Ma’ana Siti Habib Jamaluddin (1219H-17 Shawal, 1339H), popularly known as Dada Masiti (Grandmother Masiti), was born in Brava. She was kidnapped at the age of six and taken to Zanzibar where she was sold into slavery. She was found after approximately ten years by relatives or family friends who recognized her and brought her back to Brava. Upon her return, Dada Masiti became immersed in religious studies. Few details are known about her stay in Zanzibar, but the kidnapping, servitude, and eventual return are mentioned in her poem entitled “Ya Rabbi ya Muta’ali” (O, My Exalted Lord).

Dada Masiti’s poetry is memorized, transmitted, and aesthetically quoted by the Bravanese people, and specifically by Bravanese women, both in Somalia and in the diaspora. Although she is the most prominent woman scholar in Brava, she is not the only one. The Bravanese traditionally trained young women to become Quranic school teachers. Some of the women acquired advanced religious education and Sufi mystical training. In the case of Dada Masiti, she became a symbol of the true mystical seeker.

Dada Masiti’s poetry is characterized by emotional eloquence and imagination. It is poetry that proceeds from a deep emotional desire for repentance, atonement, and spiritual connection to the Divine. Another recurring theme is her orientation towards the hereafter and a denunciation of the vain desires of this world. In this poem, for example, she says:
The Bravanese have a long tradition of using *stenzi* (religious poetry) to commemorate and praise distinguished *ulama*. But *stenzi* poetry is not limited to eulogies alone, they also allude to a body of religious principles, historical events, and moral wisdom. As in other areas of Africa, such as the Hausa region of Nigeria and the Swahili towns of East Africa, vernacular verse has had a major impact in spreading Islam among the masses of Bravanese and their immediate neighbors. These poems, to my knowledge, have not previously been published and are little known outside of southern Somalia. Outside of Brava, only a few members of the *Qadiria* brotherhoods in the southern coastal towns of Somalia have incorporated some of these poems in their *dhikr* sessions.

Around the beginning of 1909, Shaikh Nurein Al-Sabir (1829–1909), the eminent Bravanese jurist and scholar, asked Dada Masiti, the revered saint and poet from Brava, to compose a poem to console his followers and to prevent the people of Brava from weeping after his death. The Shaikh was in his early 80s and was apparently in poor health. He most probably chose Dada Masiti for this task because of her *baraka* as a pious *Ashraf* Sufi and as a distinguished poet. About ten days before his death, Dada Masiti composed an emotionally moving poem that has become the best-known eulogistic poem in Brava. Although this poem was intended to comfort people, and it certainly did that at the time, its beautiful depiction of the life and death of Shaikh Nurein can still move people to tears. It is said that Shaikh Nurein told Dada Masiti to start with the verse:

*Bacda xayi ni mowti*  
*Shaikhi chifa isiloowa*  
After life comes death  
When the Shaikh dies, no one should weep

The following are excerpts from this beautiful poem:
**Bacda Hayyi (After Life)**

_Bacda xayi ni mowti_  
After life comes death

_Shaikhi chifa isiloowa_  
When the Shaikh dies, no one should weep

_Bismillahi Andika_  
Write “in the name of God,”

_Ni awali yakanzowa_  
For everything begins that way

_Rabbi Rahmani Rahimu_  
Our Lord is the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

_Rahmale hurhombaowa_  
And we ask for His mercy

_Chirhombeni Rahmale_  
Let us beg for His mercy

_Shaikhi kunaxarisoowa_  
And that the Shaikh be granted His compassion

_Ukarhi wa sakarati_  
May the Shaikh be spared

_Shaikhi kuchize kupowa_  
The torturous agonies of dying

_Shaikh Nureini nasimwa_  
Shaikh Nureini, the Gentle Breeze,

_Rahma mba kurhombelowa_  
Let us pray that God shows him mercy

Note the suffix “wa” at the end of every verse. This signifies a sound of deep sadness and gives the poem even more poignancy. Dada Masiti tries to celebrate the Shaikh’s life and mourn him at the same time. She goes on and asks why people should mourn when the Shaikh is going to heaven to join and stay with the people most beloved by the Lord:

