

The Construction of Majaz in the Abbasid Era Poetry of 'Ala Qadri Ahli L-'Azmi (The Work of Al-Mutanabbi)

Dewi Himmatul Ulya¹, Muhammad Afhon Ulin Nuha²

Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah, Indonesia

E-mail: dewihimmatul16@gmail.com, afhon@uinsatu.ac.id

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membongkar mekanisme internal pembentukan gaya bahasa kiasan (*majaz*) dan bagaimana konstruksi tersebut menopang estetika serta pesan filosofis dalam *Qasidah 'Ala Qadri Ahli L-'Azmi* karya penyair legendaris era Abbasiyah, Al-Mutanabbi. Puisi epik ini ditulis sebagai bentuk pujian (*al-madh*) atas kemenangan pangeran Sayf ad-Dawlah al-Hamdani dalam merebut kembali Benteng Al-Hadats dari Bizantium. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian kepustakaan (*library research*) dengan pendekatan analisis deskriptif-kualitatif berbasis ilmu Balaghah, khususnya cabang ilmu Bayan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Al-Mutanabbi secara genius memanfaatkan variasi struktur kiasan untuk mendramatisasi realitas pertempuran menjadi narasi heroisme yang megah. Ditemukan penggunaan *majaz mursal* melalui hubungan parsial (*al-'alaqah al-juz'iyah*) pada kata *al-jamajim* (tengkorak) untuk meruntuhkan kehormatan musuh; *isti'arah makniyyah* dalam bentuk personifikasi Benteng Al-Hadats; serta *isti'arah tasrihiyyah* pada frasa *mawju l-manaya* (gelombang kematian) untuk menggambarkan masifnya korban perang. Melalui konstruksi *majaz* yang presisi ini, Al-Mutanabbi berhasil mengubah brutalitas perang menjadi simfoni visual yang sarat akan nilai estetika, logika puitis, dan kedalaman filosofis khas zaman keemasan sastra Arab.

Kata kunci: Al-Mutanabbi, *Majaz*, *Isti'arah*, Ilmu Bayan, Daulah Abbasiyah.

Abstract This research aims to dismantle the internal mechanisms behind the formation of figurative language (*majaz*) and how such constructions sustain the aesthetics and philosophical messages in the *Qasidah 'Ala Qadri Ahli L-'Azmi* by the legendary Abbasid-era poet, Al-Mutanabbi. This epic poem was composed as a form of panegyric (*al-madh*) praising the victory of Prince Sayf ad-Dawlah al-Hamdani in recapturing the Al-Hadath Fortress from the Byzantines. The research method employed is library research with a descriptive-qualitative analytical approach based on Balaghah (Arabic rhetoric), specifically the branch of Bayan. The results demonstrate that Al-Mutanabbi geniusly utilized variations of figurative structures to dramatize the reality of battle into a grand narrative of heroism. The study reveals the use of *majaz mursal* (synecdoche) through a partial relationship (*al-'alaqah al-juz'iyah*) in the word *al-jamajim* (skulls) to shatter the enemy's honor; *isti'arah makniyyah* (implicit metaphor) in the form of personifying the Al-Hadath Fortress; and *isti'arah tasrihiyyah* (explicit metaphor) in the phrase *mawju l-manaya* (waves of death) to depict the massive scale of war casualties. Through these precise *majaz* constructions, Al-Mutanabbi successfully transformed the brutality of war into a visual symphony rich in aesthetic value, poetic logic, and the philosophical depth characteristic of the golden age of Arabic literature.

Key words: Al-Mutanabbi, *Majaz*, *Isti'arah*, Ilmu Bayan, Daulah Abbasiyah.

