

Sonderdruck aus:

ARABISCHE LITERATUR UND RHETORIK –
ELFHUNDERT BIS ACHTZEHNHUNDERT
(ALEA)

Herausgegeben von
Thomas Bauer – Syrinx von Hees

Band 3

The Sultan's Anthologist –
Ibn Abī Ḥaġalah and His Work

Edited by
Nefeli Papoutsakis – Syrinx von Hees

ERGON VERLAG

Umschlagabbildung:
Dinār des Sultans al-Malik an-Nāṣir Nāṣiraddin Ḥasan,
Kairo 750/1349-1350 (25mm, 6,85g) © Thomas Bauer

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über
<http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

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und für Einspeicherungen in elektronische Systeme.

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Papier.

Umschlaggestaltung: Jan von Hugo

Satz: Thomas Breier

www.ergon-verlag.de

ISSN 2365-8878
ISBN 978-3-95650-282-8

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The Micro-Qaṣidah

A Formal Experiment from the 8th / 14th Century

Thomas Bauer

1 Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah as a poet

Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah 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 *Diwān aṣ-ṣabābah*, has come down to us in a large number of manuscripts, whereas we only know of three manuscripts of the *Diwān* of his own poetry.¹

A remark by Ibn Ḥiḡḡah al-Ḥamawī (767-837/1336-1434) about Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah is also helpful for an appraisal of Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah's poetry. In his famous *badī'iyyah*-cum-commentary-cum-anthology entitled *Ḥizānat al-adab*, Ibn Ḥiḡḡah mentions Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah 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 Ḥiḡḡah quotes conspicuously fewer poems by Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah than by popular poet al-Mi'mār or by Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah's contemporary al-Qirāṭī (726-781/1326-1379), who was considered Ibn Nubātah's successor as the leading poet.³ Ibn Ḥiḡḡah even expresses a slight doubt about the quality of Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah's poetry, saying that for the sake of quantity, Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah contented himself with "cheap" poetry (*kāna yardā li-aḡli l-kaṭrati bi-r-raḥiṣ*).⁴ Indeed, most readers will admit that in many of Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah's poems one can find original, elegant and well-formulated verses side by side with clumsy and cumbersome lines. Nevertheless, even if Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah's poetry is of uneven quality, it is still very interesting indeed.

For a first overlook of Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah's *Diwān*, the following chart displaying the length of the poems in the *Diwān* may be useful:⁵

¹ There are two editions of Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah's *Diwān* (see bibliography). I will quote the ed. by Bahḡat and Muḥlif as "ed. 'Ammān", 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 *šī'r Taymūr* and knows a third one, which the editor does not regard, all in the Dār al-Kutub.

² Ibn Ḥiḡḡah al-Ḥamawī, *Ḥizānat al-adab wa-ḡāyat al-arab*, ed. Kawkab Diyāb, 5 vols., Beirut 1421/2001, 3:366.

³ Ibn Ḥiḡḡah, *Ḥizānat* 3:366.

⁴ Ibn Ḥiḡḡah, *Ḥizānat* 3:444.

⁵ It is based on the ed. 'Ammān, 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	Σ
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-maṭālī*)⁷ comprise exactly two-thirds of Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah'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 Ḥaḡalah'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 Ḥaḡalah's seven-liners with a congratulatory poem (*tabnī'ah* pl. *tabānī'*). Congratulatory poems are a subgenre of panegyric poetry (*madīḥ*) and constituted a very common means of communication for 'ulamā' and udabā' 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 hādihā 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 Ṣafīyyaddīn al-Ḥillī (667-750/1278-1349 or 1350) is *Dīwān al-maṭālī wa-l-maṭānī fī l-ma'ālī wa-l-ma'ānī*. 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 Ṭaybuḡā, a Turk and member of the military elite. While addressing members of the *aṣḡāb as-sayf* “bearers of the sword” with congratulatory poems is rather an exception, it is not so rare an occurrence with Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah. Instead, the number of poems addressed to members of the military elite is conspicuously higher in the *Diwān* of Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah than in the *Diwāns* 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-*udabāʿ*.⁹

As the heading informs us, the occasion of the poem was Ṭaybuḡā’s safe return from the pilgrimage, which, however, does not play any role in the poem itself.¹⁰ Remarkable is its rhyme in *-aḡā / -uḡā*, a very rare and difficult rhyme. Obviously, the poet chose it to rhyme with the addressee’s name Ṭaybuḡā (meter *tawīl*, rhyme *3ḡā*¹¹):¹²