_Yiiko Jannatul Cadni_  
There is the paradise called Eden

_Nndaawo weena Hu pendoowa_  
Reserved for the beloved of our Lord

_Nnda weena wa peenzela nto_  
It is for those who are very much beloved and pious

_Ruuxu zaawo Hu taloowa_  
And whose souls have been specifically selected

_Jamaca ya Muqarribiina_  
Those who are closest to God

_Wonte wa takuntiyanwawoowa_  
Will all be assembled

_Nasuxha ya Nabiyyi_  
And the Prophet’s Companions

_Qariibuye Hu wekoowa_  
Will all stay by his side

Dada Masiti here is referring to the Sunnah belief that the souls of the virtuous will join other pure souls in the transitional abode of **Barzakh.** Her poetry clearly shows the depth of her knowledge of the Quran and
Sunnah. She continues the verse and stresses how important Shaikh Nureini was as a scholar and as a shaikh:

*Sheekhi fadhiye ni faayda*  
We can benefit from sitting next to the Shaikh

*Kurhombowa hupatoowa*  
And we pray for this,

*Kaake hupatoowa diini*  
To acquire religious knowledge

*Kanzi Ya kuxafihooowa*  
And treasures worth preserving

*Kaake hupatoowa cilmu*  
As well as other knowledge

*Manfacayakhtumiloowa*  
Of practical use

*Kaake hupatoowa caqli*  
We gain wisdom from him

*Nijohari humeroowa*  
Precious stones worth looking for

*Xaqqi yasheekhi pendaani*  
Value the Shaikh’s life

*Daa’imu Ha ipatoowa*  
Since eternal life is impossible

*Daa’imu Ha ipatoowi*  
Eternal life is impossible

*Kufa ina yaqinoowa*  
And death is a certainty

But Dada Masiti does not give up hope that the Lord could spare the Shaikh for a few more years so that he might keep disseminating and sharing his knowledge:

*Rhombani Sheekhi ku raaga*  
Pray that the Shaikh may live on

*Cumriwe ku zidoowa*  
And that his life be extended

*Cumriwe ujiziida*  
For if his life is extended

*Cilmu ina fafishoowa*  
He will disseminate more knowledge

*Cilmu Fafishaani*  
The dissemination of knowledge

*Diiini Ina dhisatoowa*  
Will strengthen our religion

*Koodhi Ya Sheekhi Kodheerho*  
And whatever the Shaikh says

*Suura kurhangalilooowa*  
Warrants careful consideration

If the Lord does not extend the Shaikh’s life, then Dada Masiti insists that people should not weep. On the contrary, they should celebrate:

*Sheekhi chifa ha iloowi*  
When the Shaikh dies, no one should weep

*Ita ku dhikirishooowa*  
Instead people should recite dhikr

*Ita kawuma dhikiri*  
Dhikr will echo from all corners

*Na quraani khsonoowa*  
The Quran will be read
Dada Masiti then describes what the funeral rites for the Shaikh will be like; how his body will be washed, how it will be perfumed with incense. The deceased Shaikh will be dressed in his long white *hanzu* and his turban, and then wrapped in a white shroud. She describes the sadness of his followers during this process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sheekhi Chifa Hulowaayi</th>
<th>Why should people weep,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nimuunti wa khfurhoowa</td>
<td>As it is a day of joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndive muunti wa furaha</td>
<td>[The day he dies] is actually a day of joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ita kurharhisanyoowa</td>
<td>And a day to visit each other in celebration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then Dada Masiti, referring to the *Hadith*, describes how God will reward those who follow the funeral procession:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wasimeemo kumnuurisha</th>
<th>Those who are standing and reciting dhikr and Quran*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maatozi ya taktikoowa</td>
<td>Tears will flow down their cheeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yatakiiika maatozi</td>
<td>Tears will keep flowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nguyo sta kolozoowa</td>
<td>And wet their clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wote watakuaraasha</td>
<td>All will follow the funeral procession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muuyi uta kulatoowa</td>
<td>And the town will be deserted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenyu muuyi nawageeni</td>
<td>Local people and visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ntaku khtamburhaanoowa</td>
<td>Will be indistinguishable in this crowd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Naako itakuuya Naada</th>
<th>And then a divine call will be made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khalqi ina kirimoowa</td>
<td>For the crowd to be rewarded10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wa takuuyo nimalanyka</td>
<td>Angels will descend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiingi wakhtumishoowa</td>
<td>To perform this service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watakawanya thawaabu</td>
<td>They will distribute heavenly rewards11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jisa bunji hawanyoowa</td>
<td>Much like roasted coffee beans are distributed13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatta waako zorhokooni</td>
<td>Even those watching from the windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baraka wa takhpooowa</td>
<td>Will receive this blessing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now sadness will overtake the people and everything that the Shaikh has touched:

