

Main Feature in Ascetical Poetry Composed By Selected Poets Of Zamfara Twentieth Century A.D.

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Abstract: *The paper would be an effort to study and analyze the ascetical poetry composed by Zamfara scholars, as well as the general environment o Zamfara where the poets were bone and brought up for its effect on their poetries, some poets were selected in the study so as to make the research more specific, who include: Shiekh Umar Bafashi, Shiekh Qadhy Aliyu Sani Gusau, Shiekh Muhammadu Balarabe Gusau, Shiekh Qadhy Abdulkadir Sani Gusau, Shiekh Muhammadu Bello MurtalaKaura, Shiekh Muhammadu Bello AbubakarKanwa, and Ustaz Muhammadu Mustafa Balarabe Gusau.*

Key words: *Feature, Ascetical poetry, poets, Zamfara State, Nigeria.*

I. Introduction

This paper is an effort by the researchers to display the work of Zamfara Arabic Scholars, especially the poets, in field of Arabic poetry, most especially in the ascetical poetry.

The paper consist of the researchers effort to display and analyze the main features in the ascetical poetry composed by the said poets, as well as the general environment of Zamfara area where the poets were born and brought up, for its effect on their poetries. Some poets were selected in the study so as to make the research more specific.

II. Brief history of Zamfara

The old Zamfara was among the ancient hausa kingdom wich existed several years before the establishment of the Islamic kingdom led by sheikh Usmanu bnfodiyo who amalgamated all of the kingdoms and others to form the new giant spiritual kingdom.

The new Zamfarawich is our major concern in this paper is one of the existing thirty six states that form Nigeria with Gusau as its capital.

Zamfara state boarders with Sokoto state to the west, from the south it boarders with two states, that is kebbi and Niger, it boarders with katsina from the east, and from the north it boarders with the republic of Niger.⁽¹⁾

The people of Zamfara show more concern in seeking both Islamic and western knowledge, the high number total number of Quranic, Islamiyyahand modern schools in the state would support the argument.

They also show keen interest in composing Arabic poetry in different ideas, methodology, style, meter and rhymes which consist of rhetoric and cloquence.

The poets in the state and other areas of Hausa-land and Nigeria is general, are mostly Islamic scholars. That is why they don't normally compose poems for economic purpose.

III. Selected poets of ascetical poetry in Zamfara

Asceticism means whatever a believer performs to make him closer to God and his messenger Muhammad (PBUH) or disassociate him from being a party to any satanic acts. Thought it is not surprising to see the poets of Zamfara in particular or the poets of the whole Hausa land in general are fund of composing poems in the arts of asceticism, especially in the twentieth century, that's because they were born and brought up after establishment of Islamic kingdom led by sheikh Usmanu bn Fodiyo (R.A.), the purely Islamic environment contributed in modeling their methodology of composing poems to be purely or partially Islamic is not ascetical. By going on the above information we can understand it is very difficult for one to detect the total number of poets in Zamfara who composed ascetical poetry, that is why we selected the poems of the following poets in our study as an example, they are as follows:

1. shiekh Umar Bafashi Gumi (1916-2014)
2. shiekhQadyAliyuSani Gusau (1917-1985)

3. shiekh Muhammadu BalarabeGusau (1918-1987)
4. shiekhQadhyAbdulkadirSani Gusau (1927-1999)
5. Shiekh Muhammadu Bello MurtalaKaura (1944-Date)
6. Shiekh Muhammadu Bello Abubakar Kanwa(1947-Date)
7. Ustazu Muhammadu Mustapha Balarabe Gusau (1972-Date)

IV. Main features in their ascetical poetry

The main features in the ascetical of Zamfara include: praise of God, Ethics of the prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, Divine Love, and qualities of Saints (*Auliyah*) and pious, (*Shieks*), God's intercession through pious people, Monologues, portray of life, and Guidance and Misguidance.

