

## **Significant Features in the Elegies Composed by Selected Poets of Gusau City, in the Second Half of Twentieth Century, A.D**

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**Abstract:** The paper will be an effort to study and analyze significant features in the elegies composed by selected poets of Gusau city, in the second half of twentieth century A.D., which will be divided into sub – headings, such as: brief history of the city, selected poets of elegy in the city, significant features in their elegies, conclusion and endnote.

**Keywords:** poets, Gusau city, elegy

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### **Introduction**

Effort has been made in this paper to study and analyze significant features in the elegies composed by selected poets of Gusau Town, in the second half of twentieth century A.D.

The paper is divided into sub – headings, which include; brief history of Gusau city, selected poets of elegy in Gusau, significant features in their elegies, conclusion and endnote.

The significant features include the use of Sufi order technical words, mentioning the deceased's efforts in dissemination the Sufi order, encouraging fellow brothers to adhere to rules of Sufi order, prayer for the deceased, make inanimate objects to cry upon the deceased, description of the deceased with excellent virtues, condoling deceased's family, friends and neighbors, mentioning deceased's students, children and wives, mentioning date of the death, time, and place, mentioning the poet's name by himself at the end of the poem, and the poet prayer for himself, his family and the rest of Muslims.

### **Brief history of Gusau Town**

The city of Gusau is currently the capital city of Zamfara state in northern Nigeria, which is situated along Sokoto to Zaria road the distance between Sokoto to Gusau is 210 km while between Gusau to Zaria is 176 km. The city was among the cities that were established during the jihad of Shiekh Usmanu Dan Fodiyo, under the leadership of one of the Danfodiyo's companions; Muhammadu Sambo Dan Ashafa, in 1799 A.D.[1] who migrated from the ancient city of "Yandoto[2], with the advice of Shiekh Usmanu Dan Fodiyo to do so, due to

misunderstanding between him (Sambo) and the rulers of the city[3].

Historically the cities of "Yandoto and Gusau and many other towns and villages were under Katsina Kingdom, with the name: western Katsina, or Katsina Laka, which means the muddy area of Katsina. But with the establishment of Sokoto Caliphate which conquered all cities of enemies, including the city of "Yandoto, the Katsina kingdom was divided into two; the eastern part, with Umar Dallaje as a leader, and the western part, with Muhammadu Sambo as a leader who took his new city of Gusau as the headquarters of his new emirate[4]. But in the process of jihad and expanding the circle of the caliphate, he left the city of Gusau and moved from village to another in the area, putting them under the caliphate's loyalty, until he died in the year 1827 A.D. in Wonaka village, which was established by him[5].

His son Abdulkadir, who succeeded his father stayed in the village with his followers for the period of thirty three years before he migrated to Rawayya, a nearby village in the year 1860 A.D., for the fear of heavy attack by the King of Maradi. After two years he decided to move back to his father's ancient city Gusau. That was in the year 1862 A.D., during the reign of Amirul – Muminina Ahmad Atiku (1859 – 1866 A.D.)[6]. This settlement was regarded by historians as the real one, since without it Gusau would only be on historical books.

### **Selected poets of elegy in Gusau**

The elegy means to cry over the deceased and show One's grievances and sadness over his death for the relationship between the poet and the deceased, like

son and father, student and teacher, and between friends or lovers. The death of any one of the two would definitely shock the other to the level of crying and composing elegy on him, if he is a poet. By putting the above definition and description into consideration, it is not surprising for Gusau poet to have this type of poem spreading among them, for two reasons:

The first reason is that; most of the poets in Gusau, if not all, are adherents of Sufi order; Tijjaniyyah or Qadiriyyah sects, whom were known among Muslims with love and respect to their spiritual teachers, it is very rare to have a poet in Gusau without composing eulogy to his academic or spiritual teacher, while alive, or compose elegy on him after his death. By doing this, they were imitating the great Shiekh of the Sufi order they adhered to, like Shiekh Ibrahim Inyass (R.A), who composed many poems of panegyrics, that is eulogy to the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.).

The second reason is that; the art of Arabic poetry goes direct to reader or listener's heart. That is why they share the same feeling with the poet in sadness or joy. This shows that, the process of composing poem is not a simple job, it is "God given" which He gives to the selected ones among His servants, even though, it needs a poet to be well versed in Arabic studies, very wide reading of Arabic books and speaks the language fluently. This is what Gusau poets distinguished being adherents of the Sufi order, which has many academic programs in Arabic.

It is very difficult to mention all of the poets in Gusau who participated in the race of composing poems especially the art of elegy, therefore, the elegies of the following six prominent poets would be cited in the studies, they are:

1. Shiekh Muhammadu Balarabe Gusau (1918 – 1987)
2. Shiekh Qadhy Abdulkadir Sani Gusau (1927 – 1999)
3. Shiekh Muhammadu Mukhtar Danbara Gusau (1950 – Date)
4. Ustaz Abdullahi Tafkitara Gusau (1962 – Date)
5. Ustaz Muhammadu Mahi Amin Gusau (1967 – Date)
6. Ustaz Muhammadu Mustapha Balarabe Gusau (1972 – Date)

### Significant features in their elegies

#### The use of Sufi order technical words

We have mentioned above that, most of the poets in Gusau city, if not all, are adherents of Tijjaniyyah or Qadiriyyah Sufi order, so, it is not surprising to find them using Sufi order technical words in their elegies, such as: *el-Gaus*[7] (relief or aid), *el-Qutub*[8] (the pole or magnate), *el-Karamah*, *el-Wali*, *el-Faidha*, *el-Tariqa*, *Saqi*[9], *el-Ma'ani*, etc., as used by Shiekh Muhammadu Balarabe Gusau in his elegy on his spiritual teacher Shiekh Musa Madugu, when he said:

*Where are Qutub and  
another Qutub after them  
Where is saqi (the sufi order  
thirst quencher) who came  
before them*

The poet used the above verse in solace, that is to call others to bear the loss, by reminding them that many prominent scholars who were considered as *Qutubs*, that is the pole or magnate to the stability of the world have died. So everybody should bear in mind that death has no exception.

The poet also said:

*The people of Gusau had loss a great  
light of Qutub,  
The good leader and the Sun of his  
time*

Ustaz Muhammadu Mahi Amin Gusau also had similar expression in his elegy on his spiritual teacher Shiekh Muhammadu Balarabe Gusau when he said:

*(Shiekh Muhammadu Balarabe) was  
the secret of  
The Gaus [10] (the world aider of his  
time);  
Ibrahim Inyass, my beloved one  
I pray to Almighty Allah to see him in  
any way.*

Mentioning the deceased's efforts in dissemination of the Sufi order, as mentioned by Shiekh Muhammadu Balarabe in his elegy on Shiekh Musa Madugu, when he said:

*You provided a place for us where we  
say our daily zikir[11],  
May Allah reward you abundantly,  
You tried your best in propagating  
Tijjaniyyah sufi order  
You are known in Gusau as the  
reviver of the sect.*

Shiekh Muhammadu Mukhtar Danbara Gusau also has similar expression in his elegy on his mentor Shiekh Malam Lauwali, when he said:

*Shiekh Lauwali was very diligent in  
performing  
religious obligations and adherence to  
the sects' rules.*

Encouraging fellow brothers to adhere to rules of Sufi order, as Shiekh Balarabe did, when he said:

*Oh you my fellow brothers arise*

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*So as to follow the footsteps  
of Shiekh Tijjani  
To be diligent in performing  
the sects' obligations  
We should try our best to  
adhere to the rules of the  
sect  
In order to get rewards in  
hereafter.*

Prayer for the deceased, as said by Shiekh Balarabe:

*Oh Musa may Allah reward  
you with paradise,  
Together with Shiekh Ahmad  
Tijjani,  
And give you the girls of  
paradise.*

Shiekh Muhammadu Mukhtar Danbara Gusau also has similar expression, when he said:

*Oh Allah we ask You as You  
ordered  
To well come my spiritual  
teacher Shiekh Lauwali  
Reside him in paradise  
Together with the holy  
prophet Muhammad*

Make inanimate objects to cry upon the deceased, as Shiekh Muhammadu Mukhtar Danbara said:

*We cry as heaven and earth  
also cry  
For the loss of the good  
leader Shiekh Lauwali*

Description of the deceased with excellent virtues.  
The method used by Gusau poets in their elegies is classical, they describe the dead with good qualities such as knowledge, chastity, courage, piety, asceticism and intelligence, as Sheikh Balarabe said:

*The Piet and the son of the  
Piet has died  
Who was better than us in  
asceticism and nearness to  
Allah*

The poet Ustaz Abdullahi Tafkitara has similar expression on Sheikh Balarabe, when he said:

*(Shiekh Balarabe)  
was an excellent  
scholar,  
A patient, a religious, a  
chaste, and the despair,*

*Who always seek refuge to  
Allah.  
He was a Piet, a pure and  
neat, a leader,  
A pious, a sedate, a brave,  
Who would be compared  
with none.*

Condoling deceased's family, friends and neighbors.  
The condolence can be found in all of their elegies, such as what Shiekh Muhammadu Mukhtar Danbara said in his elegy on Shiekh Lauwali Jega:

*I extend my condolence to  
people of Jega and others,  
For the loss of ocean of  
knowledge Shiekh Lauwali,  
Same to his neighbors, his  
relatives,  
His wives and his parents in  
law,  
Same also to his mosque, his  
school,  
His students and his well-  
wishers*

The poet Ustaz Muhammadu Mustapha Balarabe Gusau has similar expression in his elegy on his school mates: Alhaji Muhammadu Ya'u, Alhaji Muhammadu Dan Ustazu and Alhaji Adam, who died as a result of a fatal motor accident in the year 1992 A.D., when he said:

*I extended my condolence to  
the entire Muslims,  
Especially adherents to  
Tijjaniyyah sect of sufi order  
Whose major concern in the  
world is zikr  
Most especially the  
companions  
of my spiritual teacher  
Shiekh Balarabe,  
I extend my condolence to all  
of them,  
While my eyes drop tears.  
A special condolence goes to  
Their families and friends,  
I pry to almighty Allah to  
Reward them with paradise*

Mentioning deceased's students, children and wives.  
The poets mostly mention deceased's companions, students, children and wives, as mentioned by the poet Ustaz Abdullahi Tafkitara, when he said in his elegy on his spiritual teacher Shiekh Balarabe:

*His companions were as  
stars in guidance,*

*All of them were heart healers.  
On top of the list was Alhaji Mainasara,  
Who used to escort him to everywhere at any time,  
Followed by the lion of God Alhaji Murtala  
Who, for the services he rendered to the Shiekh,  
All his wishes were fulfilled  
His children are healers to our sickness,  
With them, the fire of losing him  
In our heart is being put off,  
The oldest among them is Alhaji Ibrahim  
Who is known with his chastity,  
Followed by Malam Atiku  
Whose ocean of knowledge flooded all Peoples  
God bless his obedient two wives,  
During and after his life time,  
They are Khadija and Rabi'ah.*

Shiekh Qadhy Abdulkadir Sani Gusauhas similar expression in his elegy on his spiritual teacher Shiekh Balarabe, when he mentioned the total number of wives the Shiekh has ever married, and the two wives he left, he also mentioned total number of his children; dead among them and alive. Mentioning date of the death, time, and place, as mentioned by Shiekh Balarabe when he said:

*We lost gold on Saturday,  
So, we deserved to do none stop crying.*

Ustaz Muhammadu Mahi Amin has similar expression when he said:

*It was on Thursday night at nine o'clock  
The weather turned dark.*

Mentioning the poet's name by himself at the end of the poem as mentioned by Ustaz Muhammadu Mahi Amin, when he said:

*Mahi is extending his condolence to his family,  
Neighbors, students and all of his friends*

Shiekh Muhammadu Mukhtar Danbara has similar expression when he said:

*My name is Muhammadu Danbara Muktar,  
The son of Malam Lauwali Jibiya,  
Who leaves in eastern cinema quarters of Gusau town*

The poet pray for himself, his family and the rest of Muslims, as did by Shiekh Muhammadu Balarabe Gusau, when he said:

*We ask our God to good ending,  
For the sake of our Gaus;  
Shiekh Ahmad Tijjani*

Shiekh Muhammadu Mukhtar Danbara has similar expression when he said:

*Oh Allah protect me from my enemies,  
And also my offerings,  
For the sake of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH)  
Oh Allah forgive me  
And all of Male and female Muslims,  
For the sake of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH)  
Oh Allah forgive for my Male and Female parents,  
And also my teachers, oh Allah destroy my enemy*

## CONCLUSION

We have noticed in the paper, the researchers' effort to study and analyze significant features in the elegies composed by selected poets of Gusau city, in the second half of twentieth century A.D., which was divided into sub – headings, such as: brief history of the city, selected poets of elegy in the city, significant features in their elegies, conclusion and endnote.

We have also noticed that, the significant features include the use of Sufi order technical words, mentioning the deceased's efforts in dissemination the Sufi order, encouraging fellow brothers to adhere to rules of Sufi order, prayer for the deceased, make inanimate objects to cry upon the deceased, description of the deceased with excellent virtues, condoling deceased's family, friends and neighbors, mentioning deceased's students, children and wives, mentioning date of the death, time, and place, mentioning the poet's name by himself at the end of the poem, and the poet prayer for himself, his family and the rest of Muslims.

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2. Yandoto is a village currently in Thafe Local Government Zamfara State, Nigeria
3. Malam Bello and Dr. Sa'idu Muhammad Gusau, Loc. Cit
4. Malam Bello and Dr. Sa'idu Muhammad Gusau, A paper they presented in 1984, entitled: Brief history of Gusau: Its establishment and development, p. 3
5. Malam Bello and Dr. Sa'idu Muhammad Gusau, Gusau ta Malam Sambo, p. 3
6. Op.Cit, p. 4
7. Reliever or aider
8. The pole or magnate
9. The sufi order thirst quencher, which means the great leader of the order.
10. The world reliever or aider of his time
11. Zikr means: reciting the holy Names of Allah and that of his messenger Muhammad (PBUH)