



AL-SHAKWĀ IN MUHAMMAD THAOBĀN ĀDAM ‘ABDULLĀH AL-ILORY’S DĪWĀN
AL-SHUKRĀN: QUR’ANIC INTERTEXTUALITY, ETHICAL DISCOURSE, AND
RHETORICAL STRATEGY

¹Abbas Ahmad Sani and ²Akewula Adams Olufemi

^{1&2}Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria,
akewula.adams@dlc.ui.edu.ng
ustazabbasahmadsani@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the poetry of complaint (*shakwā*) in the works of Muhammad Thaobān Ādam ‘Abdullāh Al-Ilory with particular attention to Qur’anic intertextuality in *Dīwān al-Shukrān*. Although the collection is rhetorically framed around gratitude (*shukr*), many of its verses function as subtle expressions of ethical complaint against betrayal, envy, hypocrisy, and social injustice. Drawing upon theories of intertextuality developed by Julia Kristeva and Gerard Genette alongside classical Arabic rhetorical concepts such as *iqtibās*, *talmīḥ*, and *taḍmīn*, the study argues that Muhammad Thaobān transforms complaint into a spiritually disciplined discourse grounded in Qur’anic ethics. Through close textual reading informed by Islamic literary criticism, the paper identifies three dominant modes of Qur’anic intertextuality: ethical authorization through divine justice, prophetic allusion as moral exemplarity, and rhetorical imitation of Qur’anic discourse patterns. The study concludes that Qur’anic intertextuality in Muhammad Thaobān’s poetry functions simultaneously as rhetoric, theology, and ethical critique, thereby contributing significantly to contemporary Nigerian Arabic literature and African Arabic poetics.

Keywords: Al-shakwā, Nigerian Arabic Poetry, Qur’anic intertextuality, *Dīwān al-Shukrān*

1.0 Introduction

Complaint poetry (*shakwā*) has historically occupied a central position in Arabic literary culture as a medium for articulating grief, oppression, alienation, and ethical protest. From the elegiac laments of *Al-Khansā’* to modern Arabic protest poetry, complaint has served not merely as emotional expression but as moral discourse grounded in social and spiritual consciousness. Akhtar *et al*, (2025) in their study titled “The Evolution of the Theme of Complaint in Arabic Poetry Across the Ages,” quote Professor Bayan Ali Abdul Rahim’s definition from his article on “Basra poetry in the fourth century AH”, as an expression of deprivation and a feeling of injustice; it appears when a

person's circumstances become complicated. The author categorises complaints into two categories: private and general complaints. The private complaint addresses specific issues, such as the poet's lamentation of lost youth, unfulfilled hopes, and other issues. Sometimes, it may transcend its specificity to a broader human scope, as it is a problem facing all of humanity. As for the general complaint, it includes complaints about time and criticism of the world (Akhtar *et al*, 2025).

The study of *Al-shakwā* in Arabic poetry is particularly relevant today as poets across the Arab world and the wider Islamic cultural sphere continue to use the form to



reflect on war, displacement, political disillusionment, and cultural identity. Nigerian Arabic poets, particularly from Yorubaland and Ilorin, have adapted the form to articulate local experiences, blending Qur'anic idioms, prophetic rhetoric, and Arabic prosody to address contemporary moral and social crises. This localization of *Al-shakwā* makes it a critical lens for understanding how Arabic literary forms have been indigenized across non-Arab Muslim societies such as Nigeria. A striking example of this complexity appears in the poetry of Muhammad Thaobān Ādam 'Abdullāh Al-Ilory, particularly in *Dīwān al-Shukrān*. The collection presents an apparent paradox: poems outwardly framed as expressions of gratitude frequently function as subtle complaints about betrayal, envy, hostility, hypocrisy, and social corruption. Rather than expressing complaint through direct invective, the poet reframes suffering through gratitude, repentance, and reliance upon divine justice; complaint is therefore transformed from emotional lament into ethical reflection.

The broader Yoruba-Arabic literary tradition provides important context for understanding this strategy. Studies on Arabic poetry of Yoruba authorship emphasize the extensive intertextual engagement of West African Arabic poets with the Qur'an, Hadith, classical Arabic poetry, and Islamic intellectual heritage (Algamawy, 2023). Algamawy's thesis on intertextuality in Yoruba Arabic poetry argues that Arabic poetry of Yoruba authorship operates through "relations with other networks of texts" and that intertextuality provides a useful framework for understanding literary creativity in Nigerian Arabic poetry (Algamawy, 2023). The research further explains that Yoruba Arabic poets consciously and unconsciously

engage in forms of literary absorption, quotation, transformation, and dialogism rooted in both classical Arabic criticism and modern intertextual theory (Algamawy, 2023).