INTRODUCTION

Arabic literature during the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258 CE) experienced a golden age marked by a major leap in intellectual traditions and linguistic aesthetics. The civilization's shift from a purely Arab geopolitical lifestyle toward cosmopolitan cultural assimilation triggered a massive evolution in the structure of Arabic poetry (*al-shi'r al-'Arabi*).2017,) □□□□□ □□□ □□□ □□□□□□□□ □□ □□□□□□□□() One of the peak personifications of literary aesthetics in this era was Abu al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi (915–965 CE), a legendary poet whose works not only recorded the

socio-political dynamics of his time but also became a benchmark of eloquence (*balaghah*) that transcends generations. Al-Mallah, M. (2013).

Among Al-Mutanabbi's most monumental masterpieces is the *Qasidah* (ode) '*Ala Qadri Ahli l-'Azmi*, An epic poem composed to praise the Hamdanid prince, Sayf ad-Dawlah al-Hamdani, for his victory in recapturing the Al-Hadath Fortress from the Byzantine Empire. This poem is widely recognized not merely as a tool for political propaganda or panegyric (*al-madh*), but as the crystallization of highly complex linguistic beauty. Al-Mutanabbi brilliantly harnessed a wealth of imagination and diction to immortalize this historical event into verses of supreme artistic value.

The grandeur of this poem lies in the construction of *majaz* (figurative language), which is precisely woven by the poet. In the study of *Ilm al-Bayan* (a branch of *Balaghah*, or Arabic rhetoric), *majaz* serves as a crucial instrument that bridges the transition from denotative (literal) to connotative (figurative) meaning. (Al-q & Al-jurj, n.d.) Al-Mutanabbi does not employ figures of speech merely as textual embellishments, but rather as the foundation of a poetic logic used to dramatize reality. His varied use of *majaz* ranging from *majaz mursal* (synecdoche/metonymy) with its various dimensions (including *al-'alaqah al-juz'iyah*, or the part-for-whole relationship) to sharp *isti'arah* (metaphor) is capable of transforming a brutal battle narrative into a magnificent and philosophical visual symphony. (Tusa & Sakinah, 2025)

Although research on Al-Mutanabbi's poetry has been extensively conducted, most previous studies tend to focus on historical aspects, the thematic content of *madh* (panegyric), or the psychological analysis of the poet. Research that specifically dissects the internal mechanisms of figurative formation and how this construction of *majaz* sustains the aesthetics and philosophical message in the *qasidah* '*Ala Qadri Ahli l-'Azmi* still requires deeper exploration. This linguistic phenomenon is crucial to investigate in order to uncover how the structure of *majaz* works in building the imagery of heroism and bravery characteristic of the Abbasid era.

METHOD

This study employs library research with a descriptive-qualitative approach. The primary focus of this research is to dissect the poetic text to uncover the internal mechanisms behind the formation of figurative language. The analytical approach used is based on the theory of *Balaghah* (Arabic rhetoric), specifically prioritizing the branch of *Bayan* (science of figurative expression) to identify, classify, and interpret the structure of *majaz* (metaphor/allegory).

The data in this study consist of textual data sourced from the poetic verses (*qasidah*) titled '*Alā Qadri Ahli al-'Azmi* by Abu al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī. The data collection technique was carried out through the observation and note-taking method (*metode simak dan catat*), which involved a close reading of the poetic text, identifying lingual units (words or phrases) that indicate a shift from literal (*haqiqi*) to figurative (*majazi*) meaning, and subsequently recording them into a data corpus table.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings regarding the use of *majaz* (figurative language) in the qasidah '*Alā Qadri Ahli l-'Azmi*' by Abu al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī. The analysis was conducted using the *ilm al-bayan* approach to identify the forms of *majaz* present in the qasidah and to explain their meanings and rhetorical functions. Each datum was analyzed based on the theory of *balaghah* (Arabic rhetoric), specifically concerning *majaz mursal* (synecdoche/metonymy) and *isti'arah* (metaphor). The results show that Al-Mutanabbī utilizes various forms of *majaz* as a means to reinforce the delivery of meaning, construct heroic imagery, and enhance the poetic aesthetic value. The discussion in this chapter is organized based on the types of *majaz* found in the qasidah, which are then elaborated through an analysis of the verses containing these figurative elements, alongside explanations of their linguistic meanings and functions.

