

Morphological Structures in the Poetry of Abu al-Atahiyah

Assist. Lect. Maitham Abbas Ali al-Ghazali

Ministry of Education - General Directorate of Education, Najaf al-Ashraf

Corresponding Author: Assist. Lect. Maitham Abbas Ali al-Ghazali - meatham2030@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the morphological structures in the poetry collection of Abu al-Atahiyah as a model of ascetic poetry in the early Abbasid period. It aims to reveal the morphological characteristics that distinguished his poetic language and how he employed them to convey ascetic meanings and express aspects of the human psyche. The study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach examining prominent morphological phenomena such as verb and noun conjugations augment forms derivatives pronouns defective verbs and genitive constructions. The study concluded that Abu al-Atahiyah tended to use hyperbole and present tense verbs to suggest continuity and repetition and frequently employed the active and passive participles in his poetry to achieve semantic intensification. The presence of imperative and supplicative forms is notable reflecting the nature of the homiletic discourse. Furthermore the phenomena of substitution and elision appear as stylistic features that influenced the internal rhythm. The poet makes extensive use of the tafaul and tafaul forms to express spiritual and psychological transformations whilst separate and attached pronouns are employed to establish the first-person speaker for self-expression and the second-person addressee to create a dialogue with the reader. His poetry is not devoid of certain rare morphological phenomena such as the construction of what is not normally constructed reflecting his occasional influence from colloquial dialects or the demands of metre. The study concludes that the morphological structures in Abu al-Atahiyahs poetry were not neutral but rather served the ascetic vision they were simple for the most part yet capable of conveying profound moral implications.

KEYWORDS: morphological structures poetry Abu al-Atahiyah

1. Introduction:

Abu al-Atahiyah is one of the most prominent poets of the Abbasid era.

He was renowned for his unique and distinctive style in expressing emotions and ideas through his poems. Abu al-Atahiyah is considered one of the first poets to employ morphological structures in an innovative and original way in his poetry. Morphological structures are among the most prominent elements of poetry lending Abu al-Atahiyahs poems exceptional beauty and splendour. Abu al-Atahiyah had an independent artistic vision regarding the innovative use of morphological features in his poetry employing them to reinforce meanings and highlight ideas in a more expressive and beautiful manner. Furthermore Abu al-Atahiyah employed a variety of techniques in his use of morphological features. Through these innovative methods Abu al-Atahiyah succeeded in highlighting the aesthetic quality of his poetry and capturing the attention of listeners and readers. The nature of the research necessitated its division into six sections the first of which was entitled Morphological Structures in the Formation of Superlatives in the Poetry of Abu al-Atahiyah the second section under the title Morphological Structures in Plural Forms in the Poetry of Abu al-Atahiyah and the third section under the title The poets use of the faala metre the fourth section

concerned morphological structures in substitution in the poetry of Abu al-Atahiyah the fifth was entitled Assimilation and non-assimilation in the construction of (mudda wa lam yamudd) and the final section was entitled Miscellaneous Morphological Structures in the Poetry of Abu al-Atahiyah

Introduction His name lineage and epithet

Ismail ibn al-Qasim ibn Suwayd ibn Kaysan Abu Ishaq al-Anazi known as Abu al-Atahiyya the poet (1). It is also said his name was Ibrahim ibn Ishaq (2). His mother was Umm Zayd bint Ziyad al-Bukhari a freed slave woman of the Banu Zuhrah (3). His epithet Abu al-Atahiyya is attributed to one of two sayings the first due to the confusion found in him and the other that he was dissolute and fond of licentiousness (4). His birth and upbringing – He was born in Ayn al-Tamr and his place of origin was Kufai then he resided in Baghdad (5). It was said he used to sell jars (6). And it was said his older brother Zayd used to sell jars (7). This is supported by the saying of Abu al-Atahiyya "I am the jar-seller of poetry and my brother is the jar-seller of trade" (8). The quality of his poetic faculty – Abu al-Atahiyya was asked "How do you compose poetry?" He said "I have never intended it but it was presented to me so I say what I intend and abandon what I do not intend" (9). And Abu al-Atahiyya said "If I wished to make all my speech poetry I would have done so" (10). It becomes clearly evident from the preceding texts that Abu al-Atahiyya was naturally gifted not artificial in composing poetry as his poetic faculty supplied him so he used to compose poetry whenever he wished and however he wished.