Despite these contributions, existing scholarship on Nigerian Arabic literature has focused predominantly on biography, praise poetry (*madīh*), historical documentation, and educational verse. Relatively little attention has been devoted to rhetorical strategy, Qur'anic intertextuality, and the ethical dimensions of complaint poetry in contemporary Nigerian Arabic texts. Even studies devoted to intertextuality in Arabic poetry of Yoruba authorship acknowledge a "dearth of scholarly works" (Algamawy, 2023), specifically addressing intertextual analysis in this field. This gap becomes particularly significant in the case of Muhammad Thaobān, whose complaint poetry demonstrates engagement with Qur'anic rhetoric and Islamic ethical discourse. This study, therefore, argues that Muhammad Thaobān employs Qur'anic intertextuality as a rhetorical and ethical strategy through which complaint is legitimized, intensified, and spiritually transformed. His poetry utilizes Qur'anic echoes, prophetic paradigms, rhetorical structures, and devotional language to frame grievance within a sacred ethical universe. Through this process, suffering becomes a means of repentance (*tawbah*), gratitude (*shukr*), and spiritual transcendence rather than mere lamentation.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to three intersecting fields. First, it expands scholarship on Arabic *shakwā* poetry by examining its contemporary Nigerian manifestations. Second, it contributes to African Arabic literary studies by foregrounding the sophistication of Yoruba Arabic poetic



traditions. Third, it enriches studies of Qur'anic intertextuality by demonstrating how sacred discourse functions simultaneously as rhetoric, theology, and ethical critique within modern African Arabic poetry.

Literature Review

The reviewed literature indicates that *al-shakwā* (complaint poetry) has remained an important literary genre in both classical Arabic and Nigerian Arabic traditions, functioning as a medium for emotional expression, social criticism, moral reform, and philosophical reflection. Studies such as Tajudeen Yusuf (2008) show that Nigerian Arabic poetry addresses contemporary societal issues, including terrorism, injustice, and social disunity, while the works of Haftador and Karimi (2014; 2015) establish the historical evolution and technical features of complaint poetry in classical Arabic literature. Their studies categorize *shaqwā* into self-complaint and social complaint and identify rhetorical devices such as repetition, antithesis, and *jinās* as central stylistic features. Similarly, Mohammed Faris Yaseen Al-Hamdaany (2017) and Nizar Jibril Al-Seoudi (2017) examine the emotional, moral, and psychological dimensions of complaint poetry, emphasizing themes such as suffering, alienation, oppression, and spiritual reflection. However, these classical studies remain limited to Arab literary contexts and do not examine the adaptation of *al-shaqwā* within African Islamic literary traditions.

The literature on Nigerian Arabic poetry further demonstrates the richness of local Arabic literary production and its engagement with social realities. L. O. Ibraheem (2018) highlights the role of Ilorin scholars in preserving classical Arabic poetic traditions while incorporating

Yoruba-Islamic cultural elements, whereas Saidu Abubakar Musa (2002) emphasizes the socio-historical significance of Arabic literature in Nigeria. More recent studies by Bashir Ameen (2022) establish Nigerian Arabic poetry as a vehicle for criticizing corruption, societal depravity, leadership failure, and moral decline. Other scholars such as Sulaiman Ibrahim *Algamawi* (2023), Abbas Ahmad Sani (2023), and Adams Olufemi Akewula (2014; 2019) contribute perspectives on intertextuality, complaint poetry, nationhood, and social transformation within Arabic literary discourse. These studies collectively show that Nigerian Arabic literature actively engages with social, cultural, and ideological issues through diverse literary forms and critical approaches.

The literature on intertextuality further reveals that Arabic literary criticism possessed sophisticated theories of textual interaction long before the emergence of modern post-structuralist theories. Classical concepts such as *sarqah*, *tadmīn*, *mu'aradah*, *naqā'id*, and *talmīh* demonstrate that Arab critics recognized textual borrowing, transformation, and dialogism centuries before Julia Kristeva formalized the concept of intertextuality. Scholars note that poets such as Abū Tammām, al-Buḥturī, and Abū Nuwās frequently reconstructed earlier poetic structures and meanings in ways comparable to modern intertextual practices. Researchers also emphasize the close relationship between Kristeva's intertextual theory and the rhetorical theories of al-Jurjānī, particularly his theory of *naẓm*, which views literary creativity as the transformation of inherited texts into new aesthetic configurations. Studies by Murāshidah (2000), Turkī Al-Majīd (2016), Hayyat Ma'āsh (2004), and Sulaiman Algamawi Ibrahim (2023) further confirm



that Arabic poetry extensively employs intertextual strategies rooted in Qur'anic, Hadith, historical, and literary sources.