وقال يهتئ الأمير طيبيغاً بالقدوم صُحبة الركاب الشريفة

وطني غدا في قالبِ الحُسنِ مُفرغاً	صغيتُ لداعي الحُبِّ فيه وما صغى
فقلْ لعدُولي فيه يا صاحِ كم كذا	تُدِيرُ كؤوساً من ملامِكْ فُرغاً
لواحظُهُ مثلُ السُيوفِ وقُدُهُ	تَعَلَّمَ لِينِ العَطْفِ مِنْ رُوحِ طيبيغاً
أبو التُّركِ إلا أنَّ نُورَ جبينه	يُقولُ لَهُ بدرُ السِّمَاءِ أنتَ لي أَعَا
أميرٌ إذا دارتْ رَحَا الحَرْبِ لم يَزَلْ	يُدِيرُ كؤوسَ الحُثْفِ فيها لِمَنْ بَعَا
تَحومُ طيُورُ النَّصْرِ فوقِ لوائه	إذا أنقَصَّ كالبازيِّ في حَوْمَةِ الوَعَا
فلا زالَ في يومِ الهَيَاجِ عَدُوهُ	بَصْرَاتِه فوقَ الدِّماغِ مُدَمَّعَا

- 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 Ṭaybuḡā’s lances taught his body how to bend tenderly.

¹⁰ There are several *umarāʿ* called Ṭaybuḡā at this time. This Ṭaybuḡā could be ‘Alāʿaddin Ṭaybuḡā ad-Dawādār, who performed the pilgrimage with the Syrian caravan in 771/1370 and died in 779/1377, see *Taʾriḡ Ibn Qāḏi Ṣubbah*, vol. 3, ed. ‘Adnān Darwiṣ, Damascus 1994, p. 563.

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

¹² Text: Ms. fol. 57b; ed. ‘Ammān no. 225; ed. Cairo p. 156. In line 5, the ل of بزل is placed above the line, which led ed. Cairo to misread لم يزل بزل. Ed. Cairo uses modern standard orthography in the words رحي بغي, الوغى and بغي, ed. ‘Ammān only in بغي. 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 (ağā)*!
- 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 *ğazal*, 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 *mamdūh*, the person praised in the poem, i.e. Ṭaybuğā: “His glances are like swords and Ṭaybuğā’s lances taught his body how to bend tenderly”. This is a perfect transition between *nasīb* and the praise of the *mamdūh*. The technical term for such a transition is *taḥalluṣ*. 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 Ṭaybuğā. Further, there is no simple comparison, but a dynamic relation: The beloved’s body has learned how to bend elegantly from Ṭaybuğā’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 *ağā* 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 *ğinās* (paronomasia) between *yahūmu* and *ḥawmah* and a parallelism between real birds (probably vultures) and Ṭaybuğā’s comparison with a falcon. The poem ends in line 7 with a sort of “blessing”, again a very belligerent one, and another notable *ğinās* (*dimāğ – mudammağ*).

The poem before us is not a *qifāb* or *muqatta‘ab*, i.e. a monothematic poem, but a full-fledged *qaṣīdah*, a polythematic poem consisting of an introductory *nasīb*, a transition (*taḥalluṣ*), 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-qaşidah”, as we might call it. It is a praise-poem for another emir, called Arūs an-Nāşiri (meter *wāfir*, rhyme *2sū*):¹³

وقال يمدح الأمير أروس الناصري

ويؤدّل في وصالكم النفسيس	برؤيّة حبيكم تحبي النفوس
فقلبي في محبتكم حبيس	لئن أطلقت دمعى في هوام
فرأش الترك في مصر أروس	وان أصبحت في العشق رأسا
وتطرق من مهابتيه الرؤوس	أروس تحتشي الآساد منه
وتشرق من محياه الشمسوس	ويخجل جوده السحب الغوادي
كما تجلى على الشمع العروس	فكم جليث محاسنه علينا
ووجهه عدوه منه عبوس	فلا زال الزمان به ضحوكا

- 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 *nasib* makes a more conservative impression. The beloved is addressed in a gender-neutral way (second person plural), and the word *hayy* calls forth associations with old Arabic bedouin-style *nasib*. Line 2 is characterised by the sty-

¹³ Text: Ms. fol. 49a-b; ed. ‘Ammān no. 171; ed. Cairo pp. 134-135. Ed. ‘Ammān interprets the beginning of line 5 as ويخجل جوده السحب الغوادي. I follow the interpretation of ed. Cairo. Different to both editions, I follow the orthography of the ms. in تحبي in line 1. – On Sayfaddin Arūs an-Nāşiri see the entry (in the year 775, the year in which he probably died) in *Ta’riḥ Ibn Qāḍi Subbah*, vol. 3, ed. ‘Adnān Darwiş, Damascus 1994, p. 438.

listic device of *ṭibāq* “antithesis” by contrasting “letting loose” and “captive”. 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-Nāṣiri. As in the first poem, the *taballuṣ* 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 *tašbīḥ* (comparison) interrupts this series in line 6. With the exception of line 6 and line 1, in which the most prominent stylistic device is *ḡinās* “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 Abi Ḥaḡalah 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 *tawīl*, rhyme *āni*):¹⁵