Section One Morphological Structures in the Formation of the Superlative Form

- 1- **Adaa** – Abu al-Atahiyah said "And when I examined my enemies I found none more hostile than anger for nothing is more hostile to a persons reason than anger" (11). We note in this verse that Abu al-Atahiyah formed the superlative from the trilateral verb ada (to be hostile) which is a departure from the standard rule as superlatives are typically formed from trilateral verbs. Ibn Manzur quoted al-Thalabi as saying "And their saying more hostile than a wolf Thaalab said It may be derived from adw (hostility) or from adaw (enmity) and it is more commonly derived from adw and I see that he merely meant that one does not say afal min faalti therefore it is permissible for it to be derived from adw (running) and not from adaw (enmity)" (12). Thus the superlative is formed from adu (running) and not from adawah (hostility). The context of the verse indicates that Abu al-Atahiyah intended adawah and not adu. Al-Akhfash al-Asghar holds that it is possible to form the exclamatory form from the trilateral verb azil (13). We find in the Holy Quran that it is used as an auxiliary verb to indicate superlative and the superlative form was not derived directly from the verb. Allah the Exalted says "Indeed their hearts have become corroded by that which they were earning" (14).
- 2- **Amwat** – Abu al-Atahiyah said "As for the one who walks though his memory is dead he is a fool who has squandered his faith and he is amwat". Abu al-Atahiyah has formed the superlative from a verb that cannot be graded since it is not permissible to form the superlative or the exclamatory forms from such a verb (15). Al-Faraa holds that it is permissible to form the superlative and the exclamatory forms from the verbs died and blinded if they denote a conceptual rather than a physical attribute as such attributes are capable of variation (16).
- 3- **Ahmak Ajma** – Abu al-Atahiyah said "How foolish is man in his pride when tomorrow he shall be buried in a grave" (17). Abu al-Atahiyah said "And the unseen is confirmed in the mind by its witness and knowledge is gathered from sight and from traces" (18). Abu al-Atahiyah formed the exclamatory form from the descriptive verb afal for the masculine and fala for the feminine (foolish – foolish woman gathered – gathered women). The majority of grammarians stipulated that for the formation of

the exclamatory form the descriptive verb must not be of the afal type whose feminine form is fala lest it be confused with the attributive adjective (19). The Kufans however permitted the formation of the exclamatory form from a verb whose descriptive form follows the pattern afal (whose feminine form is fala) on the grounds that they had heard it used by the Arabs (20).

- 4- **Awlah** – Abu al-Atahiyah said "O he who dies yet grieves not for his own death and he who dies yet is not grieved for him" (21). Abu al-Atahiyah formed the interjectional verb (awlah) from a non-triple verb which is considered irregular by the majority (22). More than one grammarian has permitted the formation of interjectional verbs from non-triple verbs provided there is no ambiguity and the Egyptian Language Academy has adopted this view (23).

Section Two Morphological Structures in Plural Forms in the Poetry of Abu al-Atahiyah

Among the morphological structures in the poetry of Abu al-Atahiyah is his use of the plural of the few in a context where the plural of the many should be used however this usage is not without semantic benefit which we shall explain in our study.

- 1- **Anfus** – "The Most Merciful has placed among the graves the souls of all creation as a refuge" (24). Abu al-Atahiyah used the plural of the few (anfus) in the pattern (aful) in a context where the plural of the many (nafus) ought to be used because the number of creatures exceeds ten. Thus the use of the pattern (aful) indicates a number from three to ten and (faul) for numbers above ten (25). The patterns of the few may however be used for numbers above ten (26). It appears to the researcher that Abu al-Atahiyahs use of the pattern (aful) is to demonstrate Gods infinite power in that the souls of all creatures are in the Creators grasp. For the souls of creatures despite their multitude do not escape His authority.

- 2- **Al-Khawulat** – Abu al-Atahiyah said "Who is like him who has dominated his uncles and whose uncles are the most honourable of the khawulat?" (27). Abu al-Atahiyah used al-khawulat which is either a verbal noun or a plural of abundance it has been recorded as al-khawula as a verbal noun without a corresponding verb and as a plural of abundance (28). It appears that the poet intended the broken plural form and did not intend the infinitive as the infinitive is neither inflected nor pluralised (29). It may be that he intended the infinitive and its feminine plural form for poetic necessity.

- 3- **Skulls bones and possessions** – Abu al-Atahiyah said "The earth has left nothing of them but skulls white and gleaming and bones hollowed out" (30). And he said "My brother indeed possessions have met their end and were during their lifetime a source of affliction" (31). The poet used the plural of abundance (skulls) as the active participle and the plural of scarcity (bones) as the passive participle the plural of abundance should apply to the bones and the plural of scarcity to the skull since the human body contains a single skull and many bones. It seems that the metre compelled the poet to use it this way. In the other verse he used amlak (angels) in the pattern of afal (actions) a plural of few and did not use its corresponding plural of many (muluk) for the same reason mentioned above. It may also be said that the Arabs may use the plural of the few for numbers less than ten and the plural of the many for numbers greater than ten (32). This is also clearly evident in the Holy Quran in the words of Allah "three periods" (33) whilst there is a plural of the few (periods).

