven lines, comprising 12% of all poems and 35% of all poems longer than three lines. The astonishing fact that more than one third of all non-epigrammatic poems in Ibn Abī Ḥağalah's Dīwān comprise exactly seven lines needs an explanation. In order to find one, let us have a closer look at three of them.

2 Three seven-liners

Let us start our examination of Ibn Abī Ḥağalah's seven-liners with a congratulatory poem (*tahni'ah* pl. *tahāni'*). Congratulatory poems are a subgenre of panegyric poetry (*madīḥ*) and constituted a very common means of communication for ʿulamāʾ and udabāʾ in the Mamluk period.[9] The addressee of the present poem,

6 See Talib, Adam, *How Do You Say "Epigram" in Arabic?* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); Bauer, Thomas, "'*Ayna hādhā min al-Mutanabbī!' Toward an Aesthetics of Mamluk Literature*", in: *Mamlūk Studies Review* 17 (2013), pp. 5-22, here pp. 10-14.

7 The title of a Dīwān of epigrams, all of them two- and three-liners, by Ṣafiyyaddīn al-Ḥillī (667-750/1278-1349 or 1350) is *Dīwān al-maṭālīṭ wa-l-maṭāni fī l-maʿālī wa-l-maʿāni*. The edition by Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Ḥimṣī (Damaskus 1419/1998) is unsatisfactory and was undertaken without regarding the most important manuscript Paris 3341, fol. 1a-52b.

8 See the contributions by Homerin, Masarwa and von Hees.

9 See van Gelder, Geert Jan, "Congratulations, Arabic", in: *EI Three*, 2014-2, pp. 73-74.

however, is a certain Ṭaybuġā, a Turk and member of the military elite. While addressing members of the *aṣḥāb as-sayf* "bearers of the sword" with congratulatory poems is rather an exception, it is not so rare an occurrence with Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah. Instead, the number of poems addressed to members of the military elite is conspicuously higher in the Dīwān of Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah than in the Dīwāns of most other contemporary poets. This is in accordance with the general impression we get from his œuvre that his relation with the court played a considerably larger role for him than for his fellow-udabāʾ.

As the heading informs us, the occasion of the poem was Ṭaybuġā's safe return form the pilgrimage, which, however, does not play any role in the poem itself.[10] Remarkable is its rhyme in *-aġā / -uġā*, a very rare and difficult rhyme. Obviously, the poet chose it to rhyme with the addressee's name Ṭaybuġā (meter *ṭawīl*, rhyme *3ġā*[11]):[12]

وقال يهنّئ الأمير طَيْبُغَا بالقدوم صُحْبة الركاب الشريفة

وظَبْيٍ غدا في قالَبِ الحُسْنِ مُفْرَغا صَغِيتُ لداعي الحُبِّ فيه وما صَغَى
فقُلْ لِعَذُولي فيه يا صاحِ كَم كذا تُدِيرُ كُؤوساً من مَلامِكَ فُرَّغا
لَوَاحِظُهُ مثلُ السُيوفِ وقَدُّهُ تَعَلَّمَ لِينَ العَطْفِ مِن رُمْحِ طَيْبُغَا
أبو التُرْكِ إلّا أنَّ نُورَ جَبِينِه يقُولُ لهُ بدرُ السَما أنتَ لي أغَا
أميرٌ إذا دارتْ رَحَا الحربِ لم يَزَلْ يُدِيرُ كؤوسَ الحَتْفِ فيها لِمَنْ بَغَا
تَحُومُ طُيُورُ النَصْرِ فوق لِوائِهِ إذا ٱنقضَّ كالبازيّ في حَوْمَةِ الوَغَا
فلا زالَ في يوم الهِيَاج عَدُوُّهُ بِضَرْبَاتِه فوق الدِماغ مُدَمَّغَا

1 A gazelle appeared, cast in the mold of beauty. I gave ear to the call to love him, but he did not listen.

2 Tell the one who blames me for loving him: How many empty cups of rebuke will you pass around, friend?

3 His glances are like swords and Ṭaybuġā's lances taught his body how to bend tenderly.

10 There are several umarāʾ called Ṭaybuġā at this time. This Ṭaybuġā could be ʿAlāʾaddīn Ṭaybuġā ad-Dawādār, who performed the pilgrimage with the Syrian caravan in 771/1370 and died in 779/1377, see *Taʾrīḫ Ibn Qāḍi Šuhbah*, vol. 3, ed. ʿAdnān Darwiš, Damascus 1994, p. 563.

11 Abbreviations in noting the rhyme scheme: x = any consonant; 2 = ū or ī; 3 = a, i, u.

12 Text: Ms. fol. 57b; ed. ʿAmmān no. 225; ed. Cairo p. 156. In line 5, the ل of يزل is placed above the line, which led ed. Cairo to misread لم يزل to لم يَزِد. Ed. Cairo uses modern standard orthography in the words رحى, بغى and الوغى, ed. ʿAmmān only in بغى. I follow the orthography of the manuscript even if it is considered "wrong".

4 You're father to the Turks, but the full moon in the heavens confesses to the brightness of your forehead that: You are my father / *lord* (*aġā*)!

5 When war breaks out, he shows himself to be a leader who hands out endless cups of death to the rebels.

6 When he pounces – falcon-like – on his enemies in the tumult of battle, the birds of victory hover over his banner.

7 May his enemies never cease, in days of strife, to be abased by his blows against their brains!

The poem starts with a *nasīb*, i.e. lines of love-poetry that introduce the typical polythematic qaṣīdah. The genre is *ġazal*, love poetry in the "modern" form. The beloved is probably a beautiful youth who does not yield to the lover's courting. A censurer / blamer appears in line two, a well-known character in love poetry. Three *kāf* plus a *qāf* provide for an interesting sound pattern echoing the blamer's character.

Line three returns to the beloved, whose eyes are compared to swords. Since the addressee is a "bearer of the sword", this military image leads nicely to the first reference to the *mamdūḥ*, the person praised in the poem, i.e. Ṭaybuġā: "His glances are like swords and Ṭaybuġā's lances taught his body how to bend tenderly". This is a perfect transition between *nasīb* and the praise of the *mamdūḥ*. The technical term for such a transition is *taḫalluṣ*. Though the images are conventional, they are superbly intertwined: Whereas the beloved's glances are simply compared to swords – any swords –, his body is compared with particular lances – those of Ṭaybuġā. Further, there is no simple comparison, but a dynamic relation: The beloved's body has learned how to bend elegantly from Ṭaybuġā's lances, a surprising turn for the hearer, who might have expected another comparison parallel to the first one.

In line 4, the poet alludes to the Turkish descent of the Mamluk, which the Turkish word *aġā* reflects. The "cups of death" in line 5 refer back to the empty (!) "cups" of the censurer in line 2. Another belligerent line follows with a nice *ǧinās* (paronomasia) between *yaḥūmu* and *ḥawmaḥ* and a parallelism between real birds (probably vultures) and Ṭaybuġā's comparison with a falcon. The poem ends in line 7 with a sort of "blessing", again a very belligerent one, and another notable *ǧinās* (*dimāġ* – *mudammaġ*).

The poem before us is not a *qiṭʿah* or *muqaṭṭaʿah*, i.e. a monothematic poem, but a full-fledged qaṣīdah, a polythematic poem consisting of an introductory *nasīb*, a transition (*taḫalluṣ*), and a concluding praise-section, the *madīḥ*. What is special about this qaṣīdah is its length, or rather: its breath-taking brevity.

In order to get a clearer picture, let us examine another "micro-qaṣīdah", as we might call it. It is a praise-poem for another emir, called Arūs an-Nāṣirī (meter *wāfir*, rhyme *2sū*):[13]

وقال يمدح الأمير أروس الناصري

برؤْيَـــةِ حَـــيِّكُمْ تَحْـــيى النفـــوسُ ... ويُبْـــذَلُ في وِصـــالِكُمُ النفـــيسُ

لـــئن أطلقـــتُ دمعـــي في هـــواكُمْ ... فقَلـــبي في محَبَّـــتِكُمْ حَبِـــيسُ

وإن أصـــبحتُ في العُـــشَّاقِ رأســـا ... فـــرأسُ الـــتُرْكِ في مـــصرٍ أروسُ

أروسٌ تختـــشي الآســـادُ منـــه ... وتُطـــرَقُ مِـــن مَهابَتِـــهِ الـــرؤوسُ

ويُخْجِـلُ جـودُه الـسُحْبَ الغـوادي ... وتُـشرِقُ مِـن مُحيَّـاهُ الـشموسُ

فـــكَمْ جُلِيَـــتْ محاســـِنُهُ علينـــا ... كـما تُجـلى عـلى الـشمعِ العَـروسُ

فـــلا زالَ الزمـــانُ بـــه ضَحـــوكًا ... ووجـــهُ عَـــدُوِّهِ منـــه عَبُـــوسُ