وقال يمدح بعض الأدباء

وقد بانَ مَنْ أهوى بِسَفْحِ أبان	أَتَعَذُّلُنِي إِنْ بَانَ عَيْتِي تَصَبُّرِي
وقد حَلَّ مِنْ قَلْبِي أَعْرَضَ مَكَانِ	وَلَمْ أُنْسَهُ إِذْ قَالَ أَيْبَنَ تُجَلُّنِي
هَفَا كَجَنَاحِ النَّسْرِ فِي الخَفِّقَانِ	لِحَا اللّٰهُ قَلْبِي كُلَّمَا طَارَ طَائِرٌ
مُعَارَ جَنَاحِ مُخْسِنِ الطَّيْرَانِ	فِيَا لَجَمَالٍ لَا أزالُ بِقُرْبِهِ

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 مِنْ بَنَاتِ الْفِكْرِ مَا لَمْ أَزَلْ بِهِ صَرِيحَ مَعَانٍ أَوْ صَرِيحَ عَوَانِ
 فَيَا لَيْتَ شِعْرِي شِعْرُهُ فِي أَنْتَسَابِهِ بَدِيعَ جَمَالٍ أَمْ بَدِيعَ زَمَانِ
 يَخْفُ عَلَى سَمْعِ الْمُحِبِّ نَشِيدُهُ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ أَعْدَائِهِ السَّقْلَانِ

- 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 Ġamāladdin!* 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 / *Ġamāl* or the prodigy of the age / *Badi' az-Zamān al-Hamaḡānī*.
- 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 *ma'ānī* "ideas" (line 5) and his poetry (line 6) and the mentioning of two major littérateurs corroborate this. The first of them is Ṣarī' al-Ġawānī in line 5, a sobriquet for the early Abbasid poet Muslim ibn al-Walid (d. 208/823).¹⁶ The second is the famous pioneer of the *maqāmab* Badi' az-Zamān al-Hamaḡānī (358-398/968-1008) alluded to in line 6.¹⁷ The *taḡalluṣ*, this time in line 4, and the expression *badi'u ḡamālin* in line 6 suggest that the name of the *mamdūḥ* was Ġamāladdin. Since there are not too many notable poets known as Ġamāladdin, it is probable that the *mamdūḥ* is none other than Ġamāladdin 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 a'dā'ika l-qamarāni* "even if the two 'moons' (i.e. sun and moon) were both your enemies". In Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah's poem, these words conclude the poem. The rhyme word is different, but the word *at-taḡalānī* 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, *Dirwān*, ed. Muḡammad al-Qalqīli, Cairo 1312/1905, pp. 517-518.

Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah's poem, *mu'āra ḡanāḥin muḥsini t-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 *ḡawāni*, which occurs in line 6 of Ibn Nubātah's poem, and the phrase *fi a'azza makān* "in the highest place", which echoes the word *fi adalla makān* "in the most contemptible place" of Ibn Nubātah's line 9.

However, the intertextual relations are even more complex since Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah'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 *ḡazal* and finally Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah's own wings in the seven-liner. The phrase *fi adalla makān* is found in al-Mutanabbī's line 12, but he does not use the rhyme word *ḡawāni*.

Ibn Nubātah transformed this heroic and bellicose poem into a love poem using some of its second hemistichs by way of a *tašīr*, but also quoting whole lines or only single phrases. In addition, he added two lines entirely of his own. Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah in turn transformed Ibn Nubātah's recast into a seven-line *qaṣidah* addressed to Ibn Nubātah. Consequently, Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah 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 *ḡinās*, 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 (*tuhillunī – ḥalla*). He is placed on the "highest place" (*a'azza makān*). In line three, birds move lightly in the air. The mentioning of birds was a sort of identification tag for Ibn Abi

¹⁹ al-Barqūqī, 'Abdarrahmān, *Šarḥ Diwān 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-Afdāls von Hamāh (732/1332)", in: Marzolph, Ulrich (ed.), *Orientalistische Studien zu Sprache und Literatur. Festgabe zum 65. Geburtstag von Werner Diem*, Wiesbaden 2011, pp. 285-315.

Hağalah, 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 *taḥalluṣ* 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-Mutanabbi.

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. *Ġamāl*’s poetry is light in the ears of the speaker, who is the lover of *ġamāl*. 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-qaşidah*

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

In all these Diwāns we find a number, albeit small, of *madiḥ* poems comprising six, eight or nine lines which are monothematic and clearly not qaşidahs. When there are *muqatta‘āt* of six and eight lines, it is hardly conceivable that there should not be *muqatta‘āt* 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-Qīrāṭi’s and Ibn Abi Hağalah’s Diwāns are qaşidahs. The only possible conclusion therefore is that in the 14th century, the qaşidah comprising seven lines was cultivated as a distinctive poetic form. Poets consciously composed qaşidahs 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-qaşidah. The most common Arabic designation is *al-qaşidah as-subā‘iyyah*.