The Poetics of *Al-Shakwā* in Arabic Literature

Complaint poetry constitutes one of the oldest thematic structures in Arabic literature. In pre-Islamic poetry, poets used complaint to lament tribal decline, exile, aging, betrayal, and loss. The elegiac poetry of *Al-Khansā'* established complaint as a morally charged form of emotional expression in which grief simultaneously functions as ethical witnessing (Akewula, 2019). Classical *shakwā* frequently exposed oppression (*ẓulm*), social corruption, and personal suffering while invoking ideals of honor, patience, and divine justice. *Al-Shakwā* (الشكوى) in Arabic literature refers to complaint poetry, where poets express grief, suffering, or dissatisfaction with personal, social, or political circumstances (Sani, 2023). It constitutes a prominent thematic genre in Arabic literature through which poets articulate grief, suffering, or discontent with personal, social, or political conditions (Sani, 2023). Rooted in pre-Islamic traditions, it evolved through Islamic and Abbasid periods, often blending with other forms like elegy (*rithā'*) and supplication (*munājāt*). Below is an analysis of its definition, synonyms, and literary significance.

Al-Farahidi's *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, as edited by Al-Samarraʿī etymologically links *Al-Shakwā* to physical and emotional distress, as seen in his definitions: "*Al-Shaqwā* is used to describe distress and illness... He complained repeatedly... Complaining is the illness itself, where the act of lamentation becomes synonymous with the affliction it expresses (Al-Farahidi, 1980). Ibn Manẓūr defines *Al-Shakwā* in *Lisān al-ʿArab* (The Tongue of the Arabs) as "the expression of

grievances or distress, whether concerning matters that cause discontent or describing physical ailments" (Ibn Manzur, 1955). *Al-shakwā* is an emotional state towards a specific stimulus, or several stimuli, that causes the sensitive soul to feel anxious and tense (Weam, 2009).

Al-Shakwā (الشكوى) is a prominent thematic genre in Arabic poetry, encompassing expressions of grief, suffering, and dissatisfaction with personal, social, or political adversities. Rooted in pre-Islamic (Jāhiliyyah) poetry, it evolved across Islamic, Umayyad, Abbasid, and Andalusian periods, adapting to shifting historical and cultural contexts (Akhtar et al, 2025). Synonyms such as *Al-Taḍarru'* (التضرع, supplicatory lamentation), *Al-Nawḥ* (النوح, mournful elegy), *Al-Ihtijāj* (الاحتجاج, protest), and *Al-Lawʿah* (اللوعة, anguished outcry) reflect the multifaceted nature of *Al-shakwā*, ranging from personal sorrow to socio-political critique. Over time, complaint poetry expanded beyond personal grief into broader ethical and political discourse. Modern Arabic poets transformed *shakwā* into a vehicle for anti-colonial protest, existential anxiety, and critiques of authoritarianism.

About the poet Muhammad Thaobān Adam 'AbduLlāh Al-Ilory

Muhammad Thaobān Adam 'AbduLlāh Al-Ilory is a distinguished Nigerian Islamic scholar, educator, poet, and religious leader, and one of the sons of Shaykh Adam 'AbduLlāh Al-Ilory. Born on 5 September 1961 in Agege, he is widely recognized for his contributions to Arabic and Islamic scholarship, literary studies, and religious leadership in contemporary West Africa. He received his early education under the tutelage of his father at the Arabic and Islamic Training Centre (MARKAZ) in Agege before advancing his studies at Al-



Azhar University and Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University. He later obtained a Master's degree in Arabic Language and Literature from Lagos State University. Over the years, he has combined religious service with academic engagement, serving as Chief Imam of Sheikh Adam AbduLlāh Al-Ilory Central Mosque (*Masjid Tawbah*), founder of *Markazul-Uloom* Arabic and Islamic Centre, Otubu Agege, Lagos, Nigeria, and lecturer at Lagos State University. He has also maintained a significant media presence with significant coverage through tafsir programmes and sermons broadcast on Lagos State Television and MITV. His scholarly contributions encompass Islamic history, pedagogy, Arabic language studies, and poetry. His notable works include *Dhikr Man Jabu: History of Islamic Scholars in Ijebu Land*, *Dictionary of the Works of Sheikh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilory*, and *The Art of Teaching and Methods of Education*, alongside several educational textbooks and poetic diwans such as *Dīwān al-Shukrān*, *Dīwān Tahīyyat al-'Allāmah al-Ilory*, *Dīwān al-Ummiyyāt*, among numerous other scholarly and poetic works.

Description of the poem *Shakartu al-'Aduwwa wa La Shukra Lah!*

The poem titled *Shakartu al-'Aduwwa wa Lā Shukra Lah* (I Thanked the Enemy, Though He Deserves No Thanks) represents a reconfiguration of *al-shakwā* poetry in which personal suffering is articulated through Qur'anic discourse and classical Arabic rhetorical aesthetics. Drawing upon the theories of intertextuality developed by Julia Kristeva and Gérard Genette, the poem demonstrates how meaning emerges through the absorption and transformation of prior sacred texts, particularly the Qur'an. Kristeva's notion of textual dialogism is evident in the poet's integration of Qur'anic

language, themes, and moral structures into his poetic complaint, while Genette's concept of transtextuality explains how the poem operates as a hypertext that reshapes Qur'anic expressions into a new literary and devotional context. Through classical Arabic rhetorical techniques such as *iqtibās* (Qur'anic quotation or borrowing), *talmīh* (allusion), and *taḍmīn* (textual incorporation), the poet transforms complaint from a purely emotional response into a spiritually charged discourse grounded in divine justice and moral reflection.

