

English translation of al-ḥājj ‘Umar b. Abī Bakr praise poem: Kete-Krachi mosque

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

God’s blessings and peace be upon our Lord Muḥammad, his family, his companions, his wives and offspring.

1. We thank the Lord who spread out cradles,
And raised mountains like poles,
2. Needless of any helper,
Or spouse or children.
3. I bear witness that He is the God of creation.
He is beyond presentation and has no adversaries.
4. Then may His blessings continuously be showered
Upon the messenger who came with guidance;
5. With peace also; likewise upon his family
And the totality of companions and fighters.
6. Now, the purpose of this composition
Is in listing names of the patrons.
7. They are virtuous people and sincere friends of God.
They are generous people and most pious servants.
8. They have generously assisted in reconstructing the edifice,
Because they are benevolent people.
9. May our God reward them with goodness,
Protection, rewards and support.¹
10. The greatest helper was the leader² of the *zongo*,³
Ṣalaw.⁴ He is a unique person.
11. He has assisted us severally, without any doubt.
Every one present in the country can bear witness to that.
12. He has assisted us with graciousness: with paving stones,
And with lime and paper.
13. May God recompense him abundantly
With goodness, happiness and a long life.
14. He is followed by Garba. His mother is Maywanki.⁵
Then follows Adusi, conqueror of the envious.
15. His reward is with God of the worlds,

¹ Implies divine support.

² Literally *amīr*, Arabic for “commander,” here as a reference Malam Ṣalaw’s appointment by British colonial officials to a titled political role in Kumase.

³ Hausa word referring to a settlement founded by immigrant Muslim merchants and other travelers.

⁴ Ḥussain al-Kashnāwī, also known as Malam Ṣalaw, a subject of other praise poems by al-ḥājj ‘Umar Krachi.

⁵ Hausa title for a seller of a foodstuff known as *watche* (a mixed meal of rice and beans).

- In this day of ours and the appointed day.⁶
16. Forget not a wise one, a youth most outstanding.
That is Bāwa⁷, giver from treasures long bequeathed.
 17. He is of Mai Sūnā⁸'s descendants, a native of Kano.
His deeds surpass hand counting.
 18. God's mercy be upon his father,
As well as his mother and the rest of ancestors.
 19. Likewise his son, who has truly helped,
Malam Baraw⁹, his father like Hādi's father.¹⁰
 20. And the owner of lands in the country,
He has assisted us with great donations.
 21. That is Ibrāhīm. May God reward him
With more recompenses and happiness.
 22. Likewise our Alī, popularly known as Baraw,
Great sympathizer, he has assisted with money.
 23. May our Lord save him from evils,
In this world and the hereafter.
 24. And Yūsuf, our student, has also assisted, Imām
Of his town, the happiest of all towns.
 25. Akara¹¹ Kojo¹² has also assisted us a lot.
May he be wrapped in goodness like a scabbard.
 26. Forget not one who is like a thousand,
Al-ḥājǰ 'Uthmān of noble ancestry,
 27. Subduer of scoundrels and ruffraff,
Upholder of truth for the noble.
 28. Our son and grandchild, Mubārak,
Our student, but one of the lions,
 29. He has assisted us with white silver,
Without delay or procrastination.
 30. God's mercy be upon his father,
As well as his father's father in the tombs.
 31. Mention our father, merchant of silk brocades
And sarcenet and precious garments,
 32. Of Indian fabric as well as European,
Roman and African as well as Turkish,

⁶ Day of Judgment.

⁷ Hausa nickname meaning servant.

⁸ Hausa nickname meaning namesake.

⁹ Baraw is a common Hausa name and is a shortened form of Ibrāhīm.

¹⁰ Unknown person.

¹¹ Accra, a coastal town in Ghana.

¹² *Kūjū* in Arabic, an Akan first name.