1. Praise of God

Many poets in Zamfara who show their concern on ascetical poetry composed poems mainly on praise of Almighty Allah, and show their gratitude to him, for what he poured on mankind of blessing, favor and mercy, Shiekh Muhammadu Bello MurtalaKaura is among the poets who composed poems of such nature when said:

*Praise goes to the one who created the universe
He deserved to be praised throughout the days
He has neither beginning nor ending
He would remain when all his creatures has vanished*

2. Ethics of the prophet Muhammadu peace be upon him:

The ascetical poets in Zamfara shows more on this component of the ascetical poetry, they composed many Divans (*Diwan*) on it, their idea on it is very wide, in this component they show their keen love and respect to the prophet Muhammad Peace be upon him, as we can notice in the poem composed by Shiekh Qadhy Abdulqadir Sani Gusau, when he said:

*I really love you oh! The prophet
My heart is always with you,
Even though my body is far away from you
I always consider myself among those near you,
Even though my skin is dark,
And my home is situated from you.
That is because of your promise to cover all your lovers,
With your love and mercy,
In spite of their relationship to you
Oh the messenger of God,
All part of my body all whole some of me,
Really love you and praise you.
I don't have any rescue in my life beside this love,
Your lover is really confident to enter paradise.
He also said in another poem:
Panegyrics () is as equal as performing obligatory worship,
Like prayers and fasting.*

The poets in this component of the ascetical poetry, describe the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with excellent virtues, such as courage, generosity, hospitality, kindness, chastity, etc.

3. *divine love and qualities of saints (Auliya') and pious (sheikhs):*

divine love according to adherents of sufi order sects means to merge love of God with that of his messenger Muhammad (PBUH), saints and pious.

According to them one must love prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as he love the one who sent him to the world as his representative on earth. They also argued that those who love God and his messenger must also love all saints and all pious, because they are the representatives of God and his messenger in the various places And at different periods.

They believe that the whole universe was created out of the light of prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as sheikh Muhammadu bello Murtalakaura said in his poem:

Allah the almighty, created the universe,
With light of the Muhammad (PBUH),
And also the bed (arsh) and the chair (kursiyu),
The grandfather Muhammad (PBUH),
He (God) then, placed the light of Muhammad (PBUH),

The verses shows that the light of Muhammad (PBUH) was found before the creation of all creatures, and when prophet Adam was created, the light of Muhammad (PBUH) was placed in his body, when he died the light was transferred into another pious body, it kept being transferred from a prophets or pious body to another, until the time he was born. And when he was called by his creator, the light has keep being transferred from one saints to another until the day of judgment, that is why they say; the light of Muhammad (PBUH) would not cease in the world of the last day, because it will continue to transfer from one person' to another. At this point sheikh qadhyAbdulkadirsaniGusau described sheikh Ibrahim Inyas as the representative of God on earth, because of the light of Muhammad he was carrying in his body, when he said:

He is the representative of God in the universe,
He is the one all creatures look at, from ground and sea.
He is lover of prophet Muhammad (PBUH),
He does not separate from him as
Planet don't separate from its orbit.

4. *Monologues (el-munajat)*

The art of monologues is one of the components that form the ascetical poetry, scholars indicate that only adherents of sufi order sects show their concern on this form of poetry. Ustaz Muhammad Amin Umar described the adherents of the sufi order sects as the most as the most obedient to God's commandments, but they Also show more fear to the wrath of God than other Muslims, because they consider every mistakes, forgetfulness or laxity in performing non – obligatory worship as sinful, that is why they always seek for God forgiveness.⁽²⁾

The poets of ascetical poetry in Zamfara composed many poems on this components in which they mentioned too much of their sins and look for forgiveness of God, so as to enter the paradise, as Sheikh Qadhy Aliyu Sani Gusau has said:

I indeed come to only you my God,
To purify me from my sins out of your mercy,
I come to your door seeking for salvage
From the hellfire in the day of judgment.

They also pray to God to prevent them from any disaster, And not disgrace them in their business here and hereafter, as the last poet said:

Oh you the preventer of any kind of disaster,
Oh you the lord of mankind,
Oh my God, prevent me from Any kind of disaster
And disgrace me in my business here and hereafter.