²¹ Homerin, Emil Th., “Ibn Abi Hağalah and Sufism“, in this volume, p. 13

Readers of Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah's poems might assume that the large number of *qaṣā'id subā'iyyah* 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 *qaṣidah*. 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-*qaṣidah* does not lie with Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah. Instead, it was Ḡamāladdīn 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 Abi Ḥaḡalah, was his undisputed role model as a poet. Ibn Ḥiḡḡah al-Ḥamawī reckoned him among *al-ṣiṣābah allatī maṣat taḡta l-alam an-nubāti wa-taḡallat bi-qaṭr nabātībi ...* "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 Abi Ḥaḡalah addressed poems to Ibn Nubātah and he answered. At least four poems in the *Dīwān* of Ibn Nubātah, among them a seven-line *qaṣidah*, are addressed to his younger colleague.²³

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

But how was it that Ibn Nubātah arrived at the idea of the micro-*qaṣidah*? 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'ayyad and his death in 732/1331. On one occasion during these years, Ibn Nubātah composed his first full-fledged *qaṣidah subā'iyyah* 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 يمدحُه وقد قيلَ أنَّ جَدَّه الملك المنصور كان قد أقترح على مُدَّاخِه أن 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 *qaṣidah* 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 over-long *qaṣidahs*). We do not even know at present if the tradition is true. Thus far I

²² Ibn Ḥiḡḡah, *Ḥizānah* 3:366.

²³ Ibn Nubātah, *Dīwān*, pp. 227 (a *qaṣidah subā'iyyah*), 311 (a riddle), 318 (an epigram; on this and the preceding see Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah, *Sukkardān*, p. 10-11), 522 (an epigram).

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

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

وقيل إذا بلغت الأبيات سبعة فهي قصيدة ولهذا كان الإبطاء بعد سبعة أبيات غير عيب 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 qaşidah and therefore *itā'* (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 qaşidahs unless they feature ten lines or more."

Obviously, this is not a definition of the qaşidah but a statement about two different things, the length of the qaşidah 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 Raşīq a *qaşida* 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 *qit'a*, the monothematic poem."

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

Ibn Raşīq's report about one opinion according to which seven lines make a qaşidah 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-qaşidahs for al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad, and that was all. There are no other

²⁵ Ibn Raşīq al-Qayrawānī, *al-Umdah fi şinā'at aš-ši'r wa-naqdihī*, ed. Nabawī 'Abdalwāhid Şa'lān, 2 vols., Cairo 1420/2000, 1:302. On Ibn Raşīq see *EAL*, p. 363.

²⁶ *EAL*, p. 630.

²⁷ *Dirwān Ibn Abī Ḥağalah*, ms. fol. 98b-99a, ed. 'Ammān no. 408, ed. Cairo p. 254 (meter *ḥafif*, rhyme *āni*).

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 'Alā'addīn 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-Sab'ab 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-Sab'ab as-sayyārah* and his *Dīwān*. So far, no manuscript of *as-Sab'ab as-sayyārah* has surfaced. The reason for this loss may have been the fact that al-Baštaki included all poems from *as-Sab'ab as-sayyārah* in his second recension of the *Dīwān* Ibn Nubātah (Baštaki β).²⁸ In Baštaki β we find about 170 *qaṣā'id subā'iyāh* that most probably formed part of *as-Sab'ab as-sayyārah*. In the manuscripts, sequences of micro-qaṣīdahs are introduced by headings such as *wa-qāla fi s-subā'iyāh* or *wa-qāla fi s-Sab'ab as-sayyārah* or just *wa-qāla 7* (the number "seven" written with a digit). After this headline, all *subā'iyāh* that pertain to the particular rhyme letter follow. So far, so good.

When in 1905 al-Qalqīli 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 muqatta'ātihī* 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-sab'ab as-sayyārah* and is followed by all the *subā'iyāh* with the same rhyme consonant. Al-Qalqīli chose to leave the first *subā'iyāh* in its proper place, since it came with a heading, but to transfer all the others to the final section. Obviously, al-Qalqīli had not understood that the headline *min as-sab'ab 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 *muqatta'āt* thus obscuring Ibn Nubātah's central motivation: to compose qaṣīdahs, not *muqatta'āt*. In this way, al-Qalqīli's edition of Ibn Nubātah's *Dīwān* obscured the history of the *qaṣīdah subā'iyāh*. Consequently, the editors of the *Dīwān* of Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah, though realizing the high number of 53 seven-liners, could not contextualize it.

²⁸ On al-Baštaki (748-830/1347-1427) and his different versions of Ibn Nubātah's *Dīwān* and on al-Qalqīli'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 qaşīdahs of seven lines. Years later, he took up the idea again and started to compose a large number of micro-qaşīdahs. Many of them served to communicate with fellow udabā' who answered with *qaşā'id subā'iyyah* of their own. In this way, micro-qaşīdahs 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-qaşīdah in later generations. Ibn Abī Ḥağalah was one of the most eager followers of Ibn Nubātah. This is also reflected in the number of his *qaşā'id subā'iyyāt*, 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-qaşīdahs found a broad public.