Hu xuzuniko mpeengele — The pathways along which he walked daily
Kutta schinendoowa — Will feel sad,
Hu xuzuniko ni darsa — As will his daily circle of students
Fadhi schitalicoowa — And the lessons he used to teach
Miskiti huwa miinza — The Mosque will be dark
Ataa tarha ichashoowa — Even when it is lit
Tarha waarhiko niyeeye — For he was the light
Nuuru ya ku rhangaaloowa — A bright light we all watched
Sawarataani turhaani — Calm down and be consoled
Sheekhi siwo wakhpatoowa — For the Shaikh is out of our reach
Sheekhi karheente Jannaani — He is residing in Heaven
Na kurhiindra kendreloowa — Waiting for us to join him

The most popular religious poems in Chimbalazi, the northern Swahili dialect of Brava, have been composed by poet-ulama such as Dada Masiti, Shaikh Qassim Al-Barawi, and Mu’allim Nuri. Their poetry provides an insight into the Bravanese outlook on the world, their beliefs and value systems. In composing these poems, the Bravanese ulama in some cases followed the classical religious works of Arabic, at least in literary style. However, many poems show an impressive degree of originality and finesses. The poems composed by Dada Masiti cover both areas of Shari’a and tariqa. Her poetry also deals with fundamental principles of Islam, with Prophetic panegyrics, and with the Sufi Islamic concepts of the purification of the nafs (self or soul) and the suluk (spiritual journey). In one of her poems, Dada Masiti discusses the reproaching nafs, saying:
Today, Dada Masiti is remembered as a woman saint and mystic to whom many miracles are attributed. Little is known about her initiation into the mystic path, although Dada Masiti mentions in a poem that she was introduced to it by the people who brought her back to Brava. Like many Islamic women mystics, Dada Masiti was also an accomplished poetess and her poetry is a living treasure for all Bravanese gnostics and religious disciples. But her major impact has been on Bravanese women, who see her as a model of piety and chastity. Although women in Bravanese society are generally segregated from men and excluded from performing many formal religious activities such as leading congregational prayers, performing religious rituals, and acting as judges, yet their involvement in Islam is not marginal. Almost all of them are literate and the majority of Quranic school children are taught by them. They were the main people who memorized the *Stenzi* and, in some cases (like Dada Masiti), became religious poets and saints.

Dada Masiti’s biography is remarkably similar to that of Rabí’a Al-ʿAdawiyya (CE 717–CE 801), who is considered to be “the saint par excellence of the Sunnite hagiography.” Rabí’a was also kidnapped, sold into slavery, and set free after many years. She then committed herself to a life of devotion and “occupied herself with works of piety.” Both Rabí’a and Dada Masiti lived to a ripe old age and never married. Like Rabí’a, Dada Masiti is said to have been blessed with the power to work miracles. Dada Masiti’s poems show that she constantly grieved for her sins and believed that repentance was a “gift from God.” This is
very similar to Rabi’a’s outlook as reflected by her works. Did Dada Masiti know about Rabi’a’s works and history? Only further investigations into the life and work of Dada Masiti will reveal this.

Dada Masiti’s poetry is a good example of how vernacular verse was used to transmit Islamic knowledge in Brava and its vicinity. These vernacular verses reached their intended audience through the Makhadimu, the servants working in the mosques, or through the Waliimu, the teachers of the Quranic schools. Although the poems were composed for everyone in the community, the main audience was the local, non-Arabic speaking population of the town, particularly the Bravanese women.

The following is a further example of Dada Masiti’s poetry. It is one of the best-known Chimbalazi poems. It shows the emotional warmth and beauty of Bravanese Sufi poetry and gives us a brief insight into the religious ethos that was being discussed and transmitted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries on the Benadir coast of southern Somalia.