5. *God's intercession through pious people:*

The poets of Zamfara composed many poems on this components of ascetical poetry, which is full of shedding tears and crying, facing God and ask him to fulfill their wishes for the sake of his messenger, his prophets, saints or Any other pious people, when doing that, they don't believe in any impacts of those pious people on the fulfillment of their wishes but because they believe that these pious people are honored and respected by God for their love and obedience to him. Their reason for that is the Hadith narrated by imam el-Bukhary from Anas (RTA) that, the caliph Umar bnKhattab (RTA) , used to ask God for rainfall when it was ceased, for the sake of prophet Muhammad (PBUH), or the prophet's uncle Abbas, he said:

"Oh God, we indeed are asking you for rainfall for the sake of your prophet (SAW), let rain be fall on us, we are also asking for the sake of your prophet's uncle, let the rain be fall on us, and the rain be fall on them"⁽³⁾

In this meaning we found Sheikh QadhyAbdulkadirSaniGusau asking God for rainfall for the sake of his prophet (SAW), when he said:

For his (the prophet) sake, we are asking you Heavy rainfall, because the earth is thirsty And give us out of it food and hay And bumper harvest to our satisfaction.

Sheikh Muhammad Balarabe Gusau also said on the same meaning:

We ask our God for good ending,

For the sake of our el-Tijjany,

The aider of the time.

The poets sometimes, direct their request to these pious people and ask them to fulfill it for them, with a belief that they can do that, by extending the request to their beloved God to fulfill it. In this regard, Sheikh Qadhy Aliyu Sani Gusau has this to say.

I indeed came to you, (the prophet)

Seeking for asylum

Sir, with all respect,

I ask to accept my request,

Though I have many shortcomings,

Be my protector and aider,

Here and hereafter

Sheikh Umar Bafashi Gumi also said:

Oh sheikh (Ahmad el-Tijjany),

I ask your permission to be closed to you

So as to be led to the God who controls

The entire universe.

6. Portray of life (Taswir El-Hayat)

The portray of life is the one of the major components of ascetical poetry composed by Zamfara poets where they portrayed the world as vanity place, as such all those who prefer her over the hereafter is stupid or rival, as stated by sheikh Muhammadu Balarabe Gusau when he said:

The world is home for homeless persons,

It is a home for brat and evil doer for their servility,

It is only the stupid or rival

That will relax in it with girlfriends,

Thinking that the situation will remain permanently

Sheikh Muhammadu Bello MurtalaKaura also said

Let a man not be tempted with the live Which at last will come to an end One must prefer the supplement from here For the forthcoming day of judgement. Ustaz Muhammadu Mustapha Balarabe Gusau portrayed the world as a temporary home for mankind due to what he observed of passing away many saints and pious people as such he described the world as inconvenient place for mankind to relax in, this is why he did a farewell wave for her when he said:

Farewell from the world, the passing path of all eras

Since in it, the pious people decrease to an end

I bid a farewell to her permanently,

For what we loss in her of pious people

Nothing good in the world if in her, pious people die,

May it be crushed or smashed,

The death is better for a patient person.

The world is home of vanity and temptation, which can only be understand by sober-minded people, they are the people who look of the life of past people and form out of it their spiritual life, as pious Hassan el-basry was narrated as saying: "if it pleases you to see the world after you, look at her after others"⁽⁴⁾. On this meaning sheikh Muhammadu Balarabe Gusau composed a poem in which he said:

The sober-minded people can't be pleased with world.

The home of vanity and temptation,

Their endeavor is to always face the God

With reciting his Glorious Names

Because they saw with their mind,

That the death is passing path

To the permanent home

Where is our prophet, the best of all mankind

And other prophet who were clothier to God,
Where are Abubakar, Umar and Usman
Where are Aliyu and the rest of companions
They all passed away without any hesitation
Where is honored generation
That follows the companions
Where are the sheikhs of different era
They also describe how people are confused when any respected person died, as Ustaz Muhammadu Mustapha Balarabe Gusau described how they felt with the death of such persons, when he said:
We became confused like grasshoppers
Or powder hit by rain wind
Today we don't feel anything
We also can't distinguish between
Clear and hidden objects.
They also described the forthcoming day of judgment when people will become helpless, as sheikh Muhammadu Bello MurtalaKaura described the day as follows:
There will be no ruler in that day
Except his (God) ruling
All events will be going according to his wishes
All kings will be quit in that day
They all noticed the powerfulness of God
All people waiting patiently to see
Their deeds and its result after the judgment
He who pass at the end of exercise
The heaven will be his permanent home
Without any hesitation
And he whose good deeds became less
He will be among the perish ones
Who would enter hellfire
Oh God we ask you for good end
So as to have heaven As permanent home

7. Guidance and misguidance:

Another major component of the ascetical poetry is discussing about guidance and misguidance, which means urging people to always behave wisely and in accordance with the teaching of their religion, and shun away from whatever is contrary to the right way, for their successful life here and hereafter.