1. Puisi '*Ala Qadri Ahli l-'Azmi*' (Karya Al-Mutanabbī)

The poem '*Ala Qadri Ahli l-'Azmi*' (على قدر أهل العزم) is a classic panegyric (praise) and heroic epic (*Al-Hamasa*) composed by Al-Mutanabbī in 954 AD in Aleppo, Syria. This work was written to honor the Ruler of Aleppo, Sayf al-Dawlah al-Hamdani, for his military victory in recapturing the Al-Hadath Fortress from the forces of the Byzantine Empire. The poem is highly acclaimed because it does not merely praise physical strength, but rather highlights the psychological capacity and leadership resolve (*al-'Azmi*) of the ruler. This genius is powerfully reflected in its opening verse, which is now universally recognized as a philosophical reflection that the magnitude of an obstacle is determined by human perspective and the nobility of the soul.

This collection of works links the concept of resolve to broader literary and theological traditions. Research into early Islamic poetry demonstrates that the influence of the Qur'an transformed the value orientation of society, shifting it from a tribe-based system to an ummah-based system within a moral framework. (Study, 2025)

١. عَلَى قَدَرِ أَهْلِ الْعَزْمِ تَأْتِي الْعَزَائِمُ --- وَتَأْتِي عَلَى قَدَرِ الْكِرَامِ الْمَكَارِمُ
٢. وَتَعْظُمُ فِي عَيْنِ الصَّغِيرِ صَغَارُهَا --- وَتَصْغُرُ فِي عَيْنِ الْعَظِيمِ الْعُظَائِمُ
٣. يُكَلِّفُ سَيْفُ الدَّوْلَةِ الْجَيْشَ هَمَّهُ --- وَقَدْ عَجَزَتْ عَنْهُ الْجُيُوشُ الْخَضَارِمُ
٤. وَيَطْلُبُ عِنْدَ النَّاسِ مَا عِنْدَ نَفْسِهِ --- وَذَلِكَ مَا لَا تَدْعِيهِ الضَّرَاعِمُ
٥. هَلِ الْحَدَثُ الْحَمْرَاءُ تَعْرِفُ لَوْنَهَا --- وَتَعْلَمُ أَيُّ السَّاقِيَيْنِ الْغَمَامِ
٦. سَقَتْهَا عِمَامُ الْغُرِّ قَبْلَ نَزْوِلِهِ --- فَلَمَّا دَنَا مِنْهَا سَقَتْهَا الْجَمَاجِمُ
٧. بَنَاهَا فَأَعْلَى وَالْقَنَا تَقَرَّعُ الْقَنَا --- وَمَوْجُ الْمَنَاءِ حَوْلَهَا مَتَلَاظِمُ

In proportion to the resolve of those who possess determination, great resolves come forth. And according to the nobility of noble men, honorable deeds are realized.

Small matters appear immense in the eyes of the small-minded, while grand affairs seem trivial in the eyes of the great-souled.

Sayf ad-Dawlah burdens his army with his own lofty resolve, a task that even a vast, ocean-like host would find impossible to bear.

He demands that others possess a courage like his own, a bravery that even ferocious lions would not dare to claim.

Does the red Al-Hadath Fortress know why its walls have turned red? And does it know which of the two downpours has drenched it?

The white clouds in the sky had rained upon it before the prince's arrival, but as the prince drew near, the fortress was washed by the skulls of the enemy.

The prince rebuilt the fortress and raised it high while spears clashed furiously, and the waves of death crashed all around it.

