

# The Poetry of Ibn Al-Qaysarani: A Stylistic Study / Al-Thughriyat as a Model

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This study aims to examine the poetry of Ibn Al-Qaysarani, which he told during his trip to the thughoor (fortified towns) that was later called (Al-Thughriyat), from two points of view: personal subjective stylistics and statistical stylistics. The research found that Al-Thughriyat were merely short pieces that did not exceed fifteen verses at its finest, and that the poet was fascinated with the fortified towns he visited as well as the Western civilization which he did not find in his country. After studying the lexicon, the research found that the poet's words were softer than they were before, as his jihadist poetry was a true picture of ancient Arab poetry. We saw that he disbelieved in Arab poets such as Al-Mutanabi and Abu Tammam whom he used to consider a light for him in his jihadist poetry. Rather, he started following a poet like Abu Nawas into his flirtation with the Frankish women.

**Key words:** *Ibn Al-Qaysarani, Al-Thughriyat, Stylistics, the Crusader Invasion.*

## 1. Introduction

Levantine poetry during the Crusades was subjected to several blows that changed its form and content, especially after the death of Nur al-Din Zengi and after him Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi. Therefore, a number of poets emigrated to the countries of the Franks and hence saw the fortified towns. They abandoned the poetry topics that were common such as the poetry of jihad, praise and conquests as well as the moderation of the traditional Arabic poem, and perhaps the most prominent example of that was Ibn Al-Qaysarani.

Thus, this study will examine Ibn Al-Qaysarani's poetry, which he told on that trip to the fortified towns from two aspects: personal subjective stylistics and statistical stylistics. The first aspect will study the poet through his poetry on the grounds that the text reflects the image of its owner; in other words, the style is the personality so we cannot study poetry away from the poet's personality. The second aspect of the study applies the statistical method that brings researchers out of their own tendencies in the study and puts them in front of the dominance of the text and hence the connotations that enrich the study and reveal the secrets of the text.

This study will first give brief information about the poet (Ibn Al-Qaysarani) and then a description of Al-Thughriyat and the reason why a part of his poetry was called so. The study will also provide a definition of stylistics, methods of applying stylistics to the text and finally a study of Al-Thughriyat from several aspects.

## **2. Ibn Al-Qaysarani 478-548 AH / 1085-1153 CE**

He is Sharaf Al-Din Muhammad bin Nasr bin Saghir, known as Al-Qaysarani; he was born in Acre in 478 AH and claimed that he was a descendant of Khalid bin Al-Walid. His father left Acre with his family, fleeing the Crusaders, and settled in Qaysariyyah, so he has become known as Al-Qaysarani. He is not the son of Al-Qaysarani as many people think; the author of Al-Rawdatain also calls him Al-Qaysarani.

He became a student of the famous poet Ibn Al-Khayyat and praised the princes of Damascus. Then he joined Imad al-Din and praised him; when Imad al-Din was killed in 541 AH, he returned to Damascus, but soon after that he joined Nur al-Din Zengi and accompanied him in his wars and travels. The poet Ahmed bin Munir al-Trabelsi competed with him for that position. In 548 AH, he returned to Damascus, had a fever and died ten days after his illness (Abu Shama, 1989, p. 34.).

In Yaqut al-Hamwi's *Mu'jam Al-odaba'*, it is mentioned that he is "Muhammad bin Nasr bin Saghir bin Da'er ibn Muhammad bin Khalid, a descendant of Khalid bin al-Walid, the great companion; he is Sharaf al-Din al-Makhzoumi, known as Ibn Al-Qaysarani al-Halabi, a glorified poet and a masterful writer. He and Ibn Munir al-Trabelsi were the poets of the Levant during the reign of the just king Nur al-Din bin Zengi whom they praised in poems. He was taught literature by Tawfiq bin Muhammad al-Dimashqi and the poet Ibn al-Khayyat and heard about Aleppo from Hashem bin Ahmed al-Halabi and Abu Taher al-Khatib. Abu Saeed al-Samani, al-Hafiz bin Asaker, the writer and poet Abu al-Maali al-Hadhiri and others heard from him. He and Ibn Munir were similar to Jarir and Farazdaq; they died in the same year. Ibn Munir died in Aleppo in Jumada al-Akhira, and on the twelfth of Shaban Ibn Al-Qaysarani arrived in Damascus after being summoned by Prince Mujir al-Din. He died ten days after his arrival on Wednesday night the twenty-second of Shaban, 548 AH. He was