1 Our souls revive at the sight of your tribe and everything precious is sacrificed to gain union with you.

2 In my passion for you, I let loose my tears, but my heart remains captive to my own love for you.

3 And though I may head up those who love passionately, the head of the Turks in Egypt is Arūs.

4 Lions fear Arūs and heads bow down, awe-struck.

5 His openhandedness shames the morning clouds and splendor rises from his face like the sun.

6 How many times have his excellent qualities been revealed before us like a bride revealed in candlelight!

7 May time never cease to smile through him and may his enemies never cease to frown.

The poem shares a number of characteristics with the first one. Again the poem addresses a 'bearer of the sword', and again the rhyme is chosen to match his name. The *nasīb* makes a more conservative impression. The beloved is addressed in a gender-neutral way (second person plural), and the word *ḥayy* calls forth associations with old Arabic bedouin-style *nasīb*. Line 2 is characterised by the sty-

13 Text: Ms. fol. 49a-b; ed. ʿAmmān no. 171; ed. Cairo pp. 134-135. Ed. ʿAmmān interprets the beginning of line 5 as ويخجلُ جودَهُ السحبُ الغوادي. I follow the interpretation of ed. Cairo. Different to both editions, I follow the orthography of the ms. in تحيى in line 1. – On Sayfaddīn Arūs an-Nāṣirī see the entry (in the year 775, the year in which he probably died) in *Taʾrīḫ Ilm Qāḍī Šuhbah*, vol. 3, ed. ʿAdnān Darwīš, Damascus 1994, p. 438.

listic device of *ṭibāq* "antithesis" by contrasting "letting loose" and "captivate". By bearing steadfastly his unrequitable love, the poet is the "head of lovers", an expression that calls to mind al-ʿAbbās ibn al-Aḥnaf's (c. 133-192/750-807) conception of himself as a lover.[14] By way of another *ṭibāq*, the "head of the lovers" is juxtaposed to the "head of the Turks", none other than the *mamdūḥ* Arūs an-Nāṣirī. As in the first poem, the *taḥalluṣ* comes again in the third line.

Three of the four remaining lines of the panegyric section are again characterised by antithesis (*ṭibāq*): Lions and men (line 4), clouds and the sun (line 5), smiling versus frowning (line 7). A *tašbīh* (comparison) interrupts this series in line 6. With the exception of line 6 and line 1, in which the most prominent stylistic device is *ǧinās* "paronomasia" (*ḥayy – taḥyā*, *nufūs – nafis*), all lines are built around a *ṭibāq*. This form of contrast is therefore the most prominent characteristic of the poem besides its shortness. Both characteristics are even enforced by the meter. *Wāfir* verses are comparatively short. In this poem, each hemistich ranges from 11 to 13 syllables. The whole poem is no more than 167 syllables, indeed not much for a polythematic qaṣīdah. In addition, the last syllable of each hemistich is always shortened in the *wāfir* trimeter. This lends enormous prominence to the caesura between the first and the second hemistich of each line, and Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah makes use of this caesura in each of the seven lines. In all lines of *ṭibāq*, each of the two hemistichs is dedicated to one part of the contrasting pair. In line 1, the caesura is enforced by the rhyme between hemistich 1 and 2; in line 6, the comparison starts exactly with the beginning of the second hemistich. Whereas poets used to avoid too parallel a structure in consecutive verses, in this poem the construction of utterances of exact hemistich length is a deliberate stylistic feature that evokes the impression of hastiness, which corresponds well to its shortness.

Before trying to trace the history of the micro-qaṣīdah, let us examine a third example. This time, a poem addressed to a member of the civilian elite (meter *ṭawīl*, rhyme *ānī*):[15]

وقال يمدح بعض الأدباء

أَتَعْـــذُلُني إنْ بانَ عـــنّي تَـــصَبُّري ... وقــد بانَ مَــن أهــوى بِــسَفْحِ أبانِ

ولم أنـــسَهُ إذْ قـــال أيـــنَ تُحِلُّـــني ... وقــد حَــلَّ مِــن قلــبي أعــزَّ مــكانِ

لحــا اللهُ قلــبي كُلَّــما طــارَ طــائرٌ ... هَفَــا كجَنــاحِ النَــسْرِ في الخَفَقَــانِ

فيـــا لَجَـــمالٍ لا أزالُ بِقُرْبِـــهِ ... مُعــارَ جَنــاحٍ مُحْــسِنِ الطَــيَرَانِ

[14] On ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf see Enderwitz, Susanne, "al-ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf", in: *EI Three*, 2009-1, pp. 2-4.

[15] Text: Ms. fol. 96a; ed. ʿAmmān no. 421; ed. Cairo pp. 246-247.

له مِـن بَتَـاتِ الفِكْـرِ مـا لم أَزَلْ بِـهِ صَرِيـعَ مَعـانٍ أو صَريـعَ غَـوانِ
فيـا ليـتَ شِـعْري شِـعْرُهُ في ٱنتسابِهِ بَـدِيعُ جَـمالٍ أم بـديعُ زمـانِ
يَخِـفُّ عـلى سَمْـعِ المُحِـبِّ نَـشِيدُهُ ولـو كانَ مِـن أعدائـهِ الـثَقَلانِ

1 How can you blame me for having given up my endurance after the one whom I love left me at Safḥ Abān / the foot of Abān mountain?

2 I'll never forget the moment he asked me: "Where do you place me? (= How much do I mean to you?)"–when he'd already taken up residence in the highest station of my heart.

3 May God scold this palpitating heart of mine that flutters like an eagle's wing each time a bird flies past!

4 Oh what a beauty! / *Oh Ǧamāladdīn*! When I am close to him, I am given wings fit to fly.

5 His ideas, the 'daughters of his thought', are such that I am constantly being knocked down by ideas or by fair maidens / *Muslim ibn al-Walid*.

6 I wish I knew whether his poetry is derived from the prodigy of beauty / *Ǧamāl* or the prodigy of the age / *Badiʿ az-Zamān al-Hamaḏānī*.

7 Hearing it recited – and even if the 'two heavy ones' (man and jinn) were both its enemies – would still sound lightly in the ears of the one who loves.

The heading tells us that the addressee of the poem was an *adīb*. The praise of his *maʿānī* "ideas" (line 5) and his poetry (line 6) and the mentioning of two major littérateurs corroborate this. The first of them is Ṣarīʿ al-Ġawānī in line 5, a sobriquet for the early Abbasid poet Muslim ibn al-Walīd (d. 208/823).[16] The second is the famous pioneer of the *maqāmah* Badīʿ az-Zamān al-Hamaḏānī (358-398/968-1008) alluded to in line 6.[17] The *taḫalluṣ*, this time in line 4, and the expression *badiʿu ǧamālin* in line 6 suggest that the name of the *mamdūḥ* was Ǧamāladdīn. Since there are not too many notable poets known as Ǧamāladdīn, it is probable that the *mamdūḥ* is none other than Ǧamāladdīn Ibn Nubātah. One of his poems, which is in the same meter and rhyme as this seven-liner and shares several formulations with it, corroborates this.[18] Two hemistichs are (almost) identical. In line 3 of Ibn Nubātah's poem, which is a love poem, we learn that the beloved's beauty will overwhelm all enemies *wa-law kāna min aʿdā'ika l-qamarāni* "even if the two 'moons' (i.e. sun and moon) were both your enemies". In Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's poem, these words conclude the poem. The rhyme word is different, but the word *aṯ-ṯaqalānī* appears in Ibn Nubātah's poem in the following line. The second hemistich shared by both poems is the central passage in

16 See *EAL*, p. 557.
17 See *EAL*, pp. 123-134.
18 Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī, *Dīwān*, ed. Muḥammad al-Qalqīlī, Cairo 1312/1905, pp. 517-518.

Ibn Abī Ḥağalah's poem, *muᶜāra ǧanāḥin muḥsini ṭ-ṭayarāni* "given wings fit to fly". In Ibn Nubātah's poem, the wings are given to the palpitating hearts of the lovers (line 8). One may also note the rhyme word *ġawānī*, which occurs in line 6 of Ibn Nubātah's poem, and the phrase *fī aᶜazza makān* "in the highest place", which echoes the word *fī aḏalla makān* "in the most contemptible place" of Ibn Nubātah's line 9.

However, the intertextual relations are even more complex since Ibn Abī Ḥağalah's quotations are quotations of quotations. Their ultimate source is a poem in praise of Kāfūr written by al-Mutanabbī in 348/959.[19] The poem starts with a line about Kāfūr's enemies. We have already met its second hemistich twice: "All tongues will blame your enemy, even if sun and moon were both your enemies". In line 11, we learn that this enemy "did not know that death was above his head, having been given wings fit to fly". What were wings of death in al-Mutanabbī's poem became wings of lovers' hearts in Ibn Nubātah's *ġazal* and finally Ibn Abī Ḥağalah's own wings in the seven-liner. The phrase *fī aḏalla makān* is found in al-Mutanabbī's line 12, but he does not use the rhyme word *ġawānī*.