The charm of the micro-qaşīdah lies in its concision. The poet assembles common, often conventional qaşīdah 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-qaşīdah 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 *taḥalluṣ* between *nasīb* and *madiḥ*. In a *qaşīdah subā'iyyah*, the *taḥalluṣ* draws much more attention than in a longer qaşīdah. It becomes the very core of the poem and its focus. After all, the *taḥalluṣ*-line comprises 14 percent of the whole. In Ibn Nubātah's micro-qaşīdahs, the *taḥalluṣ* may even extend over two lines. Ibn Abī Ḥağalah did not emulate him in this respect. Instead, he placed his *taḥalluṣāt* comparatively late in the qaşīdah. Whereas Ibn Nubātah preferred *taḥalluṣāt* in line 3 or stretching from line 3 to 4 (or even from line 1 to 2), more than 40% of Ibn Abī Ḥağalah'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 qaşīdahs in six lines

With more than 220 *qaşā'id subā'iyyāt*, Ibn Nubātah and Ibn Abī Ḥağalah alone amply demonstrate that it is very well possible to compose full-fledged, well-constructed, interesting and significant qaşīdahs in the limited space of only seven lines. Whereas it is thus sufficiently clear that seven lines are enough for a qaşīdah, the question remains if seven lines are even necessary for a qaşīdah. Can we imagine a qaşīdah 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 *Dirwān Ibn Abī Ḥağalah*, ms. fol. 7a-b, ed. 'Ammān no. 26, ed. Cairo pp. 30-31 (meter *wāfir*, rhyme *2bā*); ms. fol. 106a-b, ed. 'Ammān no. 434, ed. Cairo p. 272 (meter *wāfir*, rhyme *āwī*).

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 Ḥaḡalah 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 Ṭaybuḡā, the occasion is the *mamdūh*'s safe return from pilgrimage. This *mamdūh* belongs to a rather untypical category of people receiving panegyrics from litterateurs: he was a physician and “head of medicine”, probably head of the physicians in Cairo (meter *wāfir*, rhyme *āṣū*).³⁰

وقال يهتئ القاضي علاء الدين الصغير رئيس الطب لما قدم صحبة الركاب السلطاني
 أمِنُ خَدِّ الحبيبِ لنا خَلاصُ وفي دينارِه الذَّهَبُ الخِلاصُ
 كَلَفْتُ بِهِ خَفِيفَ العَطْفِ لَكُنْ رَقِيبِي فِي مَحَبَّتِهِ رِصَاصُ
 حَيِّبٌ حَلٌّ فِي بَلَدٍ إِلَيْهَا تُشَدُّ لِرَئِيسِ الطِّبِّ القِلاصُ
 لَهُ فِي الطِّبِّ وَالتَّشْرِيحِ شَرْحُ وَفِي قِصِّ القُرُوحِ لَهُ قِصَاصُ
 أَتَى مِصرًا فَزالَ السُّقْمُ عِنها وَرُزِيَّتِ الشَّوارِعُ والعِراضُ
 فَكَيْفَ أَخافُ صَعْفَ الحِمالِ فِيها وَلِي بِجَنابِهِ العِاليِ اأختِصاصُ

- 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 Ḥaḡalah uses a rare rhyme consonant. This time, the choice was not made in response to the *mamdūh*'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. ‘Ammān 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 *taḥalluṣ* comes in line 3, in which the *mamdūh* is mentioned as *rayyis at-tibb* (note the unclassical form) and not by name. Three lines remain for the *madīh*.

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-Mutanabbi 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 Abi Ḥaḡalah dedicated a *qaṣīdah sudāsiyyah*, as one might call it along the lines of *qaṣīdah subā'iyah* (though I have never come across such a designation in the sources) to a scholar, the *qāḍī l-askar* “judge of the army” Sirāḡaddin al-Hindi. 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 *āḡi*):³²

قال يهتئ قاضي العسكر الحنفي سراج الدين [عمر بن إسحاق الهندي]

جَلَوْتُ الرِّاحَ فِي كَأْسِ الزُّجَاجِ	إِذَا مَا زَادَ هَمِّي وَأَنْزَعَا جِي
عَلَى الثَّلَاثِ الْمُبَاحِ لَدَى الْمَزَاجِ	مُدَامٌ قَدْ عَدَّتْ مِنْ نَارِ قَلْبِي
عَلَيْهَا حِينَ تُشْرِقُ فِي الدِّيَاجِي	فَحَيَّا اللَّهَ مَنْ أَمْسَى نَدِيي
سِرَاجِ الدِّينِ يَلْمَعُ كَالسِّرَاجِ	وَحَيَّا بَلَدَهُ فِيهَا مُحَيَّا
فَقَوِّمَ أَمْرَهَا بَعْدَ أَعْوَجَاجِ	إِمَامٌ فِي الْعُلُومِ وَفِي الْقَضَايَا
وَبَاتَ الشَّمَامُ مَعْتَدِلَ الْمَزَاجِ	فَبَاتَتْ مِصْرٌ فِي أَمْنٍ وَعَدْلٍ

³¹ See Homerin, Emil Th., “Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah and Sufism”, in this volume, p. 19ff.

