

Infiraji 2

[Cover page]

Warning

Distributed by Ahmad al-Tijani. May Allah protect him.

May Allah guide him to what He likes, Amin!

With the authorization of the author of this book

Alhaji Malam Aliyu Namangi

Zaria

[Title Page 2]

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. May Allah's everlasting peace and blessings be upon His noble prophet, his family, and his companions.

Oh Lord of the Throne, give me

sense and extensive explanation.¹

Friends asked me, "Please!

Let's compose a second part for our song."²

This addition will not be like the initial part.

A warning that frightens,

which looks at the forbidden and its punishment!

Anyone seeking blessings should gather

good sense--both the old and the young,

the only exception being the one who will not witness the last day!³

Cast an insightful eye and observe.

We have not come to this world to stay!

¹ The poet used the Arabic word 'Arsh which means God's Throne. It is believed in Islamic theology that the Throne is one of the greatest things that God ever created. It is located above the roof of the paradise, where Allah's pious, most beloved and closest servants will dwell after the resurrection. The Quran refers to the 'Arsh as follows: "So Exalted be Allah, the True King – None has the right to be worshipped but Him – Lord of the Supreme Throne!" (Quran, 23:116).

² This poem is a continuation of "our song," which refers to *Infiraji 1 (Book One)*.

³ Since no one can escape dying and being present on the Day of Resurrection, there are, in effect, no exceptions.

Look at the greatest of creatures who ever lived.⁴

If you set aside stupidity and lack of wisdom,

you'll realize that we will not live forever.

Friends, let us not falter.

Despite the dignity of the prophets,

they were called to the grave!

Those blessed with longevity

might assume they will not witness the Next World.

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If they do, their great loss would be self-inflicted,

for they have followed an evil idea.

They got lost due to lack of wisdom.

They will certainly come up with a thousand excuses,

but they will not be accepted.

Death has disregarded the excuses of anyone with such a worldview,

as it has taken away one's agemates.⁵

⁴ Referring to Prophet Muhammad.

⁵ The poet means that it should not be assumed that death only takes the aged; anyone who lived long enough has witnessed the death of his agemates right from childhood and beyond, at different stages and ages.

Even a fetus in the mother's womb,

when called upon [by death], must answer,

as the fetus that was miscarried, and did not survive on this earth.

Some people were just youths when death came.

Others, their mother was called [by death],

and she left them when they were in the cradle.

For others, it was the labor of childbirth that took them,

and their babies never got even a glimpse of this world.

You've had a long life,

why have you gone so foolishly astray?

Was it your being so comfortable?

Your years that have passed,

remember, they will not come back!

Since you were an infant in the cradle,

death was mentioned! Then, when growing up,

death of others occurred in your presence.

You even lost your parents.

Yet, you did not believe that yours was coming!

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All your plans for the future are based on what is stylish;

they are like caps you put on top of your turban

so that you'll be seen as a fashionable man,

even though your heart has no such assurance.

You do not recognize that you will pass on to the next life.

Why did you become so pompous?

Is it because of your food, milk and meat,

or your fashionable head-tie style and umbrella?

You don't care about obligatory prayers or the second call to prayer.

Besides, you cannot even recite the opening chapter of the Quran!⁶

You only eat, drink and enjoy yourself.

Your business has been lucrative,

but fraud and mischief are endemic in your business.

Whoever gets caught up in this mess

will never be dignified on Judgement Day!

⁶ There are two calls to prayer: *Ādhan* and *Iqāmā*. *Ādhan* is the first call, which is usually longer than the second one. It is mostly addressed to people who are far away from the mosque. *Iqāmā* is the second call, recited immediately before the prayer session begins. It is rendered more quickly and in a more monotonous fashion than the *Ādhan*, and invites those already in the mosque to enter the mosque for obligatory prayers. The poet refers to the second call to prayer, indicating that such a pompous person as the one described cannot even properly recite the *Iqāmā* due to ignorance and arrogance.

Then with what remains of your good sense,

fight [the illicit] desires of your heart.

Seek faith in the one and only God, and

strive to learn about ablution and purification rules

before the angel [of death] is sent to (fetch) you!

Know that life does not go on forever.

Be diligent in prayer and make an effort!

Perform the pilgrimage and visit [the shrine of] the prophet

so that the day your death comes

you will not go unprepared.

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In the beginning you were a sperm,

and a carcass is going to be your end.

Your stomach is filled with impurity.⁷

What made you so arrogant,

if not confusion and self-destruction?

Now, you have disgraced yourself.

⁷ Here the poet uses the word *najasah*, which means impurity, such as excrement, urine, etc. The idea is that human beings have a stomach that carries food, which will ultimately become waste to be excreted.