The poem is structured around a paradoxical rhetorical strategy in which the act of "thanking" the enemy becomes an indirect yet powerful form of complaint against envy (*ḥasad*), hatred (*ḥiqd*), and deception. Rather than openly attacking the enemy, the poet employs subtle rhetorical inversion to expose the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of his adversaries. This strategy reflects the classical rhetorical device of *tawriyah* (double meaning), where apparent praise conceals condemnation. Simultaneously, Qur'anic intertextuality amplifies the emotional and theological depth of the poem. Expressions affirming divine justice, repentance, and forgiveness echo Qur'anic formulations concerning Allah's perfect judgment and boundless mercy, thereby grounding the poet's suffering within a sacred moral framework. The poem consequently moves beyond individual grievance toward a universal meditation on truth, justice, and spiritual purification.

The progression of the poem further reveals a carefully constructed rhetorical and intertextual architecture. The opening movement establishes the paradox of thanking the enemy for his deficiencies, exposing the corrosive effects of envy and moral corruption through antithesis and

irony. The middle section shifts toward theological contemplation, where Qur'anic allusions concerning divine justice and the futility of evil reframe the poet's experience within a larger cosmic struggle between righteousness and falsehood. In the final section, the complaint gradually transforms into repentance (*tawbah*) and gratitude (*shukr*), illustrating how the poet employs Qur'anic discourse not merely as ornamentation but as a mechanism for spiritual transcendence. **The poem**
Shakartu al- 'Aduwwa wa Lā Shukra Lah

*** شَكَرْتُ الْعَدُوَّ وَلَا شُكْرَ لَهُ
وَلَكِنْ عَلَيْهِ لِمَا لَيْسَ لَهُ
*** مِنَ الْعَقْلِ وَالْفَضْلِ بَلُّهُ الْهُدَى
إِذِ الْحَقْدُ وَالْحَسَدُ قَدْ أَشْغَلَهُ
*** حَسُودِي لِلْبَغْضَى غَدَا مُفْلِسًا
أَرَاهُ حَقِيرًا وَلَا عِزَّ لَهُ
*** فَمَنْ عَدِلَ رَبِّي وَجُودُ الْعَدُوِّ
فَأَعْدِلَ بِرَبِّي فَمَا أَغْدَلَهُ
*** وَمِنْ فَضْلِهِ فَضْلُهُ وَاسِعٌ
فَأَفْضِلَ بِرَبِّي وَمَا أَفْضَلَهُ
*** وَمِنْ فَضْلِهِ فُتُّ كَيْدِ الْعَدَا
وَمَكْرُ الْحَسُودِ بِنَا أَسْفَلَهُ
*** إِذَا مَا اعْتَلَى سُرْعَةً بُرْهَةً
تَنْزَلَ فِي ذَرَكَةِ الْمَسْفَلَةِ
إِذَا ظَنَّ أَنْ قَدْ حَوَتْ كَفَّهُ *** مِنْ
الْمُلْكِ شَيْئًا فَلَا مُلْكَ لَهُ
*** وَلَوْ مَا حَوَى مَا حَوَى مِنْ ثَرَا
بِجَرْمٍ، تَيَقَّنَ هُوَ الشَّرُّ لَهُ
قَضَى عَيْشَهُ حَاسِدًا مَآكِرًا *** بِهِ
رَادَ فَضْلِي وَلَا فَضْلَ لَهُ
*** فَصُنْتُ بِهِ النَّفْسَ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْنٍ
وَالْأَفْتَحْتُ لِكَيْ يُقْلَهُ
*** لِأَنِّي احْتَرَسْتُ لِكَيْ لَا يَرَى
سِوَى الْخَيْرِ مَبْنِي وَلَوْ أَبْطَلَهُ
*** كَمَا قَدْ تَشَمَّرْتُ كَيْ أَرْتَقِي
مَقَامًا بِهِ لَا يَرَى مِثْلَ لَهُ
*** رَبًّا حَزْنُهُ إِذْ نَمَّا خَيْرُنَا
فَأَضْحَى بِكُرْهِي وَلَا أَهْلَ لَهُ
أَرَاهُ فَأَحْمَدُ رَبِّي عَلَيْهِ *** يَرَانَا
بِخَيْرٍ فَلَا بَهْجَ لَهُ