³² Text: Ms. fol. 15a; ed. ‘Ammān no. 88; ed. Cairo p. 52. In the beginning of line 4, ed. Cairo reads *بلدًا فيها محبًا* and corrects the last word to *محبًا*. The reading *مُحَيَّا*, however, is certain and makes excellent sense. For the sake of clearness, I follow ed. ‘Ammān and write the first words of lines 3 and 4 as *وحيا / فحيا* instead of *وحى / فحى* 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 Sirāğaddīn 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 *mamdūh* and his profession as judge (*qāḍī l-ʿaskar* “judge of the army”). The name Sirāğaddīn provides for the rhyme in *āğī* 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 *mizāğ* “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 *ṭilāʿ* or *muṭallat* 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 *taḥalluṣ* 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 *mamdūh* Sirāğaddīn. Not only does his name mean “lamp of religion”, his face also gleams lamp-like (*sirāğ*). 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 subā'iyyah* 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 *tabāni* "congratulations". 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 *Diwāns* 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 Abi Ḥaḡalah'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 *Diwān* (but not Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah's answer). Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah instead included his poem in his own *Diwān*, again without al-Qīrāṭī's poem, but he provides both texts in his chapter on al-Qīrāṭī in his *Maḡnāṭīs ad-durr an-naḡīs*,³⁵ and this enables us to detect a veritable surprise.

This is al-Qīrāṭī's poem in the version of the *Maḡnāṭīs* (meter *basīṭ*, rhyme *ā'ū*):³⁶

وكتب إلى الأديب شهاب الدين بن أبي حجلة

يَا نَاعَسَ الطَّرْفِ مَا لِلْعَيْنِ إِغْفَاءُ بِنُورِ أَقْسِمِ مَا فِي وَائِ صُدْغِكَ لِي نَعْمَ وَلَا فِي شِهَابِ الدِّينِ حِينَ أَضَا أَفْدِيهِ مِنْ حَجَلِي طَائِرٍ لِمَدَا لَا غَرَوَ إِنَّ رَكِبَ الشَّهْبَا عَلَى نَقْرِ يَا فَاضِلَ العَصْرِ إِنَّ المَغْرِبَ أَتَهَجَّتْ [...] مِنْ نَظْمِكَ النَّامِي فَأَحْرَفَ مَا	فَلَا لِأَذْنِكَ إِنْ نَادَيْتُ إِضْغَاءُ كَالوَائِ عَيْنٌ وَلَا طَائِرٌ وَلَا فَاءُ سَنَاهُ قَافٌ وَلَا دَالٌ وَلَا حَاءُ سِيرَ الْيَامِي فِيهِ عَنْهُ إِبْطَاءُ فِي النِّظْمِ قَدْ ذَهَمَتْهُمْ مِنْهُ دِهَاءُ مَذَلَّاحٌ مِنْ صُبْحِكَ الوَضَّاحُ لِأَلَاءُ نَظَّمْتَهُ عِنْدَهُ الوَؤَاءُ فَأَفَاءُ
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³⁴ On al-Qīrāṭī and his relation to Ibn Nubāṭah 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 *Maḡnāṭīs 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 الشهباء instead of الشهبيا. 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! (= *ʿatf* "inclination").
- 3 Yes, and when Šihābaddin's splendor sheds light, there is neither *qāf* nor *dāl* nor *ḥāʾ* in him. (= *qadh* "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 solitary of the epoch: the West is delighted that light has dawned from your bright morning.
- 7 [...] of your flourishing poetry / *an-Nāmi*, so that compared to your arranging letters in poetry, al-Waʾwāʾ suffers a speech defect.

This poem is obviously a *qaṣīdah subāʿiyyah* that starts with a *nasīb* in which the poet complains about being neglected by his beloved. After a rather unspectacular *taballuṣ* 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 *fāʿlāʾ*, 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 *ʿatf* and *qadh* (line 3). The word *ahraf* "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 Abi Ḥaḡalah 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 Ḥaḡalah, 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 'ayn, your *tā'*, your *fā'* 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 Šihābaddin would answer finally, there would be no *qadh* "blemish". In a normal *madiḥ* 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*, *taḡalluṣ* and *madiḥ*. 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 Ḥaḡalah's self-identification with the partridge. As such, he can fly more quickly than a dove, the bird with which al-Qīrāṭī identifies. In line 5, Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah 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 (*ad-damm fi ma'raḡ 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 Ḥaḡalah's western origin. Line 7 contains the name of two poets, the first in the form of a *tawriyab*. The word *nāmin* "flourishing" is also the name of the Syrian poet an-Nāmi (399/1008)³⁷. His contemporary al-Wa'wā' ad-Dimašqī (4th/10th century)³⁸ was chosen for the sound-effect of his name rather than his poetry.