2. *Majaz*

Majaz is a figurative expression in the Arabic language used to give a sentence a richer meaning. (Nur et al., 2023) Its purpose is to convey the speaker's message indirectly, making its meaning broader than the literal text. In the study of *balaghah* (Arabic rhetoric), *majaz* serves as an important tool for expressing complex ideas and deep emotions. This figurative language is frequently encountered both in Arabic literature and in religious texts such as the Qur'an. (Aslan & Araz, 2026)

3. *Majaz mursal*

Majaz mursal (metonymy/synecdoche) is a word used in a non-literal sense due to a relationship other than similarity, accompanied by a *qarinah* (contextual clue) that prevents the sentence from being understood in its literal meaning. (Nur et al., 2023) Understanding *majāz mursal* helps uncover the intended meaning of verses that employ this figurative style. Without adequate understanding, one could fall into literal interpretations that potentially deviate from the true meaning. In poetry, the form of *majāz mursal* with the relationship of *al-'alaqah al-juz'iyah* (the partial relationship) occurs when the poet mentions only a small part of an object, yet the actual intention is to depict the object in its entirety or as a whole. (Harjum & Qurrota, 2025)

Verse 6

وَسَقَّتْهَا الْجَمَاجِمُ

"...and the fortress was showered with skulls."

The use of the word *al-jamājim* (skulls/heads) in this verse is an example of *majaz mursal* (metonymy/synecdoche) featuring the relationship of *al-'alaqah al-juz'iyah* (mentioning a part to represent the whole). Here, the poet only mentions the head, whereas the actual intended meaning refers to the entire bodies of the enemy soldiers who were killed in battle, to the extent that their blood drenched the earth. The poet deliberately chose the head because it is the supreme symbol of human honor. By depicting heads shattered and strewn about, the poet aims to emphasize that the honor and arrogance of the enemy have completely collapsed at the hands of the prince.

4. *Majaz Isti'arah Makniyyah*

Isti'arah (metaphor) is a figurative style that carries a higher level of difficulty because it requires shifting the meaning of a word from its original sense to a new one based on a shared similarity in usage; a word is not interpreted literally according to the dictionary, but rather figuratively, forcing the reader to think more deeply to grasp its intent. For this reason, in the study of *balaghah* (Arabic rhetoric), *isti'arah* is categorized under verbal figures of speech (*majaz lughawi*). Many linguists also consider *isti'arah* to be an

abbreviated form of a simile (*tasybih*). The primary advantage of *isti'arah* lies in its ability to create a powerful sense of imagination for the readers (Arabiyyah, 2026). Since this figurative style does not explicitly state the comparative relationship, *isti'arah* provides ample room for readers to interpret the meaning themselves, guided by the textual context and their own experiences. This is what makes *isti'arah* more fluid, flexible, and vivid in conveying a message. Linguistically, *isti'arāh* occurs when a word is borrowed to express another context due to a shared attribute (Oktavian & Komarudin R. Edi, 2023). This process is accompanied by a contextual clue (*qarinah*) that diverts the reader's understanding away from its original meaning. (Nurafika et al., 2022)

Isti'arah makniyah (implicit/creative metaphor) refers to a metaphor that is subtle or hidden. In *isti'arah makniyah*, the *musyabbah bih* (the object to which something is compared) is not explicitly mentioned or is hidden; only the *musyabbah* (the subject being compared) and the *lazimul musyabbah bih* (an attribute or characteristic inherent to the hidden object) are mentioned.

Verse 5

هَلِ الْحَدَثُ الْخُمْرَاءُ تَعْرِفُ لَوْنَهَا

"Does the Al-Hadath Fortress know its own color?"

The poet utilizes the technique of personification by equating the fortress (an inanimate object) with a rational human being. Although the word 'human' is not explicitly mentioned in the text, distinct human characteristics namely the capacity to think and to know are nonetheless attributed to the fortress.