شَكَرْنَا بِتَوْبَتِنَا رَبَّنَا *** لَقَدْ طَابَ
مَنْ تَابَ لَا ذَنْبَ لَهُ
وَمَنْ تَابَ بِالذِّكْرِ شُكْرًا لِمَنْ ***
هُوَ اللَّهُ قَدْ هَيَّا الْعَفْرَ لَهُ
وَمُخْلِصُ وُدِّ لَنَا وَزْنُهُ ***
لِإِخْلَاصِهِ الْوَزْنَ مَا أَنْقَلَهُ
لَقَدْ تَبْتُ شُكْرًا وَمُسْتَعْفِرًا *** لِدَنْبِ
إِلَى اللَّهِ لَا عَدْلَ لَهُ

(Al-Ilory, 2019, 58-59)

Translation

I thanked the enemy,
though no thanks are due
to him
Yet gratitude belongs to
him for what he does not
possess:
Neither intellect, nor
virtue, nor even guidance,
For spite and envy have
consumed him.
My envier, through hatred
of me, became
impoverished;
I see him abased, with no
honor remaining to him.
Part of my Lord's justice
is the existence of enemies
How just is my Lord, and
none is more just than He.
And from His grace is His
vast bounty;
How excellent is my Lord,
none is more generous
than He.
By His favor, I overcame
the schemes of foes,
While the plotting of the
envier only degraded him.
Whenever he rises swiftly
for a brief moment,
He soon descends into the
lowest depth.
When he imagines that his
hand has grasped some



dominion,
 In truth, no dominion
 belongs to him.
 And whatever wealth he
 may have gathered
 unlawfully,
 Know with certainty: it
 will become evil against
 him.
 He spent his life envious
 and deceitful;
 Through him, my merit
 increased, while he gained
 no merit.
 Because of him, I guarded
 my soul from every
 blemish
 Otherwise, I would have
 left faults for him to
 spread.
 For I was cautious that he
 should see from me
 Nothing but goodness,
 even if he denied it.
 Likewise, I strove
 diligently so that I might
 ascend
 To a rank beyond anything
 he could imagine.
 His sorrow grew whenever
 our goodness increased,
 So he remained consumed
 by hatred, unworthy of it.
 Whenever I see him, I
 praise my Lord for him:
 He sees us in prosperity,
 yet finds no joy therein.
 We thanked our Lord
 through repentance.
 Blessed indeed is the one
 who repents and bears no
 sin.
 Whoever repents with
 remembrance in gratitude

to God
 Allah has already prepared
 forgiveness for him.
 And the sincere friend
 devoted to us
 How weighty his worth is
 because of his sincerity.
 Indeed, I repented in
 gratitude and sought
 forgiveness
 For sins before Allah, too
 numerous to count.

Analysis

The poem *Shakartu al-‘Aduwwa wa Lā Shukra Lah* exemplifies Muḥammad Thaobān Ādam ‘Abdullāh Al-Ilory’s use of Qur’anic intertextuality and Arabic rhetorical devices to amplify *al-shakwā*. Structurally, the poem appears to praise the enemy, yet beneath this apparent gratitude lies an intense discourse of complaint, moral condemnation, and spiritual reflection. This duality reflects what Julia Kristeva describes as intertextual transformation, whereby earlier sacred discourses are absorbed and reshaped into new literary meanings (Kristeva, 1980). Similarly, Gérard Genette’s theory of hypertextuality explains how the poem is constructed upon Qur’anic hypotexts without direct quotation (Genette, 1997). Through *iqtibās*, *talmīḥ*, *ṭibāq*, *mubālaghah*, and *tawriya*, Thaobān transforms personal suffering into a theological meditation on divine justice, envy, repentance, and moral superiority. The opening verse, “*Shakartu al-‘aduwwa wa lā shukra lah / walākin ‘alayhi limā laysa lah*” (“I thanked the enemy though he deserves no thanks, but rather for what he lacks”), immediately establishes the paradoxical foundation of the poem. The poet outwardly expresses gratitude toward the enemy, yet the gratitude is actually ironic because the enemy lacks intellect,



virtue, and guidance. This rhetorical paradox exemplifies *tawriya*, where an apparent meaning conceals a deeper and opposite intention (Ibn al-Mu'tazz, n.d.). The expression simultaneously functions as a complaint and an assertion of moral superiority. By thanking the enemy for his deficiencies, the poet indirectly condemns him while preserving spiritual composure. This paradox intensifies emotional tension because the poet refuses direct rage and instead frames hostility within controlled irony. Such restraint reflects the Islamic ethical tendency to transform anger into reflective discourse.