Burhānaddin al-Qīrāṭī himself included the poem in his own *Diwān* entitled *Maṭla' an-nayyirayn*. This version, however, is surprisingly different from the version in *Maḡnāṭis ad-durr*. Here is the full text of the *Maṭla' an-nayyirayn* version (meter *basīṭ*, rhyme *ā'ū*):³⁹

يا ناعس الطرف ما للعين إعفاء فَهَلْ لِأَذْنِكَ إِنْ نَادَيْتُ إِصْغَاءَ
بِصَادِ أَقْسِمِ مَا فِي وَائِ صُدْغِكَ لِي كَالسَّوَابِ عَيْنٌ وَلَا طَاءٌ وَلَا فَاءَ

³⁷ See *EAL*, p. 577.

³⁸ See *EAL*, p. 808.

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

نَعَمْ وَمَا فِي شَهَابِ الدِّينِ مِنْذُ بَدَا	سَنَاهَ قَافٌ وَلَا دَالٌ وَلَا حَاءٌ
أَفْدِيهِ مِنْ حَجَلِي طَائِرٍ لَمْدَى	مَا أَعْتَقْتُ فِيهِ قَبْلَ الْيَوْمِ عَنُقَاءُ
سَبَبًا قُ غَايَاتِ آدَابٍ مَطَالِعُهُ	لَشُئْهِهَا فِي مَجَرِّ الْأَفْقِ إِجْرَاءُ
إِنْ ذَكَرَ الْوَصْفَ تَشْبِيهًا وَأَثْنَهُ	سَبَا الْوَرَى حَسَنٌ مِنْهُ وَحُسْنَاءُ
أَغْرَالُهُ فِي كِلَا التَّوَعِينِ مَا بَرِحَتْ	لَهَا مَحَبَّانٌ لُوطِيٌّ وَزَنَاءُ

- 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) Šād: In the *wāw* of your sidelocks, there is neither *‘ayn* nor *ṭā’* nor *fā’* that is like this *wāw* for me! (= *‘atf* “inclination”).
- 3 Yes, and since Šihābaddin’s splendor has appeared, there is neither *qāf* nor *dāl* nor *ḥā’* in him (= *qadh* “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-bal* instead of *fa-lā* and in line 3 *munḍu badā sanābu* instead of the rather synonymous *ḥina aḏā sanābu*. In line 2, the surah whose name is also the name of a letter is *Šād* (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 Šihābaddin) takes part. Just as the griffon is a supernatural creature, the race takes place in the celestial spheres in the *Maṭla’ an-nayyirayn* version, whereas the competition takes place down on earth in the *Maḡnāṭis* 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 *Mağnāṭīs* 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 *ḥamriyyah* no. 1, which starts with Abū Nuwās's most often quoted verse: *daʿ ʿanka laʿwmi fa-inna l-laʿwma iğrāʿū*.⁴⁰

The third line of the poem, hardly less famous than the first line, describes a *ğulāmiyyah* 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 *Mağnāṭīs*. It seems as if al-Qirāṭī 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 *Mağnāṭīs* version. When Ibn Abī Ḥağalah wrote his *Mağnāṭīs*, both poets must have been reconciled again. Not only did Ibn Abī Ḥağalah dedicate a large entry in his *Mağnāṭīs* to al-Qirāṭī, he also gave space to this exchange of micro-qaşidahs. It is hardly conceivable that al-Qirāṭī produced a nastier version of his qaşidah 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 iğfāʿū* occurs (in the form *bi-l-ʿayni iğfāʿū*) at the end of line 5 of Abū Nuwās's *ḥamriyyah*.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 *Mağnāṭīs* 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-Nāmi and al-Waʿwāʾ into one that concludes with a famous hemistich by Abū Nuwās. In fact, only a transformation in the other direction is conceivable.

(3) Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah’s reply, which we will examine next, is ambivalent. On the one hand, there could be a reference to the “dove” of the *Maḡnātīs* 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 *Maḡnātīs* 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 *ḡulāmiyyah* 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 *tuhillu bibā Hindun wa-Asmāʾū* “where Hind and Asmāʾ alight”.⁴³ The deeper meaning of the phrase could have been: I am not like the *ḡulāmiyyah* 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. Burhānaddin al-Qīrāṭī was upset with the behavior of his friend Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah, 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 Abi Ḥaḡalah 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 Abi Ḥaḡalah 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 *Diwān Maṭlaʿ an-nayyirayn*.
4. Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah devised his large anthology *Muḡtabā l-udabā* and, in order to get more contributions, wrote his *Maḡnātīs 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 *subāʿiyyahs*, but found al-Qīrāṭī’s text too

⁴³ *Diwān des Abū Nuwās III*, p. 3.

harsh. Therefore, he asked al-Qirāṭī to produce a milder version. Another possibility is that al-Qirāṭī, 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 Ḥaḡalah adapted his own poem to this new version and included both poems in their revised form in his *Magnāṭis ad-durr*.