Breaths – Abu al-Atahiyah said "Your life consists of breathsi for every breath that passes a part of it is lost" (34). Breaths is a plural formed on the pattern of afal a pattern belonging to the few plural forms. This usage is justified by the fact that nafas is restricted to this particular plural form (35). Thus this plural is used for numbers both below and above ten.

4- **Turab** – The poet said "I scatter dust upon him from every side I see that as my rightful share of the suppliers provisions" (36). Turab follows the pattern of ful (the group of it is dust) (37). It appears from the word al-taifa in the text that he means turab to be a collection of various types.

5 -**Anas and al-Nas** – Abu al-Atahiyah said "People have never been equal since they were peoplei God created His creation in stages" (38). It is mentioned in al-Sahih that "al-anas a dialectal form of al-naas and it is the original form softened" (39). It appears from the text that the original form is anas and not al-nas – as is evident to the careful reader since the pronoun refers to the nearest explicit noun – and this is made clear by the softening of the word as anas has more letters than al-nas so the word was softened by omitting the hamza. It is clear from the verse that the poet was thoroughly versed and highly proficient in the languagei with this verse the poet wishes to convey that people have not been equal since ancient times and this is a linguistic nuance through which he has made this meaning clear. (Al-Nas is a derivative – and Anas is the root).

Section Three Words used by the poet in the faala metre

1 - **Dahiya** – "How many a lover in the gardens of life is followed by a shrewd woman whose cunning is dahiya". The word Dahiya appears in the poetry of Abu al-Atahiya and its root letters are (D H Y). There are two pronunciations one where the lam is pronounced as a waw and another where it is pronounced as a ya. In Arabic speech it appears as Dahya Dahya and Dahwa (40).

2- **Dunya** – Abu al-Atahiyah said "For him whose greatest concern is the world it has set before him out of its love that which wearies him." The word duniya does not appear in Arabic speech except in the works of some linguists when they were codifying its rules as it does not appear in pronunciation but is inferred in the context of derivation an alif is added before the alif of dunya causing the second alif to become a hamza due to their meeting and it is thus inferred as duniya (42). It appears that the poet used it for a semantic reason as elongation is employed to draw the listeners attention to something by prolonging the sound whereas shortening does not serve this function.

Section Four Morphological Structures in Substitution in the Poetry of Abu al-Atahiyah

1- **Muddakharam** – "Whoever is stored away with God His treasures will be revealed tomorrow" (43). The root of adhkara is adthakhara following the pattern of iftail. Two sounds with similar points of articulation are adjacenti the first is a consonant namely the dh followed by the ta of the iftail form in pronunciation which causes strain and difficulty in articulation. To avoid this difficulty they resorted to assimilating the two sounds. Since the dh is a voiced sound and the ta is a voiceless one had they assimilated them the whispering quality would be lost so they replaced the ta with a voiced sound from its point of articulation which is the sound of the dal and it became az-dakhara. Then the dal was assimilated into the dal to become ad-dakhara (44). This is the predominant view and there is another view which is the assimilation of the dal into the dal (45) which is what the poet followed in this verse.

2 - **Tattakhidh** – Abu al-Atahiyah said "O children of Adam preserve your religioni religion ought not to be discarded" (46). This form is the (tafal) formi the ta was made silent for lightening and assimilated with the ta because it is from the same place of articulation and the ta is distinguished from the ta by the manner of articulationi therefore the ta was replaced by a ta and assimilated with the ta and the hamza was introduced at the beginning of the word to avoid beginning with a consonant (47). The silent ta in the tafal form is for the purpose of assimilation and the silent letter which is assimilated into the second letter is called major assimilation (48).