**Ya Rabbi Ya Muta’ali (O My Exalted Lord)**

1. *Ya Rabbi ya Muta’ali*
   
   *Mawla peeke sho mithaali*
   
   O my Exalted Lord
   
   *Mawla peeke sho mithaali*
   
   The One and Only, Unique to Himself
   
   *Khu rhoombave si sahaawi*
   
   I never forget to pray to you
   
   *Xamidi na kula xaali*
   
   Gratefully and otherwise

2. *Bismilaahi hanzooowa*
   
   *Barakaye hu rhoombowa*
   
   We begin in the name of God,
   
   *And ask for his blessing*

3. *Ismu ya Mowla Jalaali*
   
   *Veesherho nti na kuzimu*
   
   Whose name is the Majestic One
   
   *He, who has created the earth and the sky*

4. *Nicmaze ha zi marhi*
   
   *Dhekheerho ka ukariimu*
   
   His abundant grace is never-ending
   
   *And sustained them with generosity*

5. *Ndiiyo yangu maqsuudi*
   
   *Kum rhomba macbuudi*
   
   It is my objective
   
   *To pray to the Lord*

6. *Na Rasuuli maxnuudi*
   
   *Mtume manye iqaabali*
   
   And to Mohamed, the Prophet
   
   The friendly and accessible messenger

*Mohamed Kassim*
5. Maxamadil Mukhtari
Menye siifa na fakhari
[has] wonderful characteristics
and dignity
Na nuuraze anwaari
Zarhiko ntagu awarhi
And his light is
A light that was always there
6. Mtume nrhoberha sacaada
Ndio yangu maqsada
For that is my objective
Miinso inave shahaada
And that I may end my life with
the shahada
Sacya ya kuuya ajarhi
At the time of death
7. Rabbi ni ka u saciidi
Naa kufa ya u shahiidi
Miinso kuwa touxiidi
Ndio danabu na baarhi
O Lord, may we live in happiness
And die as martyrs [for the faith]
Is my whole purpose
8. Ni yaqinini i hadiila
Aminaani kuwa lila
Mowti huuya ka ghafuula
Ndio danabu na baarhi
It is definitely true
And you should believe it as a fact
Without an obvious reason or rationale
9. Numayiitu sakaraati
Hu dhihira ka gohaati
Hu dhihira ka gohaati
[by pain]
Shidaye hay chilati
Ya ulazzo na ukali
An unrelieved anguish,
Pain and agony
10. Nti ya xaqi shta keendha
Mooya ntana yakhteennda
Na miinsave hiineendha
Sehena shpoove hataarhi
We will go to the land of the Just
Where mortals have no say
And where they will proceed at
the end
Without any provisions [from this
world]
11. Yuiko sehe mberhe yaawo
Veema xayri va tendaawo
Hulatoove ruxuzaawo
Wa vekela jana caali
There are supplies ahead of them
And they look forward to the
virtuous
And their spirits are relieved
For a higher level of heaven is
reserved [for them]
12. Kaamu waami ni va veeno
Ma amiri ya rhingeeno
How many mighty princes
I have seen [congregate]
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Wo fariqeeno zungeeno
And then go their separate ways

Viingi wa ruuxu na maali
[men] wealthy and full of vitality

13. Wa lasirho martiyaawo
Imarhiize tamayaawo
They have left their wealth
And their desires and aspiration
are no more

Ichu chiiko cho si chaawo
What is left is no longer theirs

Xayi hu rhindha dhaaxali
For it is the living who inherit all

14. Chi langala wa jowmuunti
If one reflects on the dead [in their
graves]

Wa show hadali na sowti
Who are without sound nor noise

Baca xayi ni nowti
[one realizes that] after life comes
death

Ni yaqiini si rhivarhi
This is a fact that I never forget

15. Siti sahawu na kiiza
Na khoofu ya dhanbiza
Niigz iiko ni rhiza
I, Siti, reject any excuses30
And [live] in fear of my sins
I am prohibited from a multitude
[of distractions]