Ibn Nubātah transformed this heroic and bellicose poem into a love poem using some of its second hemistichs by way of a *tašṭīr*, but also quoting whole lines or only single phrases. In addition, he added two lines entirely of his own. Ibn Abī Ḥağalah in turn transformed Ibn Nubātah's recast into a seven-line qaṣīdah addressed to Ibn Nubātah. Consequently, Ibn Abī Ḥağalah used only those lines of al-Mutanabbī, which Ibn Nubātah had already used himself.

Stylistically, this seven-liner is quite different from the preceding two. Besides its intertextual references and the extensive use of *ǧinās*, upon which we will not comment further, its main stylistic trait is the use of a leitmotif. The leitmotif-technique was well established in Ayyubid and Mamluk poetry. Several studies show that Ibn Nubātah used it constantly and with great virtuosity.[20] It is remarkable that the use of leitmotifs works not only with longer texts, but even with a seven-liner like this one.

The leitmotif in the present poem is *movement*: upwards, downwards and away, sometimes associated with lightness versus heaviness. In the first line, endurance moved away (*bāna*), just as the beloved moved away (*bāna*) to the foot of a mountain, which may stand for "heaviness". In the second line, the question is about where the beloved is placed in relation to the lover (*tuḥillunī – ḥalla*). He is placed on the "highest place" (*aᶜazza makān*). In line three, birds move lightly in the air. The mentioning of birds was a sort of identification tag for Ibn Abī

[19] al-Barqūqī, ᶜAbdarraḥmān, *Šarḥ Dīwān al-Mutanabbī*, 4 vols., Beirut 1407/1986, 4:373-379.

[20] See for example Bauer, Thomas, "»Der Fürst ist tot, es lebe der Fürst!«: Ibn Nubātas Gedicht zur Inthronisation al-Afḍals von Ḥamāh (732/1332)", in: Marzolph, Ulrich (ed.), *Orientalistische Studien zu Sprache und Literatur. Festgabe zum 65. Geburtstag von Werner Diem*, Wiesbaden 2011, pp. 285-315.

Ḥağalah, the "son of the father of a partridge".[21] In line 4, it is "beauty" = the addressee Ibn Nubātah who gives wings to him. In a way, this line seems to continue the *nasīb*, but it is in fact the *taḫalluṣ* mentioning the name of the *mamdūḥ* – a fine, almost imperceptible transition and at the same time an intertextual signal pointing to both Ibn Nubātah and al-Mutanabbī.

On the one hand, "beauty" gives wings to him; on the other hand, the *mamdūḥ*'s ideas "knock him down" in line 5. Now the act of moving downwards counters the movements up and away. Line 6 does not take up the leitmotif but echoes line 5 instead with its parallel construction of the second hemistich. The last line suggests a last turn of the movement by suggesting a movement upwards again. *Ǧamāl*'s poetry is light in the ears of the speaker, who is the lover of *ǧamāl*. When it is recited, even the "two heavy ones" cannot prevent it from flying. It is quite surprising how many ideas seven lines can contain. It is also noticeable that this poem, which is addressed to one of the leading littérateurs of its time, is conspicuously more sophisticated than the two seven-liners addressed to Turkish emirs.

3 The history of the micro-qaṣīdah

We have examined three full-fledged qaṣīdahs comprising only seven lines, and there are about fifty more like this in Ibn Abī Ḥağalah's Dīwān. Normal qaṣīdahs were much longer, often exceeding fifty lines or more, and I wonder whether there were any qaṣīdahs of seven lines at all before the 8th/14th century. In the 14th century and onwards, qaṣīdahs continued to be of substantial length, the only exception being the conspicuous number of seven-liners in the Dīwāns of Ibn Abī Ḥağalah and several of his contemporaries (Ibn Nubātah and al-Qīrāṭī), most of which are fully developed polythematic qaṣīdahs.

In all these Dīwāns we find a number, albeit small, of madīḥ poems comprising six, eight or nine lines which are monothematic and clearly not qaṣīdahs. When there are *muqaṭṭaʿāt* of six and eight lines, it is hardly conceivable that there should not be *muqaṭṭaʿāt* of seven lines, and indeed there are. But their number is very small and the overwhelming majority of seven-liners in Ibn Nubātah's, al-Qīrāṭī's and Ibn Abī Ḥağalah's Dīwāns are qaṣīdahs. The only possible conclusion therefore is that in the 14th century, the qaṣīdah comprising seven lines was cultivated as a distinctive poetic form. Poets consciously composed qaṣīdahs of seven lines, demonstrating their skilful ability to condense a polythematic poem with extreme brevity, and their readers appreciated the very special aesthetics of what I call the micro-qaṣīdah. The most common Arabic designation is *al-qaṣīdah as-subāʿiyyah*.

[21] Homerin, Emil Th., "Ibn Abī Ḥağalah and Sufism", in this volume, p. 13

Readers of Ibn Abī Ḥağalah's poems might assume that the large number of *qaṣā'id subāᶜiyyah* might have to do with the anthology *Sukkardān as-sulṭān*, in which the number "seven" is the central topic. This is not the case, however. It was not the *Sukkardān* that inspired the seven-line qaṣīdah. If there was any influence in the opposite direction, it remains to be studied; all the same, there are several seven-line poems in the work. The origin of the micro-qaṣīdah does not lie with Ibn Abī Ḥağalah. Instead, it was Ğamāladdīn Ibn Nubātah, the most respected and venerated poet and prose author of the 14th century, who played that crucial role.

The master-poet Ibn Nubātah, 38 solar years senior to Ibn Abī Ḥağalah, was his undisputed role model as a poet. Ibn Ḥiğğah al-Ḥamawī reckoned him among *al-ᶜiṣābah allatī mašat taḥta l-ᶜalam an-nubātī wa-taḥallat bi-qaṭr nabātihī* … "the group (of poets) that walked under the Nubatian banner and took their sweetness from his sugar molasses / *the drops of his plant*".[22] Ibn Abī Ḥağalah addressed poems to Ibn Nubātah and he answered. At least four poems in the Dīwān of Ibn Nubātah, among them a seven-line qaṣīdah, are addressed to his younger colleague.[23]

Ibn Nubātah was also the model for Ibn Abī Ḥağalah's micro-qaṣīdah. It may be that Ibn Nubātah did not invent the qaṣīdah of seven lines outright, but he was the person who developed it and popularised it – and inspired Ibn Abī Ḥağalah and others to use this new poetic form.

But how was it that Ibn Nubātah arrived at the idea of the micro-qaṣīdah? The key scene took place in the sultan's palace in Ḥamāh sometime between 720 A.H., when Abū l-Fidā' was granted the title al-Malik al-Mu'ayyyad and his death in 732/1331. On one occasion during these years, Ibn Nubātah composed his first full-fledged *qaṣīdah subāᶜiyyah* in praise of al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad, sultan of Ḥamāh. Its heading in the Dīwān – here one of the earliest manuscripts – says:[24]

وقال يمدَحُهُ وقد قيلَ أنَّ جَدَّه الملك المنصور كان قد ٱقترح على مُدَّاحِهِ أنْ تكونَ القصيدةُ سبعة أبياتٍ

"With the following poem, (Ibn Nubātah) praised (al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad), and it is told that (al-Mu'ayyad's) ancestor al-Malik al-Manṣūr had suggested to his panegyrists that the qaṣīdah should have seven lines …"

We do not know if it was Ibn Nubātah's idea to refer to a tradition current at the court of Ḥamāh to prove himself in a new challenge or if it was Abū l-Fidā's idea (hopefully not as a result of having been bored by listening to too many overlong qaṣīdahs). We do not even know at present if the tradition is true. Thus far I

[22] Ibn Ḥiğğah, *Ḫizānah* 3:366.

[23] Ibn Nubātah, *Dīwān*, pp. 227 (a *qaṣīdah subāᶜiyyah*), 311 (a riddle), 318 (an epigram; on this and the preceding see Ibn Abī Ḥağalah, *Sukkardān*, p. 10-11), 522 (an epigram).

[24] *Dīwān Ibn Nubātah*, Ms. Berlin 7861, fol. 34b.

have not been able to find a single qaṣīdah of seven lines dedicated to al-Malik al-Manṣūr II, who reigned Ḥamāh between 642/1244 and 683/1284 and was Abū l-Fidāʾ's great-grandfather. Setting aside the issue of al-Malik al-Manṣūr's admonition, the story of the seven-line qaṣīdah is older than Ibn Nubātah and al-Malik al-Manṣūr. Its ultimate origin seems to be a short remark in the most famous and influential handbook of poetry *al-ʿUmdah* by Ibn Rašīq al-Qayrawānī (390-456/1000-1063). Here we read:[25]

وقيل إذا بلغت الأبيات سبعة فهي قصيدة ولهذا كان الإيطاء بعد سبعة أبيات غير عَيْب عند أحد من الناس ، ومن الناس من لا يعد القصيدة إلا ما بلغ العشرة أو جاوزها...