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

ووافقت جنكها في الفعلِ أسماء	عَثَّتْ عَلَى الْعُودِ فِي الْأُورَاقِ وَرِقَاءِ
أَمَسَى لَهُ فِي نَسِيمِ الْحَيِّ أَهْوَاءِ	فَكَيْفَ لَا يَبْعَثُ التَّشْيِيبُ مَيْتَ هَوَى
بِهَا الثُّرَيَّا لَهَا فِي الشَّهْبِ إِثْرَاءِ	وَكَيْفَ تَخْفَى لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ نَارُ قِرَى
عِنْدَ الدَّرَارِيِّ لَهُ كَالْبَدْرِ لِأَلَاءِ	يَجُودُ حَتَّى بِتَنْظُمٍ كُلُّهُ دُرٌّ
لَوْلَاهُ شَيْئٌ وَلَا رَاءٌ وَلَا فَاءِ	بِقَافٍ أَقْسَمُ عَيْنُ الشَّمْسِ لَيْسَ لَهَا
إِذَا حَفِيْتُ فَكَمْ لِلدَّكِّ إِخْفَاءِ	إِنْ دَكَّنِي نَظْمُهُ الْعَالِي فَلَا عَجَبٌ
سِوَاهُ مَيْمٍ وَلَا دَالٍ وَلَا حَاءِ	مَا طَابَ لِي بَعْدَ خَيْرِ الرُّسْلِ فِي أَحَدٍ

- 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 *'Ayn Šams* would lack *šin* and *rā'* and *fā'* (= *šaraf* "glory").

⁴⁴ Text: *Diwān Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah*, Ms. fol. 3a; ed. 'Ammān no. 2; ed. Cairo pp. 18-19; *Magnāṭis 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. 'Ammān: حبكها. – Line 3: Ms., ed. 'Ammān, ed. Cairo: تخفى, ms. Riyāḍ, ms. Yale: يخفى. – Line 4: Ms., ed. 'Ammān, ms. Riyāḍ, ms. Yale: حتى, ed. Cairo: حني. – Ms., ed. 'Ammān, ed. Cairo: كالدر, ms. Riyāḍ, ms. Yale: كالبدر. – Line 6: Ms., ed. 'Ammān, ms. Riyāḍ, ms. Yale: دكني, ed. Cairo: دنلي. – Ms., ed. 'Ammān, ms. Riyāḍ, ms. Yale: للدك, ed. Cairo: للترك.

- 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 *mim*, a *dāl* and a *ḥā'* from me more than he (= *madḥ* "praise").

Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah's answer to al-Qīrāṭī is again a *qaṣīdah subā'īyyah* with two lines of *nasīb* and a *taḡalluṣ* 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 Asmā' as Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah's denial to be identified with Abū Nuwās's *ḡulāmiyyah*. This interpretation presupposes knowledge of both versions of al-Qīrāṭī's poem, while those who read only the *Maḡnāṭis* may have still grasped the identity of both doves.

The pigeon is sitting on a *'ūd* "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 mubayya'ah* before us. One might also detect the stylistic device *tawḡīh*. Three words in this line correspond to terms from the fields of writing and grammar: *awrāq* "leaves (of paper)", *fi'l* "verb" and *asmā'* "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 *taḡalluṣ* 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 Ibrāhim (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 Abi Ḥaḡalah spells out the word *ṣaraf* "glory" in the way al-Qīrāṭī spelled out the words "(no) inclination" and "blemish".

Before coming to the end, Ibn Abi Ḥaḡalah finds an excuse for not writing to his colleague earlier through use of a stylistic form called *ḥusn at-ta'līl* "phantastic etiology". He admits that he "disappeared" (*ḥafītu*), but it was only his friend's "exalted poetry" that "crushed" him and made him disappear. In the last line, the word *qadh* 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 qaşidah. 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 *qaşā'id subā'iyyah* later in life and assembled them in a Diwān called *as-Sab'ah 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-qaşidah. 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 qaşidah (for both the poet and the audience), but with a high level of complexity and sophistication as well. Its *nasib* 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 qaşidah, and the transition between the *nasib* and the final part, mostly *madih*, gained especial importance. The attention that the *taḥalluṣ* necessarily catches in so short a poem as in a *qaşidah subā'iyyah* gives the impression that many micro-qaşidahs are in fact tripartite qaşidahs with the *taḥalluṣ* as a section in its own right.

With his more than fifty *subā'iyyāt*, Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah 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-Nāşir Ḥasan, who had already received a number of *qaşā'id subā'iyyāt* from Ibn Nubātah, and the Marinid sultan of Fez. Wazirs, dawādars and umarā' of different ranks followed. Poems for fellow udabā' such as Ibn Nubātah, al-Qirāti and, again from the west, Lisānaddin Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb played an important role. More important still were the scholars, especially scholars of law and judges, but even the doctor 'Alā'addin aṣ-Şaḡir got a *qaşidah subā'iyyah* of his own. Micro-qaşidahs 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-qaşidahs could show their mastery of a traditional and complex form with the utmost brevity.

Finally, *qaşā'id subā'iyyah* 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 qaşidah. The existence of *muqatta'āt* that are longer than *qaşā'id subā'iyyah* shows that being polythematic, i.e. consisting of *nasib* and a final part, most often *madih*, 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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