Sina yaambo ya camali
And I do not claim to have done
enough good deeds

16. Dhanbi hu niskitisha
Na zamaniza na kiisha
Viingi waangu wa maciinsha
U ma rhiize ka shaalayi
My sins worry me
Nearly all my life
Has transpired in regret31

17. Rabbi ka naxarisizo
Khaansa zina kuniliizo
Ka dhanbi zaave ntukiizo
Nteeshela kana xamaali
O Lord, I pray for Your forgiveness
What makes me weep especially
Are the sins that I still carry
And that are weighing me down as
if I were a coolie32

18. Nakh tamaca ku cafoowa
Na dhanbi ku ghafiriloowa
Iyo kaako hu rhomboowa
I hope that my Lord will forgive me
And pardon my sins
You are the Only One to whom we
pray

Raxmazo za sahali
And for You forgiveness is easy

19. Duniya ni khadayoorhe
Hawayo i sin zoorhe
Miba in latiiithe woorhe
Ka xuzuniye si rhaarhi
This world is a deceitful place
May I not be tempted by its
pleasures
For it has already thrown me far
[afield]
And I cannot sleep from sorrow as
a result
20. Duniya in khada’irhe
Hawaye in tukiirhe
Kuwa muuya in sahawiirhe
Naarhiko raqi dhamaadi
This world has deceived me
Its temptations have carried me away
I forgot to be [an obedient] servant
And hence became a destitute slave

21. Naarhiko raqi nzamiirho
Nrasirho hanti nchimbiirho
Mpete vaantu wan rudirho
Wan nreeserho ka dadhaarhi
I was a slave on the verge of drowning
But then I left all [entrusted] property and escaped
Met people who brought me back
Who succeeded in bringing me back with much effort

22. Wan rheeserho ka vacadi
Umati ya Muxamadi
Veema wanye kishtadi
Nafsi inpeerhe daghaarhi
They promised to take me back
For they were from the Prophet Mohamed’s umma
Virtuous people of strong faith
Then my soul blamed me [for all my sins]

23. Nafsi ichi daghaloowa
Naku rhiindha ku bigowoow
Jisa veerho ntakiwoowa
Ilazirhe ka Jalali
When the soul is blessed with repentance
Without being castigated
No one can understand [this reform]
For it has been decreed by the Majesty

24. Nafsi ka Mooje tubiirhe
Wacdi na goondi tiyiirhe
Na nrimize zi hadiirhe
Za kinaaya na sonkaarhi
[My] Soul has repented in front of the Lord
From promises and warnings it has become fearful
And it hereby pronounces [its repentence]
Both implicitly and explicitly

25. Karhantani ka tartiibu
Meendho iweerhe kharibu
Ntakusalata wa xibu
Ka duca na fil maali
Sit down quietly
For the time to go is approaching
I am leaving my loved ones
With blessing and wealth

26. Duca nrasirhe numaani
Ka waama waamo tacaani
I am leaving all my blessing at home
[for I am giving it] to my obedient children
May the Lord make them successful
In earning their livelihoods and having offspring
I am leaving my blessing to all
May [my] blessing be enough for everyone
And may all worries disappear
Especially those of my maternal cousins
As time goes by
I begin to have doubts about my abilities
And take note of my weaknesses
And [wonder] how strong I used to be
My physical strength is gone
And my complexion has changed
All by blood vessels have dried up
Like the Jilaal grass
I was young once
Healthy and strong
Able to accomplish everything
I undertook
Like a commander or governor
[Now] youth is gone
And [my] joints are stiff
Rest and relaxations are things of the past
And I neither speak nor shout
I was a prominent person
Who used to give orders and make decisions
But now I have become weak
And have resigned myself to tawakkul [trusting in the Lord]
I have settled down patiently
Waiting for your orders
To leave the abode of deception
And go to the abode sanctioned by God
34. Numba yaangu ya qubuuri
My home is the grave
Ndijo yangu ka uzuuri
For it is better for me
Ya mtaanga na mabuuri
A place of sand and sand hills
Sho saxabu na warhaarhi
Where there are no friends nor siblings

35. Maqubuuri na mtaanga
Graves and sand
Nuumba hendoo wa mchaanga
Places that are visited by mourners
Isho weerhu na chirhaanga
Where there is no light or brightness*
Na miinza zisho wabarhi
[but] darkness and loneliness