"And it is said that if a poem reaches seven lines in length, it is a qaṣīdah and therefore *īṭāʾ* (i.e. the repetition of the rhyme word in identical sense) is not considered a fault. This is the opinion of a single person, whereas others do not reckon poems as qaṣīdahs unless they feature ten lines or more."

Obviously, this is not a definition of the qaṣīdah but a statement about two different things, the length of the qaṣīdah and the number of lines after which a poet may repeat a rhyme-word, and the number seven was brought in by a single person. Ironically, the statement has been taken much more seriously by Western scholars than it ever was by Arabic poets:[26]

"In medieval Arabic sources the term is applied to any poem of a certain length; according to Ibn Rashīq a *qaṣīda* must exceed seven (or ten) verses. In the Western tradition … the application of the term has been limited to the polythematic form, as opposed to the *qiṭʿa*, the monothematic poem."

This is obviously not true, at least not for the Mamluk period. Being polythematic is the core idea of the micro-qaṣīdah in this time. As Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's six line qaṣīdahs, which will be examined in the next section, show, being polythematic was more important for being a qaṣīdah than the minimum of seven lines. There is another poem by Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah, probably addressed to al-Qīrāṭī, which comprises nine lines but is clearly not a qaṣīdah.[27] All this corroborates the fact that Arabic poets of the middle period understood the qaṣīdah much the same as modern Arabists do.

Ibn Rašīq's report about one opinion according to which seven lines make a qaṣīdah had no immediate consequences for Arabic poets. It was only at the court of Ḥamāh where the idea was revisited two hundred years later. Even then it was only a marginal episode at first. Ibn Nubātah composed no more than two micro-qaṣidahs for al-Malik al-Muʾayyad, and that was all. There are no other

[25] Ibn Rašīq al-Qayrawānī, *al-ʿUmdah fī ṣināʿat aš-šiʿr wa-naqdihi*, ed. Nabawī ʿAbdalwāḥid Šaʿlān, 2 vols., Cairo 1420/2000, 1:302. On Ibn Rašīq see *EAL*, p. 363.

[26] *EAL*, p. 630.

[27] *Dīwān Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah*, ms. fol. 98b-99a, ed. ʿAmmān no. 408, ed. Cairo p. 254 (meter *ḫafīf*, rhyme *ānī*).

seven-liners in the oldest recension of Ibn Nubātah's Dīwān. A number of years passed until Ibn Nubātah took up the idea again, this time in a completely different dimension. During his last years in Damascus and the final period of his life in Cairo, Ibn Nubātah composed one seven-liner after the other. Micro-qaṣīdahs addressed to ʿAlāʾaddīn ibn Faḍlallāh, Sultan Ḥasan and others constitute a major part of his poetic output during these years. Finally, he collected his micro-qaṣīdahs in a special volume entitled *as-Sabʿah as-sayyārah* "the seven moving stars" = "the seven lines that circle widely". Like most works by Ibn Nubātah, it was a work in progress, and Ibn Nubātah added poems until the end.

Why has this story gone unnoticed so long? The reason for it lies in the fate of Ibn Nubātah's *as-Sabʿah as-sayyārah* and his Dīwān. So far, no manuscript of *as-Sabʿah as-sayyārah* has surfaced. The reason for this loss may have been the fact that al-Baštakī included all poems from *as-Sabʿah as-sayyārah* in his second recension of the Dīwān Ibn Nubātah (Baštakī β).[28] In Baštakī β we find about 170 *qaṣāʾid subāʿiyyah* that most probably formed part of *as-Sabʿah as-sayyārah*. In the manuscripts, sequences of micro-qaṣīdahs are introduced by headings such as *wa-qāla fī s-subāʿiyyāt* or *wa-qāla fī s-Sabʿah as-sayyārah* or just *wa-qāla 7* (the number "seven" written with a digit). After this headline, all *subāʿiyyāt* that pertain to the particular rhyme letter follow. So far, so good.

When in 1905 al-Qalqīlī produced his unsatisfactory edition of the *Dīwān Ibn Nubātah*, he had the whimsical ideal to separate all short poems that do not bear a heading of their own from all other poems and assemble them in a separate section at the end of each chapter. He gives these sections the headline *wa-min muqaṭṭaʿātihī* and arranges the poems according to their length. What is the consequence for the seven-liners? As we saw, in the manuscripts the first seven-liner bears the heading *min as-sabʿah as-sayyārah* and is followed by all the *subāʿiyyāt* with the same rhyme consonant. Al-Qalqīlī chose to leave the first *subāʿiyyah* in its proper place, since it came with a heading, but to transfer all the others to the final section. Obviously, al-Qalqīlī had not understood that the headline *min as-sabʿah as-sayyārah* (the meaning of which he obviously did not grasp) refers not only to the first seven-liner, but to the following seven-liners as well. Instead, they turn up in a section which, to top it off, is titled a section of *muqaṭṭaʿāt* thus obscuring Ibn Nubātah's central motivation: to compose qaṣīdahs, not *muqaṭṭaʿāt*. In this way, al-Qalqīlī's edition of Ibn Nubātah's Dīwān obscured the history of the *qaṣīdah subāʿiyyah*. Consequently, the editors of the Dīwān of Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah, though realizing the high number of 53 seven-liners, could not contextualize it.

[28] On al-Baštakī (748-830/1347-1427) and his different versions of Ibn Nubātah's Dīwān and on al-Qalqīlī's 1905 edition see Bauer, Thomas, "Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī (686-768/1287-1366): Life and Works. Part 2: The Dīwān of Ibn Nubātah", in: *Mamlūk Studies Review* 12.2 (2008), pp. 25-69.

To sum up: To answer a fancy of the sultan of Ḥamāh, Ibn Nubātah composed two extremely short qaṣīdahs of seven lines. Years later, he took up the idea again and started to compose a large number of micro-qaṣīdahs. Many of them served to communicate with fellow udabāʾ who answered with *qaṣāʾid subāʿiyyah* of their own. In this way, micro-qaṣīdahs became a trend and a number of poets found pleasure in composing them. So far, all of them seem to belong to the group of "those who walked under the Nubātian banner", but we need further research to clarify the fate of the micro-qaṣīdah in later generations. Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah was one of the most eager followers of Ibn Nubātah. This is also reflected in the number of his *qaṣāʾid subāʿiyyāt*, which he directed to people from quite different social groups. Among those he addressed were the caliph, the sultan, members of the military elite, scholars, other littérateurs and a physician. Obviously, micro-qaṣīdahs found a broad public.

The charm of the micro-qaṣīdah lies in its concision. The poet assembles common, often conventional qaṣīdah themes and motifs in a minimal number of lines and takes the listener from one idea to the next in the shortest possible time. What the poet has to prove in the micro-qaṣīdah is the high art of transition, transitions from idea to idea without any opportunity to elaborate on a given one, and, of course, the most important transition of all is the *taḫalluṣ* between *nasīb* and *madīḥ*. In a *qaṣīdah subāʿiyyah*, the *taḫallūṣ* draws much more attention than in a longer qaṣīdah. It becomes the very core of the poem and its focus. After all, the *taḫalluṣ*-line comprises 14 percent of the whole. In Ibn Nubātah's micro-qaṣīdahs, the *taḫalluṣ* may even extend over two lines. Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah did not emulate him in this respect. Instead, he placed his *taḫalluṣāt* comparatively late in the qaṣīdah. Whereas Ibn Nubātah preferred *taḫalluṣāt* in line 3 or stretching from line 3 to 4 (or even from line 1 to 2), more than 40% of Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's come in line 4. Two of them are even postponed to line 5. One can imagine how the *mamdūḥ* must have become rather nervous when the composer of a seven-line poem reached line 5 without yet mentioning him.[29]

4 Short and even shorter: Two qaṣīdahs in six lines

With more than 220 *qaṣāʾid subāʿiyyāt*, Ibn Nubātah and Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah alone amply demonstrate that it is very well possible to compose full-fledged, well-constructed, interesting and significant qaṣīdahs in the limited space of only seven lines. Whereas it is thus sufficiently clear that seven lines are enough for a qaṣīdah, the question remains if seven lines are even necessary for a qaṣīdah. Can we imagine a qaṣīdah of only six lines or fewer? Only rarely, however, did poets try this experiment. A seven-liner is short enough to provide the effect of unexpected brev-

[29] *Dīwān Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah*, ms. fol. 7a-b, ed. ʿAmmān no. 26, ed. Cairo pp. 30-31 (meter *wāfir*, rhyme *2bā*); ms. fol. 106a-b, ed. ʿAmmān no. 434, ed. Cairo p. 272 (meter *wāfir*, rhyme *āwi*).

ity. A qaṣīdah of six or even five lines would only marginally add to this effect. Instead, it would lack space for the complexity expected in a qaṣīdah.