33. Russian weave and Turkish weave,
That is Abū Bakr. He is among the unique ones.
34. He has assisted us greatly and it is well known.
May God reward him with revenues.
35. Muḥammad Sāni,¹³ Abū Ngari,¹⁴
Resident of Salaga,¹⁵ say, he is among the noble.
36. He has extended his hand of assistance to us.
His deed is of eternal paradise.
37. He extended us a hand of assistance.
His deed is a worthy deed.
38. May God's mercy be upon his father.
May He house him in eternal paradise.
39. Mention Abū Salaga, grandchild of Lāmi.
He has assisted the pious most prominently.
40. May our Lord reward him with what he desires,
In this world and the hereafter.
41. With regards to Sulaymān, the people's Imām,
His assistance was in manifolds.
42. He assisted privately and publicly.
May the Lord of creation reward him for his needs,
43. In this world and the hereafter.
Amen, by the chapter of *wa-al-ād*.¹⁶
44. The leader¹⁷ of the *zongo*, Khālid from Yelwa,¹⁸
That is our attendant without hesitation.
45. He was assisting us according to his capacity.
May his reward be multiplied without exhaustion.
46. Our Aḥmad, Kōmin Dare,¹⁹ was a worthy helper.
He assisted us with straw²⁰ and money.
47. We ask our Lord to reward him
With wealth, blessings and support.
48. Mai Sūna, the senior, has assisted us
Previously with slaves and provisions.

¹³ Literally *thāni* in Arabic, which means “second,” it is the nickname of a second-born Muḥammad in a family. Muḥammad is a favored male name and often is given to all males born in a Hausa family. In such a case they become known by their birth rank: *awwal* (first), *thāni* (second), *thālith* (third), etc.

¹⁴ Literally the Abu Bakr of town.

¹⁵ Commercial town in northern Ghana; it was the residence of al-ḥājj ‘Umar Krachi before a civil war in the late nineteenth century led him to move to Kete-Krachi.

¹⁶ *Wa al-ādiyāt* or “By the Runners” is the hundredth chapter of the Qur’ān.

¹⁷ Literally sultan.

¹⁸ Town in Nigeria.

¹⁹ Nickname meaning “however late-night.”

²⁰ Probably لف (pl. ألفاف), brushwood, is meant here.

49. May the Lord of creation reward him with wealth,
For the sake of Salih, Nūḥ and Hūd.²¹
50. It is befitting that we mention Abdullah,
Our landlord, without heresy.
51. That is the Zarma,²² the free born,
Who obeys our word submissively.
52. He has assisted us intermittently, yes!
May our Lord protect him from evil,
53. In all his affairs and businesses,
For the sake of he²³ who was sent with guidance.
54. As for Kalankulay, he has assisted us.
May God help him for the sake of Şād.²⁴
55. That is Muḥammad Qarātu²⁵ notably,
Leader²⁶ of Alfay, without parallel.
56. We ask God, for the sake of Jesus²⁷
To protect him from the plots of the evil.
57. And it is at this juncture that we will mention Abdullah,
Leader²⁸ of Yendi²⁹, with mighty army.
58. He has assisted us in renovating the building,
With his wealth, in cash and gold.
59. May God grant him long life
In his rule and save him from malice.
60. Aḥmad Jatigi,³⁰ blessed merchant,
Has assisted us with money and benefits.
61. We ask our Lord to augment his wealth
Multiple folds eternally.
62. We complete this composition with Malam Manzō,³¹
Very courteous towards every caller.
63. He has sincerely assisted us.
We give him thanks forever lasting.
64. His assistance came in a hard time,
When all provisions were exhausted.

²¹ Ancient prophets whose people reportedly disobeyed and thus received God's wrath.

²² Ethnic group in Niger.

²³ Prophet Muḥammad.

²⁴ Another prophet whose people reportedly disobeyed and thus received God's wrath.

²⁵ Literally "Muḥammad the Reader".

²⁶ Literally sultan.

²⁷ *Īsā* in Arabic.

²⁸ Literally sultan.

²⁹ Town in northern Ghana that was the capital of the Dagbon state.

³⁰ A Mande term for the gracious "host" of a traveler.

³¹ Literally messenger.

65. May our Lord reward him abundantly,
In this our day and the promised day.³²
66. These are the names of men of God,
And they are like mountains on earth.
67. And all those are virtuous people.
Their deeds are good without parallel.
68. May God reward them with all goodness,
And joy, blessing and happiness.
69. Praise be to God, whose generosity is immense!
His blessings be upon the Master of the world.

³² Day of Judgment.