The love of money led you to transgress.

So, you are a millionaire!

The day you die, you will be taken

with a garment worth not even seven pounds!

You are eating and drinking until you have become obese.

Know that you will die and will be put in a grave.

You will die and worms will devour your body.

Now, what is the best choice for you,

if not observing religious obligations and injunctions?

Let me remind you lest you forget.

Way back in the womb, you had a conversation,

you and the Lord of the Throne. You said

you would follow his injunctions; you agreed

to be pious and observant and you did not argue!

You had a covenant with Allah

that you would perform fasting and ritual prayers [in this life],

make the pilgrimage and give required alms. Yet, you are now reluctant

and have ignored your covenant!⁸

You have even refused to seek knowledge from scholars.

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Those who do not seek out scholars

will not do worthwhile work.

They will not get the desired result,

nor will they reap any [divine] rewards.

All because they don't ask!

Look at how he has done himself a great wrong:

He directs his efforts towards just

three things: food, clothing, and women!

By *Lisha*,⁹ he's already gone to sleep!

He won't even be aware of the sun setting!

When he fasts, it is as if a calamity has

fallen on him in no small way!¹⁰

⁸ Here the author refers to the *Day of Alastu* (Arabic: *Yawm a-lastu*) discussed in the Quran (7:172), which offers an Islamic account of the creation of Adam, the fall from grace of *Iblis* (Satan) for refusing to prostrate himself before Adam, the exceptionality of Muhammad, and the covenant between humanity and God.

⁹ *Lisha* in Hausa or *'Ishā'i* (night prayer) has two meanings: the last (5th) prayer observed by Muslims in the day, usually around 8 pm; and dinner, which is served around the prayer time.

¹⁰ Here the poet describes how lazy and unproductive such people are. He notes that whenever such people are engaged in fasting during the month of Ramadan, it is as if a calamity has befallen them because they complain so much about the difficulties of fasting.

He has the instinct of an animal,

but not of a good animal,

like the Python and Leopard!¹¹

He is a young brother to the Donkey and Horse,

even the Hippo and Antelope!

His efforts are mostly spent

in exhausting nights of sex,

and he does not even bother to cleanse himself afterwards,¹²

let alone making ablutions for worship!

A person with such habits

is lost to the point of

not even knowing the words of the Shahada,¹³

and he's not even going to ask!

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Ignorance is similar

to disbelief in its effects.

¹¹ The people that the poet talks about in these verses have failed to learn the habits of hard work and endurance as exhibited by Python and Leopard, hardworking animals that possess attributes worthy of emulation by humans.

¹² This is a reference to *ghusl al-janāba*, the purifying bath prescribed after sexual relations.

¹³ The *Shahada* is the Islamic profession of faith.

This has been the opening statement

of Malam Habibu's lectures¹⁴

that he delivers to us. It is not to be argued about!

He told us that ignorance

and disbelief have negative effects.

They are indisputably siblings!

Perhaps they are even twins!

The difference [in their age] is not even seven months!¹⁵

His views are always truthful,

for they are the views of the exalted one,

the leader of the world [Muhammad]. If you look carefully,

then you will see many followers of Satan.

Satan himself has not outdone them in defiance [of God]!

The ignorant, he [Malam Habibu] refers specifically to you!

A saying of the Prophet that

I heard from a judge who declares that

¹⁴ *Malam Habibu* is a prominent cleric known for his Quranic exegesis during the fasting month of Ramadan in Hausaland. The poet refers to him here to emphasize the point he is making, which is that ignorance is undesirable.

¹⁵ Meaning that they—ignorance and disbelief—like twins, are essentially the same. Since siblings cannot normally be seven months apart, they must be twins.

“when the heart goes blind,

seeing with the eyes becomes meaningless!”

Do not think that death will spare you

due to your wealth or poverty,

or due to the abundance or scarcity of your resources.

Remember that it took away some while they were eating [breakfast, lunch or dinner],

and before even they digested what they had swallowed!

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[Death] has come and taken an Emir

who used to own and ride on one thousand different horses,

and who used to have a thousand guardsmen in his compound.

How non-discriminatory death is!

It does not skip even the penniless!¹⁶

Once it comes, it does not relent,

whether one is well-fed or hungry!

It is more terrifying than anything.

A student and a town crier [who announces deaths publicly] alike,

¹⁶ Death does not discriminate. If it visits even famous monarchs, it surely visits the wretched poor.

nobody knows a single person it has spared.

Whether you are a rich person or a royalty,

anyone who hears its drumbeats

is frightened because of the reverberations,

and because they know what it does.

It does not care about the wellbeing of anyone.

