

The Harlot's Song

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. May blessings be upon the exalted Prophet

The Song of the Harlot, Mother of Scoundrels

by Hamisu Yadudu Funtua.

Allah, the King Who created all of us,

forgive our sins out of your mercy.

Save us from acts of destruction.

Together we pray and praise

the Prophet, the Leader of all living beings.

Oh my young siblings – the youth—come!

Observe what comes and goes carefully.

Stop striving to see beyond the mist!¹

Do not rely on the spider's web.²

My intention is to focus on the mother of provocateurs.

Understand that a harlot never has a favorite!

Anybody who offers her gifts is her favorite.

Her desire is to receive gifts, morning and night.

Anyone who follows her desires

¹ Here the poet warns young people against greed.

² Here the poet uses the metaphor of the spider's web to draw attention to the fact that relying on a harlot is like relying on the spider's web, which is a waste of time and resources.

will one day become her servant.

Do not follow her path to the lost city.

Do not follow it, for it will not take you to the city!

Beware that she will lead you to a dangerous place,

where you will become ridiculed and perplexed.

In the end, she will leave you begging for a dime!

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She can charm a malam [religious scholar]!

Because of her, a ruler could easily lose his throne!

She can turn a rich man into a hunter!

Her mischief can break up a marriage!

Anyone who follows her path has gone astray.

Malam, stop and hear the habits of the harlot:

The first of them is that she doesn't care about work.

What she cares about the most is bathing and washing.

When she has eaten and is satisfied, she cleans her room.

Then she goes back to her chair and sits.

She could change her voice, if she sees money,

and she could say that she is in Lagos or Makurdi!

If she hears your name, she would not say it.

Instead, she would select a more pleasing name!

She would address you with it to get your money!

If she were infected with a disease, she would not reveal it.

She would be silent and would tell nobody.

Oh you, female spider [the harlot], the mother of concealing truth!

Her habits are to lie, cheat, and deceive.

She is wicked and her eyes see only money.

She talks while swaying [seductively].

She talks as if she is whispering.

As she is doing so, she raises her shoulder,

just like someone who has entered a dance!

Listen to me, poor people without guidance!

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If she observes that you are destitute,

she would frown with ingratitude.

She would begin wiping and blowing her nose,

or she would say "leave, I want to sleep,"

because she sees you as someone with nothing to offer.

A harlot changes her name!

If you hear her name is Kande in Yarwa [Maiduguri],

in Kano city, you would hear her name is Yalwa,

or she would say Binta Mai-Aduwa.

A harlot has more than one thousand names!

Her name is Ai in Katsina,

but in Sokoto, she would say Maimuna,
or Rabi, if she is in Kaduna!
Her name is Ladi in Mina,
and that of Lagos is different from those of everywhere!

My friend, be careful in your dealings with her:

She is more dangerous than fire!

There is no splendor in her brightness. Only loss!

The cold [diseases] in her private parts exceeds the coldness of the Kwara River!³

Take good care of yourself and listen to my advice!

She will embark on a trip without reason.

In preparation, she will wrap a kola nut in a small piece of cloth.

She always has a mirror and powder as if she is engaged in petty trading!⁴

She will put on her makeup and come out and sit on the veranda.

Her best business partner is the one who brings her customers.

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Her ambition is set on Sabon-gari or Fagge.⁵

Mostly, Tudun-Wada is the place where they strive.

Praise-singers and goge musicians,

along with molo, garaya, and goge are some of the musical instruments they like.⁶

³ In Hausa, sexually transmitted diseases (STD) are associated with cold. They are called *civon sanyi*, cold-related infections. The *Kwara River*, another name for the *Niger River*, is regarded as cold.

⁴ Petty-trading or *Koli* in Hausa is a type of trade where the trader sells mirrors, powders, lipsticks, and other cosmetics.

⁵ In the city of Kano where the poet lives, *Sabon-gari* and *Fagge* are considered the areas where newcomers dominate. The same is true for the place called *Tudun-wada*, which comes in the next verse.

⁶ *Goge*, *molo* and *Garaya* are musical instruments that are common in Hausaland.

When playing music for harlots, there is no better instrument than the goge.

Alcohol is her nourishment in the morning and the evening.

She does not need *tuwo* or *rama*⁷

because she prefers wheat.

Only *Alkubus*,⁸ sometimes with meat!

To her drinking water, she adds honey!

She refuses to see you off while in her makeup and finery.

She puts on her bed pillows and mattresses.

She arranges the dishware to catch the eye!

If she is going for a walk, she decorates her eyes!

The moment she returns from the walk she retires to bed!

You cannot separate her from the scent of perfume!

She will put on the brightest silver rings!

Her shoes are reddish like those of Europeans!

While wearing a skirt of *Ashoke*,⁹ she brushes her teeth.

Her visitors will not arrive until the night!

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Her marriage will not last for more than six months!

⁷ *Tuwo* is a polenta-like staple food commonly eaten in Hausaland. *Rama* is a leaf that looks like spinach but is bitter. It is used to make soup and is usually eaten along with *tuwo*. The combination of *tuwo* and *rama* gives *tuwo miyar rama* (*tuwo-rama soup*).

⁸ *Alkubus* is a type of food made from flour. It is also called Arab bread in Nigeria.

⁹ *Ashoke* is a particular piece of woven cloth that the Yoruba people wear during ceremonies. The Hausa people have adopted the culture of *ashoke* but have expanded it to mean sewing and wearing clothes of the same fabric, including shirts, trousers, and caps.

Even if she gets divorced, she is not in the least concerned with 'idda.¹⁰

An aunty who had married six military men,

all of whom had gone home in tears!

This is the day the dog caught the antelope!¹¹

No matter what you give her, she cannot love you.

With her, it always must be her way!

Do not be deceived, when she says she loves you.

There are many of you that she claims to love!

She sometimes dislikes a bed and sleeps on a mat.

Her flaw is like that of her male clients!

whoever blames the mouse for stealing,

should equally blame the odor of daddawa!¹²

The cooking pot mustn't call the kettle black!

The blanket is woven in the same place as the veil!

A man who pretends to be a woman is a fool who lacks an advisor!

You must repent to God and cease this duplicity.

He is the kanwa [the pimp], the cause of all troubles.

¹⁰ The period of waiting that a Muslim woman must observe after divorce or death of her husband. She must not remarry or engage in romantic relationships during this period.

¹¹ *Rannan kare za shi kama gada!* (Literally: the day the dog caught the antelope!) is a Hausa saying which means in this context that the harlot had a great catch.

¹² *Daddawa* is a black ball of pounded and fermented locust beans used as spice in sauces. It is known for its strong odor. Here the poet urges the reader to see the flaws of not only the harlot, but also of her male clients.

You must cease wearing skirts and the blue veil.

You should be wearing men's clothing and a turban!

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Whoever engages with them will be in tears,

together with their unruly friends!

If you see their group, avoid them!

Even if they call you, do not respond!

If you refuse to follow my advice, it is your problem!

All praises and thanks are due to Allah, I have finished the poem!

It is here I reached the end [of the song]

Khamisu Yadudu is the one who [first] recited the poem.

Do not focus on his lack of poetic skills,

but look at his intention without hypocrisy!

So my people, you have heard my words.

You should now know how to jump over a ditch!

You know that planning alone cannot tie a bundle!

Similar fragile items cannot be stacked together!

The dog and the monkey can't stand being together!

This is completed with gratitude to Allah.

The name of the writer is Muhammadu Dan-Gurgu,

Kano-Darma,

Nigeria

In the name of Allah