Section Five Assimilation and Non-Assimilation in the Grammar of (mudda wa lam yamudd)

Two linguistic variants exist in the present tense and imperative form of the verb (madda) and its like when not connected to a pronoun that requires it to be built on sukoon. These two constructions are permissible in Arabic usage assimilation (idgham) and disassimilation (fakk al-idgham) as in "lam yamdud" and "lam yamudd" (49). Both usages are attested in the poetry of Abu al-Atahiyah. Abu al-Atahiyah said "Do not be deceived by unforeseen events for unforeseen events offer no lasting security to any person" (50). He also said "Why is it that I passed by the graves greeting the grave of the beloved yet he did not return my greeting?" (51). He also said "So say what is good refrain from evil and never cease to be silent in the face of wrongdoing" (52). It may be observed that Abu al-Atahiyah in these instances employed the disassimilated variant at times and the assimilated variant at others. To the researcher it appears that what compelled the poet to oscillate between assimilation and its absence is the metre. For the metre of the verb in "la yanfakka" differs from its metre in "la yanfakik". Likewise the verb in "lam yarudda" differs from its metre in "lam yardud". Likewise the verb in "la taghtarir" differs from its metre in "la taghtarra". The Quran was revealed with these two linguistic variants. Allah Almighty said in Surah Al-Mutaffifin (83) verse 14 "No! Rather the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning" (53). And He used the same verb without assimilation in another passage. Allah Almighty said in Surah Al-Qalam (68) verse 44 "So leave Me [O Muhammad] with [the matter of] whoever denies this Quran. We will progressively lead them [to punishment] from where they do not know" (54).

Section Six Miscellaneous Morphological Structures

1- **Khatauhu** – Abu al-Atahiyah said "Most of them find the correctness of those who disagree with him objectionable yet approve of his error" (55). Khata is the source of khataa and khataa means to err. It has been said that there is a distinction between them one errs if the mistake was unintentional and one khataa if the mistake was intentional (56). Al-khata is a linguistic form accepted by some Arabs (57). Some of them consider its usage to be rare in Arabic speech (58).

2- **Numan** – "Before you O Numan lies a house of happiness where bliss endures and a house of misery" (59). Numan one who sleeps a great deal. Its pattern is falan (60) and it is not one of the known forms of hyperbole (faal mifal fail fail and faul) (61). Scholars have differed regarding the usage of Numani most of them hold that it is used only in vocatives (62). Some of them hold that its usage is rare outside of vocatives (63). Others have simply cited the example a man who sleeps a lot without further comment.

3 - **Faraj** – Abu al-Atahiyah said "Fulfill peoples needs as best you can and be a source of relief for your brothers worries" (65). In the word faraj there are two pronunciations one with a heavy r and one with a light r. In one it is said Faraja Allah al-gham (May God relieve the distress) (66) and in the other Faraja Allah al-gham with the heavy r (67). Thus the source of faraja is tafrij and the source of faraja is faraj (68). The poet has combined both pronunciations in his verse "O reliever of distress whose troops are deployed just as the break of dawn relieves the gloom of darkness." It appears that the poet was compelled to use this form (faraja the active participle of faraj) so that this rhyme (faraj) might correspond to its counterparts in the verse. There appears to be a similarity between (faraj and farraj) and (faala and afala). Scholars have divided the usage of (faala and afala) into three categories:

- 1- One school of thought holds that there is no difference in meaning between faala and afala as in barq and abra qhamad and amad and raadta and aradta. This is the view of Abu Ubayda who permitted both forms on more than one occasion (69).
- 2- Another more strict school of thought holds that there is a difference between the two forms this view is represented by al-AsmaI (70) and Ibn Khalawayh (71).
- 3- There is a third group that vacillates between the two views led by al-Khalil and Sibawayh. At times they hold that there is a difference in meaning between them due to the transitive hamza (72) whilst at other times they maintain that the difference lies solely in linguistic usage in the speech of some people the form is faal whilst in the speech of others it is afal yet the meaning remains the same (73). To the observer of the latter view it appears that the existence of this structure is due to dialectal differences thus faraj with a softened ra is one dialect and with a stressed ra is another.

Conclusion:

Ultimately the research reached the following conclusions.

- 1- Abu al-Atahiyahs use of the plural form in his poems was varied and rich. He employed all the different forms of the plural such as masculine and feminine regular and irregular.
- 2- It appears that Abu al-Atahiyahs unique use of dunya in the form faala (dunya) was not due to metre but rather for a semantic reason to emphasise the word by lengthening it. By prolonging the sound in the elongation he sought to draw the readers attention to this point.
- 3- Abu al-Atahiyah possessed a great deal of knowledge of the Arabic dialects as we find in his poetry various morphological structures reflecting the diverse Arabic dialects. The present tense verb in the jussive mood such as lam yamadud (he did not extend) appears in his poetry in two forms one with assimilation and one without.

Footnotes:

- (1) See Tarikh Baghdad wa Dhuluhi Al-Ilmiyyah edition (6/249)
- (2) See Bughyat al-Talab fi Tarikh Halab (4/1752)
- (3) See Ibid same page
- (4) See Tarikh Baghdad wa Dhuluhi 6/249
- (5) See History of Baghdad and its Appendices Al-Ilmiyyah edition (6/249)
- (6) See Al-Wafi bi-l-Wafiyat 9/111
- (7) See Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah 6
- (8) Al-Aghani Abu al-Faraj al-Asbahani 4/11
- (9) Al-Aghani Abu al-Faraj al-Asbahani 4/16
- (10) Ibid
- (11) Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah 49
- (12) Lisan al-Arab Ibn Manzur 15/37

- (13) See *Al-Madaris al-Nahwiyya* Ahmad Shawqi Abd al-Salam 106
- (14) *Surah al-Maidah* verse 82
- (15) *Al-Nahw al-Wadhiih fi Qawaid al-Lugha al-Arabiyya* Ali al-Jarim and Mustafa Amin 2/82
- (16) See *Lisan al-Arab* Ibn Manzur 15/96
- (17) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* 178
- (18) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* p 194
- (19) See *Mujam al-Sawab al-Lughawi* Dr Ahmad Mukhtar Umar 1/19
- (20) See *Ibid*
- (21) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* 444
- (22) See *Lisan al-Arab* entry (wali) 15/405
- (23) See *Mujam al-Sawab al-Lughawi* 1/8
- (24) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* 53
- (25) See *Al-Nahw al-Wadhiih fi al-Lugha al-Arabiyya* 2/316
- (26) See *Ibid*
- (27) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* 103
- (28) See *Al-Muhkam wa al-Muhit al-Azam* 5/300 *Lisan al-Arab* 11/224 *Taj al-Arus al-Zubaydi* 28/443
- (29) See *Sharh al-Mufassal* by Ibn Yaish 1/53
- (30) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* 77
- (31) *Ibid* 78
- (32) See *Kitab Sibawayh* 3/490
- (33) *Surah al-Baqarah* verse 228
- (34) *Diwan of Abu al-Atahiyah* 14
- (35) See *Al-Mishbah al-Munir* by al-Fayyumi 2/617
- (36) *Diwan of Abu al-Atahiyah* 142
- (37) *Al-Mukhasas* by Ibn Sayyidah 3/41
- (38) *Diwan of Abu al-Atahiyah* 173
- (39) *Al-Sahah Taj al-Lugha wa Sahah al-Arabiyya Al-Jawhari* 3/905
- (40) See *Lisan al-Arab* 14/275
- (41) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* 59

- (42) See *Sirr Sinaat al-Irab Ibn Jini* 2/499
- (43) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* p 205
- (44) See *Shams al-Ulum wa Dawa Kalami al-Arab min al-Kalum* 4/2250
- (45) See *Lisan al-Arab* 4/302
- (46) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* 118
- (47) See *The Influence of Quranic Recitations on Lexicographical Composition* Taj Dr Abdul-Razzaq al-Qadusi 93
- (48) See *Gharib al-Quran wa Raghaib al-Furqan al-Naysaburi* 1/59
- (49) See *Ibn Aqils Commentary on Ibn Maliks Alfiyah* 4/275
- (50) *Ibid* 23
- (51) *Ibid* 39
- (52) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* 85
- (53) *Surah al-Maidah* verse 54
- (54) *Surah al-Baqarah* verse 217
- (55) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* 15
- (56) See *Majma Bahar al-Anwar* 2/58
- (57) See *Tas-hih al-Tas-hif wa-Tahrir al-Tahrif* 247
- (58) See *Al-Gharibayn fi al-Quran wa-l-Hadith* Abu Ubayd al-Harawi 2/568
- (59) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* p 13
- (60) See *Al-Ain* 8/386 *Mukhtar al-Sahah al-Razi* 322 *Lisan al-Arab* 12/596
- (61) See *Mujam al-Lugha al-Arabiyya al-Muasirah* Dr Ahmad Mukhtar Omar 1/243
- (62) See *Al-Sahah Taj al-Lugha wa Sahah al-Arabiyya* 5/2046 and *Al-Mukhasas* 1/493
- (63) See *Al-Nihayah fi Gharib al-Hadith wa al-Athar* 5/130
- (64) See *Tahdhib al-Lugha* 15/373
- (65) *Diwan Abi al-Atahiyah* 110
- (66) See *Al-Mishbah al-Munir fi Gharib al-Sharh al-Kabir* 2/465
- (67) See *Al-Ayn* 6/108
- (68) See *Kitab al-Afal Ibn al-Haddad* 4/26
- (69) See *Jamhara al-Lugha* 3/434
- (70) See *Ibid* 3/434

(71) See Lays fi Kalam al-Arab 156

(72) See Kitab Sibawayh 2/233

(73) See Ibid 2/236 .

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