This does not mean that there are no qaṣīdahs of six lines. The following two poems by Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah are polythematic qaṣīdahs of six lines, and nothing suggests that a line is missing. The first is again a congratulatory poem. As in the poem on Ṭaybuġā, the occasion is the *mamdūḥ*'s safe return from pilgrimage. This *mamdūḥ* belongs to a rather untypical category of people receiving panegyrics from littérateurs: he was a physician and "head of medicine", probably head of the physicians in Cairo (meter *wāfir*, rhyme *āṣū*).[30]

وقال يهنّئ القاضي علاء الدين الصغير رئيس الطبّ لمّا قدم صحبة الركاب السلطاني

أمِـنْ خـدِّ الحبيـبِ لنـا خَـلاصُ ... وفي دينـارِهِ الذَهَـبُ الخِـلاصُ

كَلِفـتُ بـه خفيـفَ العطـفِ لكـنْ ... رَقيـبي في محَبَّتِـه رَصـاصُ

حَبِيـبٌ حَـلَّ في بَـلَدٍ إليهـا ... تُـشَدُّ لِـرَيِّسِ الطِـبِّ القِـلاصُ

له في الطـبِّ والتَـشريحِ شرحٌ ... وفي قَـصِّ القُـروحِ له قِـصاصُ

أتَى مِـصراً فـزالَ الـسُقْمُ عنهـا ... وزُيِّنَـتِ الـشوارعُ والعِـراصُ

فكيـفَ أخـافُ ضَـعْفَ الحـالِ فيهـا ... ولي بِجَنَابِـهِ العـالي ٱختـصاصُ

1 How can we break away from the beloved so long as the dinar of his cheek is pure gold?

2 I fell in love with him, his body bends agilely, but the one overlooking my love for him is (as dense) as lead.

3 He is a beloved who repaired to a country toward which those who hope to meet the head of medicine saddle their camels.

4 He has many comments on issues of medicine and anatomy, and he takes vengeance on ulcers by cutting them out.

5 When he came to Egypt, illness abandoned it. The streets were adorned and the plazas.

6 Why then should I fear weakness there when I hold a distinguished position at his exalted side?

As in the first two sample poems, Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah uses a rare rhyme consonant. This time, the choice was not made in response to the *mamdūḥ*'s name. Instead, *ṣād* is sort of a leitmotif in itself. In this short poem, the consonant *ṣād* occurs 12 times, which yields an average of two uses per line. The metals "gold" and "lead"

30 Text: Ms. fol. 53b; ed. ʿAmmān no. 190; ed. Cairo p. 145. In line 4, the manuscript and both editions read الجروح. I would like to read القروح instead, which makes better sense and adds a third *qāf* to this very melodious line.

in the first two lines might already be an allusion to the scientific profession of the physician. The *taḫalluṣ* comes in line 3, in which the *mamdūḥ* is mentioned as *rayyis aṭ-ṭibb* (note the unclassical form) and not by name. Three lines remain for the *madīḥ*.

In Abbasid times, generosity and military prowess were expected to be the main subjects of a panegyric qaṣīdah. Since scholars could hardly be as generous as rulers or military leaders and because they are rather lacking in martial achievements worthy of praise, even poets like al-Mutanabbī found it challenging to praise one of their rank. By the Ayyubid and Mamluk period, poets had learned how to praise scholars and many if not most panegyrics were addressed to them. A physician was still an unusual object for poetic praise, however. Perhaps this accounts for the shortness of the poem. Another reason could be the overall lightness and easiness of the poem, which makes it a qaṣīdah in an epigrammatic mood, for which six lines may have been sufficient.

In at least one case, Ibn Abī Ḥağalah dedicated a *qaṣīdah sudāsiyyah*, as one might call it along the lines of *qaṣīdah subāᶜiyyah* (though I have never come across such a designation in the sources) to a scholar, the *qāḍī l-ᶜaskar* "judge of the army" Sirāğaddīn al-Hindī. The poem, which is again a congratulatory poem, demonstrates how alike epigram and qaṣīdah could be. The poem is also treated in Emil Homerin's contribution to this volume, in which he gives a detailed background of the person praised, the circumstances of the poem and a more beautiful translation than mine.[31] Here I shall limit myself to a few literary aspects of the qaṣīdah (meter *wāfir*, rhyme *āğī*):[32]

قال يهنّئ قاضي العسكر الحنفي سراج الدين [عُمَر بن إسحاق الهندي]

إذا مـــا زادَ هَمّـــي وٱنزِعـــاجي ... جَلَـــوتُ الـــراحَ في كأسِ الزُجَـــاجِ

مُـدامٌ قـد غَـدَتْ مـن نار قلـبي ... عـلى الثُلـثِ المُبَـاحِ لدَى المـزاجِ

فَحَيَّـا اللهُ مَـن أمسَى نَـديمي ... عليهـا حـينَ تُـشرِقُ في الدَياجي

وحَيَّـا بَـلْدَةً فيهـا مُحَيَّـا ... سراجِ الديـن يلمَـعُ كالـسراج

إمـامٌ في العلـوم وفي القـضايا ... فقـوَّمَ أمرهـا بعـد ٱعوجـاج

فباتـت مـصرُ في أمْـنٍ وعَـدْلٍ ... وباتَ الـشامُ معتـدلَ المـزاجِ

31 See Homerin, Emil Th., "Ibn Abī Ḥağalah and Sufism", in this volume, p. 19ff.

32 Text: Ms. fol. 15a; ed. ᶜAmmān no. 88; ed. Cairo p. 52. In the beginning of line 4, ed. Cairo reads وحَيِّي بلدةً فيها محِبّا and corrects the last word to محبٌّ. The reading مُحيّا, however, is certain and makes excellent sense. For the sake of clearness, I follow ed. ᶜAmmān and write the first words of lines 3 and 4 as وحيّا / فحيّا instead of وحيّى / فحيّي as in the manuscript.

1 When my sorrows and troubles grow, I let the wine shine in the goblet of glass.

2 An old wine that the fire of my heart boiled down to the permitted third when it was mixed.

3 May God preserve him who becomes my drinking companion when the wine sparkles in the dark,

4 And may he preserve a country in which the face of Sirāǧaddīn gleams like a lamp!

5 An imam in scholarship and in legal judgments: He straightens the matters when they were crooked.

6 Egypt can thus live in security and justice, and Syria enjoys a well-tempered condition ("mixture").

The parameters of the poem are determined by the name of the *mamdūḥ* and his profession as judge (*qāḍī l-ʿaskar* "judge of the army"). The name Sirāǧaddīn provides for the rhyme in *āǧī* and the leitmotif "lamp, light, sparkling, gleaming". The profession as judge, who has to act with *ʿadl* "fairness", adds a second leitmotif, the "right mixture".

As in many poems from the period, the slot of the *nasīb* is filled by a wine-song, which gives ample occasion to develop the "right mixture" motif as well as the "light" motif. Line 1 starts with the drinker's complaint about his sorrows and troubles, against which he seeks help in the wine, which is "unveiled, made clear" in a glass, the first occurrence of the "light" motif.

The second line brings together both leitmotifs, the *mizāǧ* "mixture" and the "fire of the heart", which causes the wine to boil until two-thirds of its original quantity are evaporated. Such a wine is called *ṭilāʾ* or *muṭallaṭ* and considered lawful according to most legal scholars.[33] The right mixture therefore consists of water and legally permitted wine. Line 3 welcomes a drinking companion who may or may not be the judge himself. The wine again provides the motif "light". Line 4, a relative late *taḫalluṣ* in a six-liner, is linked to line 3. It starts with the same verb and bids a welcome (*ḥayyā*) to the face (*muḥayyā*) of the *mamdūḥ* Sirāǧaddīn. Not only does his name mean "lamp of religion", his face also gleams lamp-like (*sirāǧ*). Now it is no longer the wine but the judge who provides the "light". In line 5 he is praised for making crooked things straight–an easily recognizable variant of the "right mixture" motif, which is again transferred from the wine to the judge. In the last line, security and justice replace the sorrows and troubles with which the poem began. The poem ends with an invocation of the "right mixture". The shortness of the poem allows the poet to intertwine two leitmotifs as tightly as one can imagine.

[33] See Wensinck, A.J., "Khamr – 1. Juridical Aspects" in: *EI*^{2} 4:994-997, esp. 995b and 996b.

5 The micro-qaṣīdah as a means of communication

Its brevity renders the *qaṣīdah subāʿiyyah* especially suitable as a means of communication. It is longer than an epigram, which can only convey a single idea and has to be pointed; it is shorter and more informal than a full-length qaṣīdah. Hence, the micro-qaṣīdah functions like a greeting card today. Typically, a considerable number of micro-qaṣīdahs are *tahāniʾ* "congratualtions". Often poets answered a micro-qaṣīdah with another one, keeping the same rhyme and meter. Unfortunately, poets used to include only their part of the conversation in their Dīwāns and to skip the text of their dialogue partner. Sometimes, however, we are able to reconstruct a poetic exchange, as in the following case.

Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's sparring partner is Burhānaddīn al-Qīrāṭī, probably the most important of those poets who "walked under the Nubatian banner".[34] The conversation was initiated by al-Qīrāṭī, who included the poem in his Dīwān (but not Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's answer). Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah instead included his poem in his own Dīwān, again without al-Qīrāṭī's poem, but he provides both texts in his chapter on al-Qīrāṭī in his *Maġnāṭīs ad-durr an-nafīs*,[35] and this enables us to detect a veritable surprise.

This is al-Qīrāṭī's poem in the version of the *Maġnāṭīs* (meter *basīṭ*, rhyme *āʾū*):[36]

وكتب إلى الأديب شهاب الدين بن أبي حجلة

يا ناعِسَ الطَّرْفِ ما لِلعَين إغْفاءُ ... قَلا لِأُذْنِكَ إنْ نادَيْتُ إصْغاءُ

بِنُونَ أُقْسِمُ ما في واوِ صُدْغِكَ لي ... كالواوِ عَينٌ ولا طاءٌ ولا فاءُ

نَعَمْ ولا في شهاب الدِين حين أضا ... ءَ سَناه قافٌ ولا دالٌ ولا حاءُ

أفدِيه مِن حجليٍّ طائرٍ لمداً ... سير اليمامِيّ فيه عنه إبطاءُ

لا غَرْوَ إنْ رَكِبَ الشهبا على نفرٍ ... في النظم قد دَهَمَتهُمْ منه دهماءُ

يا فاضل العصر إنّ المغرب ٱبتهجت ... مذ لاحَ من صُبْحِكَ الوضّاح لألآءُ

[...] من نظمك النامي فأحرف ما ... نظمته عنده الوأواء فأفاءُ

[34] On al-Qīrāṭī and his relation to Ibn Nubātah see Bauer, Thomas, "»Extremely Beautiful and Extremely Long«: Al-Qīrāṭī's Exuberant Letter from the Year 761/1360", in: Lowry, Joseph E. & Shawkat M. Toorawa, *Arabic Humanities, Islamic Thought: Essays in Honor of Everett K. Rowson*, Leiden 2017, pp. 338-360.

[35] On *Maġnāṭīs ad-durr* see the contribution by Nefeli Papoutsakis in this volume.

[36] Text: Ms. Riyāḍ p. 16, ms. Yale fol. 10b. In line 5, ms. Yale reads الشهاب instead of الشهبا. At the beginning of the last line, three syllables are missing in both manuscripts.

1 O you of the languid glance: You don't allow the eye to slumber, nor does your ear listen when I call.

2 I swear by (sūrat) Nūn: In the *wāw* of your sidelocks there is neither *ʿayn* nor *ṭāʾ* nor *fāʾ* like this *wāw* for me! (= *ʿaṭf* "inclination").

3 Yes, and when Šihābaddīn's splendor sheds light, there is neither *qāf* nor *dāl* nor *ḥāʾ* in him. (= *qadḥ* "blemish").

4 I pay homage to him as a man who flies like a partridge such that the flight of a dove seems slow in comparison.

5 Small wonder then that when he mounts the white horse to vie with other people in poetry, disaster / *a black horse* overwhelms them.

6 O solitaire of the epoch: the West is delighted that light has dawned from your bright morning.

7 […] of your flourishing poetry / *an-Nāmī*, so that compared to your arranging letters in poetry, al-Waʾwāʾ suffers a speech defect.

This poem is obviously a *qaṣīdaḥ subāʿiyyaḥ* that starts with a *nasīb* in which the poet complains about being neglected by his beloved. After a rather unspectacular *taḫalluṣ* in line 3, the remaining lines are in praise of the addressee with special reference to his poetry. Besides a number of words of the pattern *faʿlāʾ*, the stylistic feature that sticks out are the many words that are also the names of letters of the alphabet. The word *ʿayn* in line one means "eye", but it is also the name of a letter, although the reader may not be aware of this double meaning yet. Only after learning the importance of letter names, might he go back and catch the reference to a letter-name already in line 1. In line 2, the reference is to surah 68 of the Quran, known by the name of the letter *nūn*. The *wāw* in the same line is a common object of comparison to the sidelock. The letter-names that follow together spell the words *ʿaṭf* and *qadḥ* (line 3). The word *aḥruf* "letters" occurs in the last line together with the name of the poet al-Waʾwāʾ, which sounds like the name of a letter, but is not. At first, the reader might doubt whether this play on letter-names is a good idea. It is too easy to solve to count as a riddle. And it seems a bit too silly to come across as a serious communication. Taken as an independent poem in praise of a poet, it seems not entirely convincing.

However, the poem is not an autonomous praise poem. Rather it conveys a barely concealed message to its addressee. A careful reading of this poem and the reply to it leaves no doubt that the poem was written to criticise Ibn Abī Ḥağalah for not writing to him and not answering his letters. To reprimand people for not communicating or to excuse one's self for not having responded in time was always a major subject of human communication, and so it remains in the present day. No one has studied the many Arabic letters and poems on this subject so far, but there are many, and this poem is one.

Read as reprimand in the guise of praise, most of the lines assume a second meaning. In line 1, the notion of the beloved whose glance is full of sleep whereas

the lover is sleepless, can easily be transferred to the relation between al-Qīrāṭī, the sleepless lover, and Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah, the drowsy friend who does not react. The second hemistich expresses in clear words the writer's concern: "Your ear does not listen when I call". What is missing is your "inclination", as line 2 says. This "inclination" is spelled letter-by-letter demonstrating the way the addressee could show his inclination: Letters! Do write me letters! I am waiting for your *ʿayn*, your *ṭāʾ*, your *fāʾ* and all the other letters of the alphabet. This is obviously what is behind the obsession with letter names in this poem.

After this reprimand, the poet continues with a conciliatory line 3: "Yes" (meaning: "Yes, so is the state of affairs, but …"), if Šihābaddīn would answer finally, there would be no *qadḥ* "blemish". In a normal *madīḥ* poem, this line would be odd. No one would reasonably assume that a *mamdūḥ* who "lets his splendour shine" would deserve rebuke. As an offer to pardon him for his negligence, it makes perfect sense.

Formally, the poem consists of *nasīb*, *taḫalluṣ* and *madīḥ*. As regards content, all three parts form a whole and treat a single subject, the addressee's neglect, as line three makes sufficiently clear. Nevertheless, al-Qīrāṭī changes his line of argument in line 4. In this line, al-Qīrāṭī picks up Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's self-identification with the partridge. As such, he can fly more quickly than a dove, the bird with which al-Qīraṭī identifies. In line 5, Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah is again portrayed as running away from other poets (such as al-Qīrāṭī), much to their detriment. This is a perfect case of rebuke in the guise of praise (*aḍ-ḍamm fi maʿraḍ al-madḥ*), as a theorist of rhetoric would say. On the one hand, the fellow poet is praised for outstripping his fellows. At the same time, he is rebuked for not caring about them and their friendship to him. The last two lines are an appeal to answer this poem with his poetry. Line 5 contains an allusion to Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's western origin. Line 7 contains the name of two poets, the first in the form of a *tawriyah*. The word *nāmin* "flourishing" is also the name of the Syrian poet an-Nāmī (399/1008)[37]. His contemporary al-Waʾwāʾ ad-Dimašqī (4th/10th century)[38] was chosen for the sound-effect of his name rather than his poetry.

Burhānaddīn al-Qīrāṭī himself included the poem in his own Dīwān entitled *Maṭlaʿ an-nayyirayn*. This version, however, is surprisingly different from the version in *Maġnāṭīs ad-durr*. Here is the full text of the *Maṭlaʿ an-nayyirayn* version (meter *basīṭ*, rhyme *āʾū*):[39]

يا ناعِسَ الطَّرْفِ ما لِلعَين إغْفاءُ فَهَلْ لِأُذْنِكَ إنْ نادَيْتُ إصْغاءُ

بِصادَ أقْسِمُ ما في واوِ صُدْغِكَ لي كالواوِ عَينٌ ولا طاءٌ ولا فاءُ

37 See *EAL*, p. 577.

38 See *EAL*, p. 808.

39 Text: *Maṭlaʿ an-nayyirayn*, ms. Istanbul Fatiḥ 3861 fol. 102a, ms. British Museum OR. 2913 fol. 200a.

نَعَمْ وما في شهاب الدِين منذ بَدَا ... سناه قافٌ ولا دالٌ ولا حاءُ

أفدِيه مِن حجليٍّ طائرٍ لمدىً ... ما أعْنَقَتْ فيه قبلَ اليَوْمِ عَنْقاءُ

سَبَّاقُ غاياتِ آدابٍ مَطالِعُهُ ... لشُهْبِها في مَجَرِّ الأُفْقِ إجراءُ

إنْ ذكّر الوَصْفَ تَشْبِيبًا وأنَّثَهُ ... سَبَا الوَرَى حَسَنٌ منه وحَسْناءُ

أعْزالُهُ في كِلا النَوْعَينِ ما بَرِحَتْ ... لها محبّانِ لُوطيٌّ وزَنّاءُ

1 O you of the languid glance: You don't allow the eye to slumber, but will your ear listen when I call?

2 I swear by (sūrat) Ṣād: In the *wāw* of your sidelocks, there is neither *ʿayn* nor *ṭāʾ* nor *fāʾ* that is like this *wāw* for me! (= *ʿatf* "inclination").