The following line, "*mina al-'aqli wa-al-faḍli balhi al-hudā / idh al-ḥiqdu wa-al-ḥasadu qad ashghalah*" ("he lacks intellect, virtue, and even guidance, since hatred and envy have consumed him"), introduces a sustained moral antithesis. Here, the poet contrasts reason and guidance with envy and malice, employing *ṭibāq* to sharpen the ethical distinction between himself and the envier. The pairing of *al-'aql* and *al-hudā* against *al-ḥiqd* and *al-ḥasad* creates a semantic opposition between enlightenment and spiritual corruption. This reflects the Qur'anic worldview in which envy blinds individuals from truth and guidance. The allusion to envy as a destructive spiritual force recalls the Qur'anic condemnation of the envier in *Surah al-Falaq* (Q113:5), thereby embedding the complaint within a sacred moral framework. Through this intertextual strategy, the poet portrays envy not merely as social hostility but as theological deviation.

In the verse "*ḥasūdī li-bughḍī ghadā muflisan / arāhu ḥaqīran wa lā 'izza lah*" ("my envier became bankrupt because of his hatred; I see him humiliated and without honor"), Thaobān employs the metaphor of bankruptcy to describe moral ruin. The word

muflisan echoes Qur'anic and prophetic discourse regarding spiritual bankruptcy, where outward success conceals inward loss. This image recalls the Qur'anic concept of *al-khāsirūn* ("the losers") who exchange guidance for misguidance (Q2:16). The metaphor intensifies *al-shakwā* by transforming the enemy's hatred into evidence of his own destruction. Simultaneously, the poet uses *mubālaghah* in describing the enemy as entirely devoid of honor, emphasizing the complete moral collapse produced by envy. Through this rhetorical exaggeration, the poem amplifies the emotional and ethical consequences of hatred.

The central theological pivot of the poem appears in the fourth line: "*fa-min 'adli rabbī wujūdu al-'aduww / fa-a'dil bi-rabbī fa-mā a'dalah*" ("from the justice of my Lord is the existence of the enemy; so affirm the justice of my Lord, for who is more just than Him?"). The poet transforms personal complaint into theological contemplation. The rhetorical question "*fa-mā a'dalah*" echoes Qur'anic interrogative patterns such as "*wa-man aḥsanu mina Allāhi ḥukman*" ("who is better than Allah in judgment?" Q5:50) and "*wa-man aṣḍaqu mina Allāhi qīlā*" ("who is more truthful than Allah in speech?" Q4:87). This constitutes *iqtibās* through adaptive paraphrase of Qur'anic style. According to Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, such interrogatives represent *istifhām taqrīrī*, rhetorical questioning that reinforces certainty rather than seeks information (Al-Jurjānī, 1954). The existence of enemies is therefore interpreted as part of divine wisdom and justice. This theological reframing elevates the poem beyond ordinary lamentation into spiritual surrender and trust in God.

Similarly, the seventh line "*wa-min faḍlihi faḍluhu wāsi' / fa-aḍil bi-rabbī wa-mā*



afḍalah” emphasizes divine generosity through repetitive praise. The repetition of *faḍl* creates rhythmic reinforcement of God’s boundless favor and contrasts sharply with the envy of human beings. This repetition functions as *takrīr*, intensifying emotional conviction and gratitude. The poet suggests that while human beings envy and restrict, God’s generosity remains infinite. Such juxtaposition deepens the complaint because the enemy’s jealousy is implicitly portrayed as opposition to the divine distribution of blessings.

The poem also develops a recurring motif of the temporary rise and inevitable downfall of the envier. In the ninth and tenth verses, “*idhā mā i’talā sur’atan burhatan / tanazzala fī darkati al-maṣfalah*” (“whenever he rises quickly for a moment, he descends into the lowest depths”) and “*idhā ḡanna anna qad ḡawat kaffuhu / mina al-mulki shay’an fa-lā mulka lah*” (“when he imagines that his hand possesses some dominion, truly he possesses no dominion”), Muhammad Thaobān employs sharp irony and antithetical movement between elevation and descent. These lines echo Qur’anic depictions of arrogant oppressors whose apparent power collapses suddenly, such as Pharaoh and Qarun. The movement from elevation to humiliation constitutes *ṭibāq* between ascent and descent, while the negation “*fa-lā mulka lah*” undermines the illusion of worldly authority. Through this device, the poet assures himself that injustice and envy are ultimately self-destructive.