36. Siti bintul amiini
Heavenly lady, daughter of the Trustworthy [Prophet],
Mtmue noeela muciiini
Come to my assistance
Mpa weerhu wa qabriini
Give me light in my grave
Na khaifiyi ya su’aarhi
And ease the “questioning” [that awaits me] there*

37. Siti mbakula dhamaana
Heavenly lady, who is the guarantor of all
Nshiika kana amaan
Protect me like someone entrusted to your care
Ndice wa ruxuma saana
You are the merciful one
Sku ya xari na su’aarhi
In the difficult days of questioning*

38. Sheekhi qubvuli ducaye
The Shaikh’s prayers find acceptance with the Lord
Mi teete barakaye
And I have acquired his blessing
Rabbi nitrha safaye
May the Lord allow me to line up with him [at the Day of Judgment]
Bi xaqi Sheekhil xakali
By the succor of Shaikh [Abdul-Qadir]*

39. Sheekhi ye ni taqiyi
The Shaikh is very pious
Aba Calawi Zakiiyi
The father of ‘Alawi, the pure*
Meema Abal Haashimiye
[He descends] from the virtuous Hashimi [clan]
Itimiirhe ya camali
And has completed all his religious obligations

40. Camaliye itimiirhe
All his duties have been completed
Sheekhi peeto livaniile
Whoever receives the Shaikh’s blessings will be successful
Mohamed Kassim

Kheerize mu wafiqile
His munificence finds acceptance with the Lord

Sheekhi hupeenda xalaali
For the Shaikh loves [only] what is sanctioned by God

41. Meendo waake ni fayda
When he walks, it is with purpose
Na fadhiye nda cibaada
When he sits, it is for worship
Zaazila ka u sacaada
He was born to find happiness
[in the hereafter]

Ndiye Abaa Iqbaali
And his blessing finds acceptance
with the Lord

42. Sheekhi barakaye mpeerhe
The Shaikh has granted me his blessing
Imaaniya idegerhe
And my faith has been reaffirmed
Kheeri niigi zi ndekherhe
I have been sufficiently blessed
Niya mbovu ha itaarhi
And this cannot be taken away by any malice

43. Sabri mpeete na mapeema
Early on I was given patience
Nduciliilo Mtuma meema
And I was blessed by the virtuous Prophet

Miinso wa khaatima njeema
To conclude my life with a felicitous ending

Huwa kheeri ya camali
Will be the supreme accomplishment

Transliteration

For the poetry the Somali alphabet is generally used except for

v, z As in English
ch As in English church
dh Arabic مَصَّ
gh Arabic مَغْ
rh A very light (l), peculiar to Chimini, for example, vierho (today)
Notes

1. I am grateful to Professor Lidwien Kapteijns for improving the draft of this article with her thorough review and helpful comments. I would also like to thank Bana M. S. Banafunzi, Zen Jeylani Sheikh, and my father Munye Qassim Sheikh for helping me with the translation of many of the verses. This article is based on my ongoing thesis research that focuses on the local production and transmission of Islamic knowledge in southern Somalia in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

2. Copyrights by Mohamed M. Kassim.

3. Equivalent to (1804–24 June 1921).


6. Barzakh is defined as a state that is between death and the Last Day. Refer to Sabiq, as-Sayyid, Fiqh-al-Sunnah (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1991), Part IV, pp. 95 – 97, which states that the souls “will join some souls with others in the abode of Barzakh and on the Day of Resurrection, placing the believer’s soul with other pure souls, that is, other pure souls kindred to his soul. A soul, after separation from the body, joins other kindred souls who in their nature and deeds are similar to it and stays with them.”

7. Shaikh Nurein was the Chief Qadi (Judge) of Brava and was considered an expert in Islamic Jurisprudence.


9. Standing outside or standing in the area where the funeral preparations are being made.

10. Sabiq, as-Sayyid, p. 37, states that: Abu Hurairah narrates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: “Whoever follows a funeral procession and offers the prayer for the deceased, will get one kerat of reward. And whoever follows it and remains with it until the body is buried, will get two kerats of reward, the least of which is equal in weight to ‘Mount Uhud’ or he said ‘one of them is like Uhud.’” Sabiq notes that a kerat is a measure, one-sixteenth of a dirham.

11. Literally: to be honored.

12. Thawab: reward ???


14. The Bravanese language is called Chimbalazi. It is also called Chimini, which is a derivative of chi muyini (literally, the language of the town).

15. The Path of mystical education, also the Sufi order.


17. To show repentance both in feeling and behavior.

19. Mystics who are considered to possess deep knowledge (ma’rifa) of Allah.
20. Rabi’a al-Adawiyya was born in Basra, Iraq.
22. Literally “in every state,” meaning either in happiness or in despondency. Remembrance of Allah in all situations is mentioned in the Hadith (i.e., the sayings of the Prophet). Refer to Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, Gardens of the Righteous (Riyadh as-Salihin) of Imam Nawawi (London: Curzon Press Ltd., 1989), p. 241.
23. One of the Prophet Mohamed’s names. The name literally means the one for whom we thank God.
24. Iqbaal: approachable with easiness, amicable.
25. Shahada: Profession of faith. To die with the shahada on my lips.
26. Tawhid: To say Kalimat al Tawheed, i.e., “There is no God who deserves worship except God.” To say this in my last breath before death.
27. Excuse or valid reason: that is, without justification such as a prior sickness.
28. They proceed to the Hereafter without any provisions from this world. Sehe are the provisions/supplies that a traveler takes along on a trip. Here, the poet says that we leave this world to go to the Hereafter without carrying any wealth with us.
29. The virtuous are the Prophet, Asa’haba (followers who lived during his time), and all the blessed Awliya’ (friends of Allah).
30. This verse has two possible translations since Siti is usually used to refer to the Holy Prophet’s daughter Fatima, in which case the poet is saying that Siti Fatima rejects excuses such as “I forgot” or “I did not know.” The poet may also have used Siti to refer to herself and hence mean that she does not want to make excuses for her mistakes.
31. There is another version of this verse (with some families in Brava) that reads: For nearly all my life has transpired in merriment.
32. Hamaali: means coolie or porter, i.e., an unskilled laborer.
33. Raqii: slave, from the Arabic riq.’ Dhamaadi: a Somali loan-word which literally means “to end.” Here, the poet means someone at his rope’s end.
34. As a result of their preaching and admonitions, my soul blamed me for past sins.
35. To feel remorseful and repentant is a blessing.
36. There is a difference between Nakuwalata, which means I am leaving, and Ntakuwalata, which means It has not spared. Reading nakuwalata for ntakuwalata.
37. Jisinaali is an abbreviation for Jisi yaami naaliko, which means the way I was physically, i.e., young and healthy.
38. Midibu is a Somali loan-word that means color.
39. Jilal is the dry season.
40. Aqiidi: from the Arabic, Aqid means a commander. Wali is also from the Arabic and means a Governor.
41. Literally: rest and relaxation have gradually waned. The poet is stressing the pain suffered from aching joints and ailments due to old age.
42. Qaylo is a Somali word that means loud voice or noise.
43. Tawakal: Tawakkul means accepting what the Lord has decreed for you.
44. Chirhaanga means a beam of light that enters a room through a small opening.
45. Amin is one of the Holy Prophet’s names. In Arabic, Siti means lady. Here, Siti refers to the Holy Prophet’s daughter Fatima.
46. The questioning of the grave: According to Islam, the dead in their graves will be questioned about their lives by two angels.
47. Another version of this verse is: “Sku ya xari na zuhaarhi,” which means in the very hot days when the sun is at its zenith.
48. The Shaikh referred to here is Shaikh Abdulqadir Al-Jilani, one of the most revered saints in the Muslim world. It is reported that Dada Masiti dreamt about Shaikh Abdulqadir blessing her.
49. The Father of Alawi, most probably the poet’s reference here is Shaikh Abdulqadir al-Jilani who is a Ba Alawi and a Hashimi: The descendants of Ali bin Abi Talib. Zakiyi: Sinless, pure.
50. Another possible meaning is: there is no place for malice in my heart.
51. Literally: pleasant ending (as a pious Muslim), from the Islamic term husnul khatimah (felicitous end).