3 Yes, and since Šihābaddīn's splendor has appeared, there is neither *qāf* nor *dāl* nor *ḥāʾ* in him (= *qadḥ* "blemish").

4 I pay homage to him as a man who flies like a partridge to a point that not even a griffon has hastened to before.

5 He is the winner in the race to reach the goals of literature; the white horses / *shooting stars* of the initial parts (of his poems) keep running at the trail of the horizon.

6 Whenever he portrays a male or female in his amorous poetry, the whole world is captivated by a beautiful youth or a beautiful girl.

7 His love poems are of both natures and so will never be without "two kinds of lovers: the sodomite and the fornicator".

The variants in the first three lines are inconspicuous. In line 1 we have *fa-hal* instead of *fa-lā* and in line 3 *munḏu badā sanāhu* instead of the rather synonymous *ḥīna aḍā sanāhu*. In line 2, the surah whose name is also the name of a letter is *Ṣād* (surah 38) instead of *Nūn*. I cannot detect any reason for this change.

The differences between both versions increase considerably in line 4, where the entire second hemistich changes. Now it is not the peaceful dove that cannot keep up with the partridge, it is the legendary griffon who is left behind. Other than in case of the dove, al-Qīrāṭī certainly did not identify with the griffon. The hyperbole is much stronger and the reproach seems to be more violent. The addressee is not content to compete with normal birds, but vies with supernatural creatures instead. How could he care about a normal man like him?

Both versions of line 5 have nothing more in common than the addressee's taking part in a race for the best literature, in which a white horse (*ašhab*, alluding to the addressee's name Šihābaddīn) takes part. Just as the griffon is a supernatural creature, the race takes place in the celestial spheres in the *Maṭlaʿ an-nayyirayn* version, whereas the competition takes place down on earth in the *Maġnāṭīs* version.

The last two lines differ completely in both versions. The only thing they have in common is references to poets. In the last line of the *Maġnāṭīs* version, two poets of average prominence are mentioned. In the last line of the *Maṭlaʿ an-nayyirayn* instead, no poet is mentioned by name, but one of the most prominent poets in the history of Arabic literature is quoted, Abū Nuwās. The last hemistich of the poem is a verbatim quote from what was probably Abū Nuwās's most famous poem. It is his *ḫamriyyah* no. 1, which starts with Abū Nuwās's most often quoted verse: *daʿ ʿanka lawmī fa-inna l-lawma iġrāʾū*.[40]

The third line of the poem, hardly less famous than the first line, describes a *ġulāmiyyah* who pours the wine. She is a girl "with a pussy" dressed as a boy "with a penis" and is desired by both "the sodomite and the fornicator".[41] Quoting this frivolous verse is obviously harsher than the version of the *Maġnāṭīs*. It seems as if al-Qīrāṭī wanted to say in lines 4 and 5 that, on the one hand, his friend moved into other spheres and does not deal any longer with his true friends and colleagues. Line 6 and 7 tell us that, on the other hand, he still addresses even people with dubious reputation. In this "rebuke in the guise of praise", the praise seems rather dubious and the rebuke is all too clear.

Which of the two version is the original one? Several interpretations are possible but all have to take the following observations into account:

(1) The *Maṭlaʿ an-nayyirayn* version is more spiteful than the *Maġnāṭīs* version. When Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah wrote his *Maġnāṭīs*, both poets must have been reconciled again. Not only did Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah dedicate a large entry in his *Maġnāṭīs* to al-Qīrāṭī, he also gave space to this exchange of micro-qaṣīdahs. It is hardly conceivable that al-Qīrāṭī produced a nastier version of his qaṣīdah after their reconciliation.

(2) The main clue is the role of Abū Nuwās. In strophic poems, in almost all epigrams and in many other poems, the key line of the poem is the last one. The rest of the poem is often modelled on it. In the *Maṭlaʿ an-nayyirayn* version, Abū Nuwās's poem is the starting point. The last line, or rather the last hemistich with its Abū Nuwās quotation, is a key sentence of the poem. It also provides for rhyme and meter of the poem. A closer look turns up another quotation from the same poem in the first hemistich. The phrase *li-l-ʿayni iġfāʾū* occurs (in the form *bi-l-ʿayni iġfāʾū*) at the end of line 5 of Abū Nuwās's *ḫamriyyah*.[42] Inconspicuous as it is, only those who notice the Abū Nuwās quotation in the last line may have realized this. Most readers of the *Maġnāṭīs* version, if they noticed the

[40] Ewald Wagner lists 31 complete translations of the poem and cites a large number of translations of its first and its third line, see his *Abū Nuwās in Übersetzung. Eine Stellensammlung zu Abū Nuwās-Übersetzungen vornehmlich in europäische Sprachen*, Wiesbaden 2012, pp. 14, 62-64, 207-215.

[41] The text of the poem is given in *Der Dīwān des Abū Nuwās. Teil III*, ed. Ewald Wagner, Wiesbaden, Stuttgart 1988, pp. 2-4.

[42] *Dīwān des Abū Nuwās III*, p. 3.

parallel at all, would have likely considered it a coincidence. It can almost be ruled out that al-Qīrāṭī would transform a poem starting with an imperceptible Abū Nuwās-quotation and mentioning the poets an-Nāmī and al-Waʾwāʾ into one that concludes with a famous hemistich by Abū Nuwās. In fact, only a transformation in the other direction is conceivable.

(3) Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's reply, which we will examine next, is ambivalent. On the one hand, there could be a reference to the "dove" of the *Maġnāṭīs* version of al-Qīrāṭī's poem. On the other hand, a woman called *Asmāʾ* provides the rhyme word at the end of the first line. Examined against the backdrop of the *Maġnāṭīs* version of al-Qīrāṭī's poem, there is no subtext to the name. The *Maṭlaʿ an-nayyirayn* version, however, gives an interesting clue, again through the poem by Abū Nuwās. In line 9 – a sort of an "anti-*nasīb*"– Abū Nuwās says that the tavern in which he and his companions drink wine served by the *ġulāmiyyah* is the place over which he weeps when he has to leave it. Instead, he does not weep over the places that the old Arab poets bemoaned in the *nasīb*-sections of their poems, the places *tuḥillu bihā Hindun wa-Asmāʾū* "where Hind and Asmāʾ alight".[43] The deeper meaning of the phrase could have been: I am not like the *ġulāmiyyah* but rather like Asmāʾ, her counterpart. This understanding presupposes the reader's understanding of the Abū Nuwās connection, which is hardly possible without knowing the last hemistich of the *Maṭlaʿ an-nayyirayn* version of al-Qīrāṭī's poem.

To reconcile these points, I would suggest the following sequence of events:

1. Burhānaddīn al-Qīrāṭī was upset with the behavior of his friend Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah, who maintained close contact with many people who were not very involved in literature, but he did not respond when his colleague got in touch with him. As a result, he composed a *qaṣīdah subāʿiyyah* (a form much more popular with Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah than with al-Qīrāṭī himself), which on the surface maintained decorum and masqueraded as a poem praising the addressee, but which contained a bitter undertone.
2. Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah responded with a qaṣīdah in the same form, which may have been an earlier version of the qaṣīdah we have now. The reference to Asmāʾ must have already been there.
3. Both poets reconciled; al-Qīrāṭī included his own poem in his Dīwān *Maṭlaʿ an-nayyirayn*.
4. Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah devised his large anthology *Muǧtabā l-udabā* and, in order to get more contributions, wrote his *Maġnāṭīs ad-durr an-nafīs*, a sampler of already existing entries plus a "call for papers". One of the entries already present was the one on al-Qīrāṭī. As a document of his relationship with him, he wanted to include their exchange of *subāʿiyyah*s, but found al-Qīrāṭī's text too

[43] *Dīwān des Abū Nuwās III*, p. 3.

harsh. Therefore, he asked al-Qīrāṭī to produce a milder version. Another possibility is that al-Qīrāṭī, asked to proofread the entry about him, decided to produce the second version of the poem. Whatever the case may have been, he crossed out the frivolous Abū Nuwās quotation, replaced Abū Nuwās by two lesser known poets, and moved the racecourse down to earth.

5. Ibn Abī Ḥağalah adapted his own poem to this new version and included both poems in their revised form in his *Maġnāṭīs ad-durr*.