The twelfth line “*qaḍā ‘ayshahu ḡāsīdan mākiran / bihi zāda faḍlī wa lā faḍla lah*” (“he spent his life envying and plotting; through him my virtue increased while he gained no virtue”) reflects another paradoxical inversion. The enemy’s hatred unintentionally becomes the means of the

poet’s spiritual elevation. This idea aligns with Qur’anic theological principles whereby trials purify believers and increase their rank. The contrast between the poet’s increasing *faḍl* and the enemy’s lack of virtue further reinforces *ṭibāq*. The complaint is therefore transformed into a moral triumph, where suffering becomes evidence of divine favor rather than defeat. Muhammad Thaobān’s ethical restraint becomes especially visible in the thirteenth and fourteenth verses: “*fa-suntu bihi al-nafsa min kullī shayn / wa illā fataḡtu li-kay yanqulah*” (“Because of him, I guarded my soul from every blemish, Otherwise, I would have left faults for him to spread.”) and “*li-annī iḡtarastu li-kay lā yarā / siwā al-khayri minnī wa-law abṡalah*” (“For I was cautious that he should see from me Nothing but goodness, even if he denied it.”). Here, the complaint is moderated by self-discipline and moral consciousness. The poet refuses retaliation despite provocation, thereby presenting himself as ethically superior to the envier. This restraint reflects Islamic ethical ideals concerning patience and concealment of faults. The complaint becomes not an uncontrolled emotional outburst but a measured moral testimony.

The emotional climax emerges in the sixteenth and seventeenth lines: “*rabā ḡuznuhu idh namā khayrunā / fa-aḡḡa bi-kurḡi wa lā aḡla lah*” (“his sorrow increased whenever our goodness increased, and he became consumed by hatred though unworthy of it”) and “*arāḡu fa-aḡmadu rabbī ‘alayh / yarānā bi-khayrin fa-lā baḡja lah*” (“when I see him, I praise my Lord for him; he sees our goodness but finds no joy in it”). These lines reveal how the poet transforms the enemy’s envy into a cause for gratitude toward God. The complaint thus evolves into praise. The enemy’s inability to rejoice in *khayr* (goodness) becomes



symbolic of spiritual deprivation. The poet's response is not revenge but *HamduliLlah* (thanking Allah), indicating spiritual transcendence over resentment.

The final verses shift decisively toward repentance and remembrance of God: "*shakarnā bi-tawbatinā rabbanā / laqad tāba man tāba lā dhanba lah*" ("we thanked our Lord through our repentance; blessed is the one who repents and has no sin") and "*laqad tubtu shukran wa-mustaghfiran / li-dhanbin ilā Allāhi lā 'adda lah*" ("I have repented in gratitude and sought forgiveness for sins beyond number"). These lines allude to Qur'anic concepts of *tawbah* and divine mercy, especially Q39:53 and Q2:222. Complaint culminates not in curses or vengeance but in repentance and spiritual purification. The phrase "*lā 'adda lah*" ("countless") employs *mubālaghah* to emphasize the magnitude of human imperfection and the vastness of divine forgiveness. Through this conclusion, Thaobān redefines *al-shakwā* as a pathway to humility, gratitude, and nearness to God.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that *al-shakwā* in Muḥammad Thaobān Ādam 'AbduLlāh Al-Ilory's *Dīwān al-Shukrān* is not merely an expression of personal grievance but a complex rhetorical and theological construct shaped by Qur'anic intertextuality. Through the strategic deployment of *iqtibās*, *talmīh*, *tawriyah*, and *ṭibāq*, the poet transforms complaint into a morally regulated discourse in which suffering is reinterpreted through divine justice and spiritual meaning. The study establishes that complaint poetry in Nigerian Arabic literature operates within a dynamic intertextual field where Qur'anic discourse, classical Arabic rhetoric, and local socio-cultural realities converge. Muhammad Thaobān's poetic strategy reveals that grievance, when filtered through

Qur'anic ethics, becomes a mechanism for spiritual elevation rather than resentment. The transformation of *al-shakwā* into gratitude and repentance ultimately reflects a broader epistemological orientation in Islamic poetics, where suffering is not negated but reinterpreted as part of divine wisdom. This contributes significantly to African Arabic literary studies by demonstrating that Nigerian Arabic poetry is not derivative but intellectually sophisticated, rhetorically complex, and deeply rooted in both classical and contemporary Islamic intellectual traditions.

References

- Akewula A.O. 2014. Representation of Nationhood and Social Change in Bari Adetunji's Arabic Short Stories. *Al-Hikmah International Journal for Islamic Studies & Human Sciences*. 7. <https://alhikmah.my/index.php/hikmah/article/view/474/542>
- Akewula A.O. 2019. Classical Arabic: A Critique of Thumadir bint Amr's (*Al-Khansa*) poetry. *Al-Hikmah International Journal for Islamic Studies & Human Sciences*. 5. 1.
- Akhtar, Y., Bhutta, Q. A., & Naz, F. 2025. The Evolution of the Theme of Complaint in Arabic Poetry Across the Ages. *Ulm-e-Arabia Journal*. 1. 13. <https://journals.iub.edu.pk/index.php/ulumeArabia/article/view/3629/1919>.
- Alāhu ad-dīn, R.A. 2014. *Sāirah at-tanās bayna al-imām abdulqāir al-jurjānī wa jūliyā kiristifā. Buhūthu al-muhtamar al-'ilmī ad-dawlī al-awwal li kuliyyah al-lugah al-'arabiyyah bi aswyūt*. <http://www.azhar-asiut.com/page.php?pid=%205>