Zamfara poets are among the poets that contributed their quarter to the development of ascetical poetry in Nigeria, such as what Sheikh Qadhy Abdulkadir Sani Gusau has said:

My advice to the son of Adam and eve

Is to always adhere to strictly to piety

Whoever is stronger than you in

Anything beside the piety

You are stronger than him if

You are better than him in piety

The poets described the piety, as the only supplement can take along with him to his very long unavoidable journey to the ground of last judgment, which will only benefit its owners. It narrated that caliph AliyubnAbiTalib (RTA), one day visited in cemetery, and said pointing at the graves after he said salam to them: "all of houses were occupied, all of the property were distributed, all of the wives (or husbands) we remarried, this is our story to you, what is your story to us?" and then continue after he turned and face his followers: " I swear with one my soul is in his hand, if they are to be permitted to talk, they will tell us that the best supplement (one can take along with him to his very long unavoidable journey to the ground of last judgment) is piety"⁽⁵⁾

Trust in God is one of the major components of ascetical poetry composed by Zamfara poets, as said by Sheikh QadhyAbdulkadirSaniGusau:

All part of my body and total sum of my humble self

Have indeed trusted God the best knower of the secret

Abu Alim el-A'araji has this to say on the trust of God:

"I found two things only in the world, one is for me, I can't rush it for myself before the due time, even with the help of universal power. The other one is for another person, I didn't get in the past and I would not get it in the

future, what is for me is prevented to another person, and what is for me is prevented to me, what of the two things can I make my life busy and destroy myself⁽⁶⁾.

The poets of Zamfara went contrary with Rabiah el-Adawiyyah in one of her view which says "I didn't worship God for the fear of his hellfire or for the hope of his heaven, but for the sake Of my love to him"⁽⁷⁾. The poets of Zamfara in this components of their ascetical poetry show that they believe in "hope and fear", that is to say, they fear the wrath of God which lead to hellfire, and hope for his mercy which lead to heaven, that is why they call people to maximize their effort in worshipping the God, so as to get the gate pass of the heaven, and be far away from the hellfire, as mentioned by sheikh Muhammadu Bello MurtalaKaura, when he said:

May we not try our best to meet?

The God of forgiveness

For the hope of his luxurious heaven, Which all of us hope to enter In the day that the hellfire is made.

V. Conclusion

We have seen in the paper, effort made by researchers in analyzing the ascetical poetry composed by Zamfara scholars, as well as the general environment of Zamfara where the poets were born and brought up.

We have also seen the name of some poets whose poems were selected in the study, whom include: Sheikh Umar Bafashi, Sheikh Qadhy Aliyu Sani Gusau, Sheikh Muhammadu Balarabe Gusau, sheikh Qadhy Abdulkadir Sani Gusau, sheikh Muhammadu Bello Murtalakaura, sheikh Muhammadu BelloAbubakarKanwa and Ustaz Muhammadu Mustapha Balarabe Gusau

We have also noticed that the main features of the ascetical poetry composed by the said poets include: praise of God, Ethics of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Divine Love and qualities of Saints [Auliya'] and Pious [sheikhs], Monologues [El-Munajat], God's Intercession through pious people, portray of life [Taswir El-Hayat] and Guidance and Misguidance.

Endnote:

1. Muhammad el-Amin Umar, el-sheikh AbubakarAtikuwaDiwanuhadiyyatulahbabiwalkhillani, p.235.
2. Hadith is the saying of prophet Muhammad (PBUH), his deeds or what his confirmation of what others did in his presence.
3. El-Bukhary, Abu Abdullahi bnIsma'ilabn Ibrahim, sahih el-Bukhary, vol.2, p.34.
4. El-jahith, Abu UthmanAmru' bn Bahr, El-Bayan wa El-Tabyin, vol.3, p.128.
5. Op-cit, p.136.
6. Op-cit, p.123.
7. She was one of the prominent founders of Sufi order sects.