born in 478 AH, and he has much poetry, and most of it is put down in writing."( Yaqut Al-Hamwi, 1993, vol. 6, p. 2654).

### 3. Al-Thughriyat (Fortified Towns)

It seems that the Arabs were busy giving descriptions to the things that they were distinguished by, as they gave names to what their poets excelled in. So, they called what Abu Nawas produced in describing wine (Khimriyat), what al-Mutanabi presented in his knight Saif al-Dawla (Sayfiyat) and even his poetry in Egypt (Kafooriyat) and what Hanin Abi Firas revealed in captivity (Rumiyyat). What we are about to mention is al-thughriyat of Ibn Al-Qaysarani, with which he expressed his fascination with women of the Crusaders on his journey towards the Islamic fortified towns that were subject to the Crusader occupation at that time. Through Al-Thughriyat, he crossed to another culture and civilization, where he saw civilized dimensions that changed his formation, views and even vision. This added graciousness and vitality to his poetry and made him different because at the beginning of his poetic experience, he adhered to the traditional poem approach, in form and content.

Ibn Al-Qaysarani was disgraced as the nation, so he fell into a well of humiliation, defeat and disappointment. He fell when everyone fell, and his heart and sword weakened as the swords of Islam did.

Al-Imad narrates that the story began when Ibn Al-Qaysarani "entered the town of Antioch in 540 AH due to something presented to him, so he wrote poetry in which he flirted with Frankish women."( Al-Imad Al-Isfahani, 1955-1956, p.99) In these pieces called Al-Thughriyat, Ibn Al-Qaysarani mentioned monasteries, described Frankish women and mentioned some places and names that stunned him and fascinated his heart.

Dr. Shafiq al-Raqb saw the entry of Ibn Al-Qaysarani to Antioch as a beautiful thing, saying: "Perhaps the strange thing is that the entry of the poet to Antioch and its surroundings from the occupied countries did not arouse his sorrows and that the poetry he recited on his journey did not indicate any hostile attitude towards the occupiers as he was one of the prominent poets of jihad during the reign of Imad al-Din Zengi and his son Nur al-Din Mahmud". So did the poet, who was sixty years old, succumb to massive despair, as one of the scholars says? It may be the case, but I see that the poet, while on this vacation, wanted to get rid of the praise poetry that consumed his artistic efforts in the previous stage. In addition, he wanted to achieve fame for himself by singularity of a subject that not one of the poets of his time dealt with, and he wanted to express his admiration and astonishment at what he saw of cultural manifestations alien to him in a flirtatious phrase.

Whatever the case, the poems that Ibn Al-Qaysarani recited in the occupied countries, if viewed in terms of content, enrich the image drawn by historians of the social life of the

Franks, as he conveyed pictures of their lives in their fun meetings, their feasts, their churches and their monasteries. If we follow the path taken by the poet, we can say that his first thughriyat are those that he recited when he crossed the town of Azaz from the outskirts of Aleppo, and it appears from the beginning that the poet was fascinated by the Crusader women, describing the goodness of their faces, the beauty of their eyes, their moderate stature, the delicacy of their waists and the way they arranged their hair (Shafiq Al-Raqb, 2014, pp. 45-46).