Finally, let us look at Ibn Abī Ḥağalah's response to al-Qīrāṭī's poem. The text in the *Maġnāṭīs ad-durr* is identical to the text in the Dīwān. The poem, in which he admits his guilt, confirms our interpretation of al-Qīrāṭī's *qaṣīdah subāᶜiyyah* as a sophisticated poem, combining reprimand, praise and an offer of reconciliation. Here is Ibn Abī Ḥağalah's response (meter *basīṭ*, rhyme *ā'ū*):[44]

غَنَّتْ على العُودِ في الأوراقِ ورقاءُ ... ووافقت جنكها في الفِعلِ أسماءُ

فكيفَ لا يبعثُ التشبيبُ مَيْتَ هوىً ... أمسَى لهُ في نَسِيمِ الحيّ أهواءُ

وكيفَ تَخْفَى لإبراهيمَ نارُ قِرىً ... بها الثُريَّا لها في الشُهبِ إثراءُ

يجودُ حتّى بنَظمٍ كُلُّهُ دُرَرٌ ... عندَ الدَراري له كالبدر لألاءُ

بقافَ أُقسمُ عينُ الشمسِ ليسَ لها ... لولاه شينٌ ولا راءٌ ولا فاءُ

إنْ دَكَّني نظمُهُ العالي فلا عجبٌ ... إذا خَفيتُ فكمْ للدكِّ إخفاءُ

ما طابَ لي بعدَ خيرِ الرُسلِ في أحدٍ ... سواهُ ميمٌ ولا دالٌ ولا حاءُ

1 A dove sang on the bough amidst the leaves and Asmā' harmonized with its harp in what she did.

2 How could amorous poetry fail to awake a victim of love when passions reach him via breezes wafting from (the beloved's) tribe?

3 And how could Ibrāhīm's fire of hospitality be hidden, where the Pleiades shine to enrich (the brightness of) shooting stars?

4 He grants generously, even poetry all of which is pearls that shine like the full moon when the bright stars glisten.

5 I swear by (sūrat) Qāf: If it were not for him, even the disc of the sun / *the quarter ᶜAyn Šams* would lack *šīn* and *rā'* and *fā'* (= *šaraf* "glory").

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44 Text: *Dīwān Ibn Abī Ḥağalah*, Ms. fol. 3a; ed. ᶜAmmān no. 2; ed. Cairo pp. 18-19; *Maġnāṭīs ad-durr*, Ms. Riyāḍ p. 16-17, ms. Yale fol. 10b-11a. – Variant readings: Line 1: Ms., ed. Cairo, ms. Riyāḍ, ms. Yale: جنكها, ed. ᶜAmmān: حبكها. – Line 3: Ms., ed. ᶜAmmān, ed. Cairo: تَخفى, ms. Riyāḍ, ms. Yale: يخفى. – Line 4: Ms., ed. ᶜAmmān, ms. Riyāḍ, ms. Yale: حتى, ed. Cairo: حبّي. – Ms., ed. ᶜAmmān, ed. Cairo: كالدرّ, ms. Riyāḍ, ms. Yale: كالبدر. – Line 6: Ms., ed. ᶜAmmān, ms. Riyāḍ, ms. Yale: دكني, ed. Cairo: دلّني. – Ms., ed. ᶜAmmān, ms. Riyāḍ, ms. Yale: للدكّ, ed. Cairo: للتُرك.

6 No wonder that I disappeared as his exalted poetry crushed me (*dakka*). How often has crushing caused things to disappear!

7 Besides the best prophet of all, no one else deserves to receive a *mīm*, a *dāl* and a *ḥāʾ* from me more than he (= *madḥ* "praise").

Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's answer to al-Qīrāṭī is again a *qaṣīdah subāʿiyyah* with two lines of *nasīb* and a *taḫalluṣ* in line 3. As in al-Qīrāṭī's poem, the structure does not determine the content and the *nasīb* is already part of the message. Here it is a message of peace and harmony. In the *nasīb*-sections of countless poems, doves complain about a loss. In this poem, the dove is not complaining. Instead, it is in complete harmony with a harp player who accompanies its singing. One can imagine that insiders could take the dove as the one that could not catch up with the partridge and Asmāʾ as Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah's denial to be identified with Abū Nuwās's *ġulāmiyyah*. This interpretation presupposes knowledge of both versions of al-Qīrāṭī's poem, while those who read only the *Maġnāṭīs* may have still grasped the identity of both doves.

The pigeon is sitting on a *ʿūd* "bough", a word that could also mean "lute". This meaning, which is not the intended one, is suggested by mention of the "harp". We have the stylistic device of a *tawriyah muhayyaʾah* before us. One might also detect the stylistic device *tawǧīh*. Three words in this line correspond to terms from the fields of writing and grammar: *awrāq* "leaves (of paper)", *fiʿl* "verb" and *asmāʾ* "nouns". The message seems to be: Now that I am writing, harmony is re-established.

The "awakening" in line two seems to correspond to the "sleepiness" in al-Qīrāṭī's *nasīb*. In the language of love-poetry, the poet conveys the message that his friend's poetry, in which sleepy eyes were mentioned, has awakened in him. As in al-Qīrāṭī's poem, the *taḫalluṣ* is so smooth a transition that the reader does not get the impression that the *nasīb* treats a subject different from the *madīḥ*.

Two lines about Ibrāhīm (al-Qīrāṭī)'s generosity, which certainly includes forgiveness, follow, and all conceivable celestial bodies are united in lines 3 to 5. Line 6 responds to the oath on the Quran in line 2 of al-Qīrāṭī's poem. This time it is surah 50 called surat *Qāf*, another surah named for a letter. Having begun with the name of a letter, Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah spells out the word *šaraf* "glory" in the way al-Qīrāṭī spelled out the words "(no) inclination" and "blemish".

Before coming to the end, Ibn Abī Ḥaǧalah finds an excuse for not writing to his colleague earlier through use of a stylistic form called *ḥusn at-taʿlīl* "phantastic etiology". He admits that he "disappeared" (*ḫafītu*), but it was only his friend's "exalted poetry" that "crushed" him and made him disappear. In the last line, the word *qadḥ* of al-Qīrāṭī's reproach is transformed into the word *madḥ* "praise", and harmony and friendship are restored.

6 Conclusion

An inconspicuous marginal note in a handbook of poetry from the 11th century gave rise to the idea that seven lines are enough to make a qaṣīdah. The idea was revived at the court in Ḥamāh in the third decade of the 8th/14th century and came to the fore when Ibn Nubātah composed a large number of *qaṣāʾid subāʿiyyah* later in life and assembled them in a Dīwān called *as-Sabʿah as-sayyārah*. This happened at a time when all walks of society cultivated poetry, which was used as a means of communication both to address people of higher rank as well as to communicate with peers or even with those of a lower segment. These circumstances paved the way for the epigram's unprecedented career, but it also provided fertile ground for the micro-qaṣīdah. A number of poets composed poems in this new form, which proved to be flexible for a number of purposes, less demanding than a long qaṣīdah (for both the poet and the audience), but with a high level of complexity and sophistication as well. Its *nasīb* offered the opportunity to reshape traditional themes of love and wine poetry in a playful manner, often in accordance with the main subject of the qaṣīdah, and the transition between the *nasīb* and the final part, mostly *madīḥ*, gained especial importance. The attention that the *taḫalluṣ* necessarily catches in so short a poem as in a *qaṣīdah subāʿiyyah* gives the impression that many micro-qaṣīdahs are in fact tripartite qaṣīdahs with the *taḫalluṣ* as a section in its own right.

With his more than fifty *subāʿiyyāt*, Ibn Abī Ḥağalah was perhaps the most zealous poet to emulate his revered model Ibn Nubātah in the production of seven-liners. He used them to address people from very different layers of society. Among his addressees are the Abbasid caliph, the Mamluk sultan an-Nāṣir Ḥasan, who had already received a number of *qaṣāʾid subāʿiyyāt* from Ibn Nubātah, and the Marinid sultan of Fez. Wazīrs, dawādārs and umarāʾ of different ranks followed. Poems for fellow udabāʾ such as Ibn Nubātah, al-Qīrāṭī and, again from the west, Lisānaddīn Ibn al-Ḫaṭīb played an important role. More important still were the scholars, especially scholars of law and judges, but even the doctor ʿAlāʾaddīn aṣ-Ṣaġīr got a *qaṣīdah subāʿiyyah* of his own. Micro-qaṣīdahs were used as a means of exchange instead of or in addition to letters and epigrams. They proved an ideal instrument in order to congratulate or welcome people but also to reproach friends in a mild and elegant way. The composers of micro-qaṣīdahs could show their mastery of a traditional and complex form with the utmost brevity.

Finally, *qaṣāʾid subāʿiyyah* are interesting also for literary history. They demonstrate that Arabic poets, at least in the 7th-8th/13th-14th century (but most probably also earlier) did not consider length the main criterion of a qaṣīdah. The existence of *muqaṭṭaʿāt* that are longer than *qaṣāʾid subāʿiyyah* shows that being polythematic, i.e. consisting of *nasīb* and a final part, most often *madīḥ*, was paramount.

Despite the undeniable fascination of the micro-qaṣīdah, its career, initiated by Ibn Nubātah, seems to have been rather short. As far as one can tell at the present state of our knowledge, micro-qaṣīdahs did not play any role further in the Ottoman period.

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