5. *Majaz Isti'arah Tasrihiyyah*

In the Qur'an, *isti'arah* (metaphor) serves a much greater purpose than mere linguistic beauty. Its presence aims to simplify the understanding of complex meanings, convey theological messages through powerful symbols, and preserve the integrity of the substantive meaning across various contexts of exegesis (*tafsir*). (Murdiono et al., 2022)

This type of *isti'arah* is explained through a word that brings forward the object of comparison (*musyabbah bih*), even though the actual intended meaning is the original object being described (*musyabbah*). In addition, other literature states that *Isti'arah Tasrihiyyah* (explicit metaphor) is a figure of speech in which the text explicitly brings forward only the object of comparison or its figurative meaning (*musyabbah bih*). (Diki Saputra Siregar et al., 2024)

Isti'arah Tasrihiyyah (explicit metaphor) is a metaphorical construction in which the poet borrows a term inherently attached to the *musyabbah bih* (the figurative meaning) to express the *musyabbah* (the literal meaning) whose position has been replaced. The reinforcement of this definition is also commonly found in various *balaghah* (Arabic rhetoric) textbooks, which identify *Isti'arah Tasrihiyyah* as a figurative style characterized by the textual appearance of the *musyabbah bih* component. Consequently, even though the reader directly confronts the symbol or representation of the figurative meaning, the contextual logic of the sentence continues to guide the

understanding toward the reality of the unmentioned literal meaning. (Oktavian & Komarudin R. Edi, 2023)

Verse 7

وَمَوْجُ الْمَنَآيَا

"Wave of death"

The poet equates the high number of deaths on the battlefield to the rolling waves of the sea. The poet deliberately omits the word 'war' and directly employs the word 'wave' (*isti'arah tasrihiyyah*). The use of the word 'wave' is intended to demonstrate that death occurred there very rapidly, in massive numbers, and highly terrifying, like a massive wave in the ocean that engulfs everything in its path.

The results of this study indicate that *majaz* (figurative language) is one of the essential elements that shapes the expressive power and aesthetic value in Al-Mutanabbī's poetry. Therefore, an analysis of *majaz* provides a deeper understanding of the characteristics of Al-Mutanabbī's poetic language, while demonstrating the role of *ilm al-bayan* (the science of rhetoric) in uncovering the meanings embedded behind the figurative expressions in classical Arabic literature.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the *qasidah* (ode) '*Alā Qadri Ahli al-'Azmi*' by Abu al-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī is constructed through a systematic framework of *majaz* (figurative language) as a rhetorical strategy to represent the heroism, bravery, and victory of Sayf al-Dawlah al-Hamdānī. Based on an analysis using the *ilm al-bayan* (science of rhetoric) approach, three dominant forms of *majaz* were identified: *majaz mursal*, *isti'arah makniyyah*, and *isti'arah tasrihiyyah*. These three forms do not merely serve as elements of linguistic aesthetics, but also act as semantic devices that reinforce the heroic message and expand the meaning the poet intends to convey. *Majaz mursal* with the relationship of *al-'alāqah al-juz'iyyah* (synecdoche) is apparent in the use of the word *al-jamājim* (skulls), which represents the entire bodies of the enemy soldiers as a symbol of the collapse of their honor and power. Meanwhile, *isti'arah makniyyah* is manifested through the personification of the Al-Hadath Fortress, which is depicted as possessing the human-like ability to know, thereby delivering an imaginative effect while heightening the dramatization of the battle. Finally, the *isti'arah tasrihiyyah* in the phrase *mawju al-manāyā* (wave of death) provides a metaphorical depiction of the sheer intensity of the war and the massive number of casualties that fell.

This study confirms that the construction of *majaz* (figurative language) in Al-Mutanabbī's *qasidah* is an integral part of the poetic logic that connects linguistic, aesthetic, and philosophical meanings. Thus, *majaz* serves not merely as a rhetorical ornament, but as a primary instrument in building the representation of heroism and reinforcing the persuasive power of the poetry. This research is expected to contribute to the development of *balaghah* studies, particularly *ilm al-bayan*, and to serve as a reference for future research examining Al-Mutanabbī's stylistic flair or classical Arabic literature through stylistic, semantic, or discourse analysis approaches.

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