#### 4. Stylistics

We cannot talk about a stylistic study of a poet or poetry without exploring the meaning of the word stylistics and its presence in the linguistic and idiomatic dictionaries to show the interrelationship of these two meanings and the clear picture they present that helps in understanding the nature of the literary and analytical work. The word al-osloob has many meanings in both dictionaries. "It is every garment on a person that has been taken. Al-salooob of the camels: the camel whose child is taken and the plural is salae'b. It was said that it is the camel that has dropped its child and the plural is solob. It is said that al-salb is tall, a tall horse and camel. Al-saleeb is the tree whose branches and leaves were taken. A musallab woman: a woman who mourns the death of her husband. A mare (salb alqawae'm): transportable. A man with salb hands to stab: light hands. A bull with a salb horn to gore: a light horn. And the salab trees have white fibers. (Al-salb): the fiber of eyeballs." In *Lisan Al-Arab*, "the line of palms is (osloob). Every extended road is (osloob). And (osloob) is the track, the way and the ideology. It is said: You are on the wrong track (osloob)" (Al-Khalil bin Ahmed, 1982).

For both terminologists and rhetoricians, "the word osloob (i.e. style) has many meanings, so it is difficult to define it with one definition. This is due to the fact that this word does not pertain to the linguistic field alone, but it is used in many other areas of daily life and art." (Heinrich Blett, 1999, p. 51) Stylistics, as Abd al-Salam al-Masadi says, "is a composite of the root 'osloob' (style) and the suffix 'tah'. Style has a subjective human meaning, and the suffix is concerned with the secular, mental and objective dimension." (al-Masadi, 1977, p. 31) Moreover, Jackson defines style as "a search for what distinguishes artistic speech firstly from other levels of discourse and secondly from all types of human arts." (al-Masadi, 1977, p. 33).

1. This is a simple presentation to define stylistics in an attempt to access Ibn Al-Qaysarani's Thughriyat and study them from a stylistic perspective. We will choose two types of stylistics: personal subjective stylistics and statistical stylistics.

## 5. Study of Al-Thughriyat

### Personal Subjective Stylistics

Al-Thughriyat are different from Ibn Al-Qaysarani's other poems, especially his jihadist poetry and even (poems about Iraqi women) in that "the dominant characteristic of their topic is the poet reaction to the human beauty and the attainable kinds of amusement in the occupied area he visited in the north. Hence, (al-thughriyat) was a form of enjoyable sentimental poetry, sometimes mixed with a description of the poet's observations in a strange cultural environment." (Ibrahim, 1988, p. 222)

Ibn Al-Qaysarani tried to break with the tradition of his time and the typicality of poetry that poets of his time followed, so he chose a different path, trying to invent something new in which he would achieve precedence and supremacy. He tried to escape "from the restrictions of the occasions to which he was related and began to describe the topics he liked." (Farouk,1974, p. 223) He was fascinated by what he saw of the beauty of the Frankish women and began describing the beauty of the women in the churches of the Romans who resembled the oryxes and were adorned with modesty; they were so beautiful that if their pictures graced the walls, they would be adored for their beauty and charm. They had the beauty which the poet hoped to be present in Arab women, so you feel that he describes the Roman women as Arabs, as he makes up for what he lacks there, saying:( Adel Jaber,1991, p. 215)

Maidens in churches are  
Like oryxes adorned with modesty  
If her picture is attached  
Other pictures will kneel before hers  
A saint with length in her shoulder  
And shortness in her belt  
Modesty planted in her cheek  
Flowers watered by looks  
If you talked to her  
Her eyelids would answer you  
Her garment patted her hair  
A moon night showed my weakness

Then this fascination continues, and he loves a Frankish woman scented with aromas, with a bright crown on her head, with a thin waist and with blue eyes which distinguish her from Arab women who have the same eye color; he says:( Adel Jaber,1991, p. 310)

I was fascinated by a Frankish woman  
Scented with aromas

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In her dress is a fine branch  
And in her crown a bright moon  
If she has blue eyes  
Then the racemes are blue

Ibn Al-Qaysarani's poetry softened as his resolves did, and his pure Arabic dictionary collapsed, just as Arabism collapsed and became in the wind of enemies who disdain Arabism and do not care what it suffers. His heart was fascinated with the Franks, so his unconscious revealed what he was trying to hide. Christian phrases became part of his poetic dictionary, so we find in his poetry words such as "the priest, the saint, the temple, the trinity, the altar, the statues, the sacrament, the deacon, the prince, Saint George, the Christian, the bishop, Feast of the Cross and others." (Adel Jaber,1991, p. 493) He goes too far in describing these things and repeating them in his poetry, as if he was hiding something. Had it not been for his life of faith in God and monotheism, I would have said that he had disbelieved:( Adel Jaber,1991, p. 327)

I saw a miracle in Antioch  
In which thought was not shared  
A vaunting temple in the name of Mary  
Its sky has radiant lights  
If the bell rings for a battle  
It has a battle in the virtue military

He wants to turn into a martyr for her love, just as Saint George who was a martyr for Christianity and who was killed by the Roman emperor Diocletian during the persecution of Christians; Ibn Al-Qaysarani says(Adel Jaber,1991, p. 255)

I wish I were her doll  
She see me and there is no shame in my touch  
I swear if I could  
I would turn into a picture of Saint George

Ibn Al-Qaysarani describes some of the Franks' rituals of slaughter and the rituals the priests perform, so he says: (Adel Jaber,1991, p. 407)

They call slaughtering souls the altar  
Or for prayers and sacrifices  
Priests dislodged it from the front  
And placed it in wishes

He flirts with the saints, not caring about being punished, for his fascination with the Frankish women made him absent-minded and unable to think or feel ashamed; he says: (Adel Jaber,1991, p. 215)

A saint with length in her shoulder  
And shortness in her belt  
And he continues describing the shape of the monasteries and talks specifically about the temple, how it is built and how it is left exposed, saying:( Adel Jaber,1991, p. 297)  
How many faces are like the morn sun  
Exposed in the exposed temple

He also talks about statues, how they are an integral part of monasteries, their shapes and the positions they have to be in. He says:( Adel Jaber,1991, p. 255)

Exposed faces of charming women  
Are covered with the morn sun  
The statues almost speak  
Owing to their charm

However, Ibn Al-Qaysarani was not able to break with the constraints of Arab poets and their presence in his poetry, so we find him a follower of the great Arab poets in his thughriyat as he followed others in the poetry of jihad. In al-thughriyat, he followed "Abu Nawas in particular, the poet of indecency."( Mahmoud Ibrahim,1988 ,p. 223) Ibn al-Qaysarani broke with the poets of Arabism and enthusiasm such as Al-Mutanabi and Abu Tammam, falling into the trap of the poet of amusement, indecency, wine and boys.

He was inspired by the experience of Abu Nawas in the monasteries of the Christians and tried to apply it to his thughriyat. If the Khimriyat (poems about wine) and Ghulmaniyat (poems about boys) of Abu Nawas indicate recklessness and delicacy, then Ibn Al-Qaysarani's following poem has the two elements, in addition to bearing Abu Nawas' spirit."(Mahmoud Ibrahim,1988 ,p. 223) This also indicates that Ibn Al-Qaysarani was a follower of the great Arab poets in the vision, form, formation and elements, and he was not reproducing the Arab heritage or using new templates, as he tells his story with his friend in Ashmonitha and explains his love for males, just like Abu Nawas (Adel Jaber,1991, p. 128-129)

If you were in Ashmonitha  
You'd see monotheism and trinity  
You'd see our ambitious eyes  
Favoring masculinity and femininity

He also follows Abu Nawas' dramatic story in his poems about wine and boys, flirting with boys and asking to drink wine from their mouths as it is more delicious, more beautiful and more intoxicating, saying:( Adel Jaber,1991, p. 128-129)

Every embrace pulls his bottom  
Like the sand holds tenderness  
Boys so gracefully slender  
I assumed the young men were effeminate  
I asked for a drink from his saliva  
He filled the bottle and dashed  
Pour me a drink from you  
Your virtue restrains my malice  
He said to consider clinging glasses  
I did not take in trinity

And his heart softens towards Christianity which the boy argues for, so the poet argues with him about religion. However, this argument ends and the poet flirts with the boy again, as he believes that the night is still at the beginning. So, he asks to stop the argument and enjoy the pleasures that continue until dawn, for these pleasures will be stopped only by the sound of dawn and the people going out; he says:( Adel Jaber,1991, p.128-129)

He began to argue for his religion  
I spent the night arguing  
He just prays to Jesus  
He chose Lot and we remembered wine  
The full moon is smiling  
Like the face of a virgin  
A night stopped by a dawn  
And swift horses

The Arab in Ibn Al-Qaysarani was defeated, so his hero and his Arabism died. We see him "rejecting Al-Mutanabi's position on achieving a victory for the Bedouin women and the life of the desert, and he accepts the position of Abu Nawas on disdaining the life of the desert, preferring urban life, including who and what it has." (Mahmoud Ibrahim,1988, p. 225) It seems that he disbelieved in anything related to Arabism, feeling defeated and renouncing the flirtation with the deserts and their women because he is busy with those in the palaces. Therefore, he adopts a civilized stance against the desert that represents Arabism, and he is all in favor of the city with what it represents of material values that for him achieve a self that was lost for him. He is in favour of unveiling and refuses veils that conceal beauty and make you suspicious, for the unveiled luminous faces that elevate you on the moons are his demand and purpose; he says:( Adel Jaber,1991, p.237-238)

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Those who dwelled in verses  
Manifested the merits of feeling  
Enjoy looking at faces  
Whose cheeks are far above veiling  
Unveiled women are full of grace  
Veils manifest signs of vanity  
If you looked  
You would be elevated on a bright moon  
I won't flirt with Bedouins  
For I am busy with the palace dwellers

The poet of enthusiasm and jihad, while on the verge of death, tried to "sincerely express himself and respond to original tendencies in himself, a strong tendency in him to fun and amusement and a tendency which the years could not weaken." (Mahmoud Ibrahim, 1988, p. 226)

## 2. Statistical Stylistics

Statistical stylistics is one of the methods used to reveal the poet's hidden depths in the text and what preoccupies the poet at the time of writing, and it also defines the poet's culture, approach and the nature of his poetic components. Moreover, it is "the easiest way for those who investigate scientific accuracy and avoid subjectivity in criticism." (Abdul-Muttalib, 1994, p. 198) When looking at Ibn Al-Qaysarani's thughriyat, we found that most of the poems are nothing more than mere pieces; the largest of which does not exceed 15 verses. This led me to say that the poems were improvised as a quick reaction to what the poet saw of things that inflamed his feelings and moved him to write.

When counting al-thughriyat, we found that they do not exceed 173 verses. They were arranged on nine poetry metres: the muta qarib (nearing) metre was used the most, as 32 verses were arranged on it, then the khafif (light) metre 27 verses, the munsarih (quick-paced) metre 26 verses, the wafir (abundant) metre 25 verses, the tawil (long) metre 21 verses, the kamil (complete) metre 17 verses, the sari' (swift) metre 12 verses, the rajaz (trembling) metre 8 verses and finally the basit (spread out) metre 5 verses.

As for the rhyme and the final letter (rhyme letter), the letter r was used the most (in 40 verses), then d in 27 verses, the letter n in 22 verses, s in 15 verses, the two letters b and th in 11 verses for each of them, the letter z in 10 verses, the letter ya in 9 verses, ya in 8 verses, f in 6 verses, k in 5 verses, al-Ain in 4 verses, al-qaf in 3 verses and finally the letter m in two verses.

After counting the broken rhyme letters, which represented the state of the poet's brokenness resulting from the brokenness of the nation and its submission, we found that the number of those verses is 102 out of 173, i.e. 58.95%.

If we look at the poet's linguistic and figurative composition, we find that he uses homonyms a lot. For example, he uses the word "nassib" to mean "flirtation" as well as "one of the wife's relatives."(Adel Jaber,1991, p.237)

If my word confided in her saint  
Flirtation would become his relative

He also uses "al-thughoor" to mean "Frankish cities", and "lips."(Adel Jaber,1991, p.237)

Bright lips in Frankish cities  
Slaughtering the enemy from the chest

He uses incomplete homonyms in the words "Khamarraah" (a brewed substance) and "Jamara" (palm core), saying (Adel Jaber,1991, p.239)

A brew coming out of slaughter  
A white palm core from slaughter

He uses complete homonyms in the words "be'am" (blindness) and "be'ame" (uncle), saying:(Adel Jaber,1991, p.390)

In Blindness I passed by  
A Christian who called me my uncle

We find this a lot, not only in al-thughriyat but in all Ibn Al-Qaysarani's poems; this is not surprising because that era was characterised by the use of figures of speech.

As for the antithesis, it was used a lot by the poet, and we will quote verses to demonstrate this. In the following verse, he uses the living and the dead: (Adel Jaber,1991, p.390)

She has a Christian face  
In which you see the dead alive

He also employs positive antithesis in the words "night" and "day" and uses the homonyms "jann" (went dark at night) and "jann" (went out of one's mind); he says:( Adel Jaber,1991, p.407)

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I ask travelers about you in the daytime  
And I lose my mind at night

Then he uses antithesis in the words "virtue" and "malice," saying:( Adel Jaber,1991, p.128)

Pour me a drink from you  
Your virtue restrains my malice

Ibn Al-Qaysarani deliberately used similes and metaphors a lot in his poetry to strengthen images and to add aesthetics to poetry. He invented images that no one used before; in his portrayal of these beautiful Frankish women, he says that if their pictures were attached to the walls, the pictures and drawings would kneel before their beauty:(Adel Jaber,1991, p.215)

If her picture is attached  
Other pictures will kneel before hers

He also depicts beautiful pictures kneeling before other pictures:(Adel Jaber,1991, p.245)

You just see pictures  
Kneeling before pictures

Among his beautiful similes is comparing the nuns to the oryxes embellished with modesty, which is a tendency towards traditional Arab Bedouin similes:( Adel Jaber,1991, p.215)

Maidens in churches are  
Like oryxes adorned with modesty

Also, he compares the nuns' faces with the full moon and their hair with the dark night, which are also traditional similes:( Adel Jaber,1991, p.212)

Every face's image is like  
A full moon, but its night is a poem

He also uses tropes, metonymy, both explicit and implicit metaphors and other forms of rhetoric, in addition to good division, puns and other things that cannot be discussed further in this short paper.

## **6. Conclusion:**

Those were Ibn Al-Qaysarani's thughriyat, on which we reflected trying to clarify what was hidden in them, but that reflection was as quick as the greeting of strangers in the port. The



research has found that al-thughriyat represents the state of defeat that the poet and society suffered at that time.

The research has also found out that al-thughriyat were only short pieces that did not exceed fifteen verses at its finest and that the poet relied on the use of the broken letter at the end of each verse, which expresses the state of Islamic defeat at the time. The research has also found that the poet is fascinated with the fortified towns that he visited and admires the Western civilization that his country has not had.

After studying the lexicon, the research found that the poet's words were softer than they were before, as his jihadist poetry was a true picture of ancient Arab poetry. We saw that he disbelieved in Arab poets such as Al-Mutanabi and Abu Tammam whom he used to consider a light for him in his jihadist poetry. Rather, he started following a poet like Abu Nawas into his flirtation with the Frankish women.

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