- Al-Arfaj, A. A. R. H. 2006. *Shi'ru Al-Shaqwā 'inda al-mutanabbyy*. Master's thesis, Umm al-Qura University.
- Al-Bukhārī, Muhammad ibn Ismā'īl. 2004. *Sahīh al-bukhārī*. Ed. Tāmir, M. M. Cairo: Dār Al-āfāq Al-'arabiyyah
- Algamawi S. I. 2023. *Intertextuality in Arabic Poetry of Yoruba Authorship*. PhD Thesis. Department Of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan.
- Al-Ilory, M. T. A. A. 2019. *Dīwān al-Shukrān*. Markazul-Uloom Arabic and Islamic Centre, Otubu Agege, Lagos, Nigeria. Second edition.
- Al-Jurjani, A. 1954. *Asrar al-Balaghah*. Edited by H. Ritter. Istanbul: Government Press.
- Al-Jurjānī, 'Abd al-Qāhir. 1954. *Dalā'il al-I'jāz*. Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif.
- Al-Majīd, Turkī. 2016. *Al-tanās wa manihajiyyatuhu fī al-sh'ri al'arabī al-hadīth, qasīdatu "Najāt" li hmad Shawqī namūzajan*. 3rd International Conference on Arabic studies and Islamic civilization. 14-15 March, 2016. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
<http://Worldconferences.net/proceeding/icasis2016/fullpaper/Arabic papers/IC 125 الأستاذ الدكتور>
- Ameen, Bashir. 2022. Social Criticism in the Nigerian Arabic Poetry: A Case Study of Musa Abdulsalam Mustapha Abikan's Poetry. *International Mukhtar for Arabic Language and Islamic Studies*. Egypt.
- Faris Yassin Muhammad al-Hamdani. 2014. *As-shaqwa fī shi'r Subt Ibn al-Ta'awidhi*. (d. 583 AH). *Adaab al-raafideen, University of Mosul*. Issue 71.
<https://doi.org/10.33899/RADAB.1970.163408>
- Genette, Gérard. 1997. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Haftador, G. A. R., & Karimi, S. 2014. *The Contents of The Complaint in The First Century A.H. Arabic Literature*, 6. 1. 171–192.
https://jalit.ut.ac.ir/article_52029.html
- Haftador, G. A. R., & Karimi, S. 2015. *Technical Structure of Complaint Poetry Until 3A.H. Research in Arabic Language and Literature*, 7. 1. 197–224.
https://rall.ui.ac.ir/article_15815.html
- Hamzat I. Abdulraheem. 2014. Non-Religious Themes in Nigerian Poetry of Arabic Expression: A Study of Selected Poems from Isa Abubakar's *Al-Suba'iyāt*. *AWEJ. Special Issue on Literature*. No.2. 96 -105
- Ibn al-Mu'tazz. n.d. *Kitāb al-Badī'*. Beirut: Dār al-Jīl.
- Ibn Mālik. n.d. *Sharḥ al-Kāfiyah al-Shāfiyah*. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.
- Ibraheem, L. O. 2018. The Contributions of Ilorin Scholars to Poetry in Arabic in Nigeria. *ResearchGate*.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326560733>.
- Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi 1988. *Al-Ayn*. trans. Dr. Mahdi al-Makhzoumi, Dr. Ibrahim al-Samra'i, Dar al-Arah Foundation, Iran, second edition. Under the entry "*shakwa*" 5. 388.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1980. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. New York: Columbia University Press.



Ma'āsh, Hayāt. 2004. *At-tanās fī tāiyah bn Al-khalūf*. Diss. Al-lugah Al-Arabiyyah wa Adābuah. Al-ādāb wa al-‘ulūm al-insāniyyah. Jāmi;ah Al-‘aqdīd Al-hāj Li Khadar Bātinah. 17 - 105.

Murāshidah, ‘A. A. M. 2000. *At-Tanāss fī al-shi’r al-‘arabī al-hadīth (dirāsatan nasariyatan wa tatbīqiyatan)* Badr shākir, Aml Danqal, Mahmūd Darwīsh namūzajan. Thesis. Dirāsāt Al-‘ulyāh. University of Jordan.

Saidu Abubakar Musa. 2002. Arabic Literature and Nigerian Society. *International Seminar on Islamiyyat Studies. (IRSYAD 2019)*. Faculty of Islamic Civilization Studies. International Islamic University College, Selangor, Malaysia. <https://conference.uis.edu.my/irsyad/images/e proceeding/2019/2002-irsyad-2019.pdf>

Sani A. A. 2023. *Shi’ru Al-Shakwā Fi Diwān Al’uhāriyyāt Li Yahyā Solih Al-Imām Al-Haqeeqi: Dirāsatan Fanniyyatun*. M.A. Thesis. School of Post Graduate Studies, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba.