

English translation of al-ḥājj ‘Umar Krachi’s didactic poem: Peaceful coexistence

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful
God bless and grant Muḥammad, our Lord, eternal Salvation

1. All praise to God who grants righteous people salvation,
And forbids liars redemption and justification;
2. Upholder of truth, creator of all creation; and their king;
Vindicator of scholars when they advance their proofs;
3. Benefactor of all servants, we praise and thank Him,
With unceasing praise and thanks till eternity.
4. Best of blessings, the purest and most complete,
Be showered upon the prophet who ascended up to God;
5. Upon his family as well, his disciples, and those who follow their suit;
And upon members of his kin and the wives, women of sagacity.
6. And then know that we have read your card,
And we are delighted that you have achieved immense.
7. Because your enemies have recoiled in shame,
They did not obtain their wish, after wasting their wealth.¹
8. And when we read your card to the great congregation,²
We said, what a joy, that your enemies have fools.
9. How delighted we are, O happiness without limit,
From that news, that your enemies have been vanquished.³
10. I want [to give you] words of advice, so lend your ear
To words of counsel without pretense.
11. The first of my advice: Be as united as the hand
Against others and listen⁴ not to those who peddle lies.
12. Give no ear to those who want to sow discord among you;
For many a word of calumny has stirred dispute.
13. Do not break up your rank, and envy no one else.
When enmity is harbored long it becomes rank.
14. Enmity against Muslims is worse than drought.
It is worse than any cause of famine that can upset mankind.
15. Turn in penitence to your Lord in all disputes;
And make peace among yourselves when your minds⁵ are enraged.
16. Whoso forbears in making peace, has chosen erroneous path.
He has aligned himself to God’s enemy⁶ of God by chosen conceit.
17. And whosoever wants to break Muslims apart,
God’s curses will befall him until his aim is exposed.

¹ بلج or *balajun* in Arabic, signifies money and by extension signifies wealth; but another meaning is to fall into the state of embarrassment.

² حَفْل or *ḥuffalun* in Arabic, is the plural of حافل or *ḥāfilun*, meaning filled; numerous.

³ الجأء or *al-ja’jā’u* in Arabic, means defeat; and تَجَاأ or *taja’ja’*, means to retreat, shrink or recoil.

⁴ أصاخ إصيح or *‘aṣākha/yuṣīkhu* in Arabic, meaning to listen.

⁵ رأي or *ra’yun* in Arabic, means view, opinion, but here it is used synecdochically.

⁶ Satan.

18. I say this generally and not specifically.
And whosoever harbors this in him should repent fast.
19. And if he does not repent but persists to keep apart,
He shall regret on Resurrection day as he revolts.
20. O believers! Be as brothers in good will.
Make peace between your brothers without stabbing one another.
21. When you live in brotherhood together without malice,
Honor and dignity shall cover you.
22. Have you not seen army of ants dragging a bone?
Unity is beneficial, and the one who strays will be oppressed.
23. Thus reeds cannot be broken when they are in mass;
But when separated they break to the one who pulls them out.
24. Anyone who embraces Islam is a brother:
Arab and non-Arab⁷ are equal in faith when it is sincere,
25. Berber and Indian⁸ or Slav,
Indians and Copts, when they follow the wide⁹ [way].
26. Likewise Turks and Kurman,¹⁰ all of them,
As well as the people of Sokode¹¹ when they drink from our faith.
27. People from Borno¹² and Azbin¹³ and the Fulani,¹⁴
And the Hausa are equal in religion, there is no obscurity.
28. Even Gurunsi¹⁵ and cooks,¹⁶ when they embrace
The religion, they are brothers among us without acrimony.¹⁷
29. There is no discrimination in Islam nor mutual hatred.
All are equal in God's religion. There is no deviation.
30. Be equal, without wrath or conceit,
Without bigotry or awful¹⁸ calumny.
31. And do not say I am Hausa, our town is
Kano,¹⁹ and but this one is stupid. His tummy is large.
32. I have tried people all sorts together.
I have found most of them embroiled in perfidy.
33. All that I have said will benefit you a lot.
How many a truthful word has the taste of colocynth!²⁰
34. Greetings from me to you, O Abā Bakr,²¹

⁷ 'Ajamun is used for Persians or more generally for anyone who is not Arab.

⁸ سنڌ , or *sindh* in Arabic, refers to one of the provinces in today's Pakistan.

⁹ بجاج or *bujajun* in Arabic, is used to describe wideness of the eyes.

¹⁰ Ethnic group in Ghana.

¹¹ Town in Togo.

¹² State in northeastern Nigeria.

¹³ Probably a Tamasheq-speaking group.

¹⁴ Transhumant herders widely distributed in West Africa; also known as Fulbe, Fula, and Peul.

¹⁵ Ethnic group in northern Ghana.

¹⁶ The word is ambiguous. It might be a Hausa phrase, *ku kuku*, meaning 'even cooks' (*kuku* borrowed in Hausa from English).

¹⁷ The marginal gloss, غمدای و , means "closing the mouth when enraged" or "sullen" in Hausa.

¹⁸ The marginal gloss, مومونا , means "ugliness" in Hausa.

¹⁹ Town in northern Nigeria.

²⁰ *Citrullus colocynthis*, commonly known as the colocynth, bitter apple, bitter cucumber.

- With good will and high esteem followed by hope.
35. We pray for God's favor and showers of mercy
Upon your brother, my beloved who has departed.
36. It was he who built glory for his heirs;
His blessings have encompassed all people without a break.
37. From me to his son Bāko²² good will to him,
As well as the rest of the family, brothers and whoever has come.
38. Likewise to your distinguished one, Mai Dōki,²³ honorable man,
From me to him, greetings whose perfume is fragrant.

²¹ Probably the sender of the letter.

²² Nickname in Hausa meaning "guest" or "stranger."

²³ Nickname in Hausa meaning "horse owner."