The sounds of cries are the drumbeats of death,

and they can be heard in planting and harvest seasons.

Wherever it passes, its effects become clear.

Wherever death strikes,

you will always hear people screaming.

It will find you wherever you go,

and does not care whether you are walking or sitting.

It is not shy around anyone.

If any human power could defeat it,

King Namaruzu would not have died.¹⁷

¹⁷*Namaruzu* in Hausa or *Namrud* in Arabic. In Islamic sources, he was the one who wanted to burn Prophet Abraham on a pyre but failed when God cooled the fire.

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Look at Pharaoh who claimed superiority over everyone!

No one was more arrogant than he was.

Death followed him into the sea,

and he had not even crossed when the sea took him!¹⁸

He never achieved his goal.

Death does not spare anyone.

Whenever it grabs you, it does not let go.

It does not spare a bride or a groom,

and can leave the survivor in grief.

It comes without warning.

Who is spared by death's call?

Who does its arrow select?

It follows strongmen and destroys them.

If there were a hiding places from death anywhere,

then fleas would not die!

¹⁸ Here, the poet describes how, despite Pharaoh's arrogance and power, death followed him and drowned him in the sea, as narrated in the Quran. "Remember when We parted the sea for you, so We saved you and drowned Pharaoh's people while you were looking (at them, when the seawater covered them)" (Surat al-Baqara, 2:50).

It can come from above abruptly,

and strike the hawk, making it fall!

In the water, it can descend on the frog!

Similarly, it can crawl beneath the ground,

and doesn't miss a water beetle or a sandhopper!¹⁹

Refusal to accumulate wealth nor tremendous efforts to amass wealth [neither can prevent death].

Once it comes, there is nothing you can do to be spared.

It may come in the middle of the night,

or during broad day light.

It does not care whether you are ready or not.

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Death may appear to be caused by war,

fire, or childbirth.

It strikes a weaver

who is committed to finishing his work,

causing him to die without completing it.

For some it is caused by a horse,

¹⁹ A horned beetle-like insect that lives in the sand.

and for others, it is caused by a lion.

Some die in ponds,

while for others it is caused by a collapsed house.

It strikes all of them by surprise!

Remember at all the prominent people [who once lived],

those for whom musical instruments were played.

All those prominent men have died.

Why do you think it will spare you whose back has bruises? ²⁰

How can you still assume that you won't die?

Remember our noblemen,

those who once ruled our nation,

those who were eminent among us!

Look at our religious leader – Shehu [Usman ḍan Fodio]!

Remember that we will not remain in this world perpetually.

Today, where are the Sultans,

Bello, or Abdul-Karimi,

Musa or Abdul Salam?

They have gone to the afterlife.

²⁰ This is meant to describe a poor, wretched person. The poet wants to say that death does not care if you are rich or poor. If the rich, the famous, and royalty die, then why would you not believe that you will, too, and prepare accordingly?

Not one of them remains in this world.

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Ummaru of Dallajo Korau

Sallau died in Kumasi.

Likewise, his son Kwasau died.

Today, there is no Dalhatu in Zazzau!

No more Abashe! Where is Aliyu, the senior?²¹

They are all gone. With the exception of hearing their names

and the memories of their wealth

and beautiful attire and ceremonial adornments,

you will never see one of them again.

You can only see the family members they left behind.

Oh Lord, we praise You, Allah,

for giving us the favor of fasting and prayers,

and for sending us the message.²²

Please, do not leave us in ignorance,

and with matters of no importance.

Even though sin is [like] a mountain,

²¹ Here the poet lists some of the late well-known local sultans and emirs in order to emphasize that death spares no one.

²² The message refers to the prophethood of Muhammad or to the revelation of the Quran, both of which are referred to as the message.

your own sins that you have accumulated form

the mountain on which you climb to see other people's sins.²³

Here comes a man, an adviser

who is not immune to sinning against the Lord!²⁴

My friends, let me tell you:

"I have spotted the stupidity in most of you,

because you have lost your wisdom

and are only following your whims and desires,

which prevent you from preparing for Judgement day!"

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Is it the fried pigeon and chicken

or the good spinach and peanut sauce that you eat,

or the Raleigh and Ridges that you ride ²⁵

that easily lead you astray?

Aren't you aware that death is approaching?

Or is it the coolness of your floors

²³ Here the poet notes that it is human nature to see other people's mistakes and sins, but to turn a blind eye on one's own. The poet describes sins as mountains or ladders that we climb so as to see people's sins while ignoring our own.

²⁴ Here the poet refers to himself as an advisor who has sinned like most people, but whose goal is to share the teachings and blessings of Prophet Muhammad.

²⁵ Here the poet refers to brands of bicycle (Raleigh) and motorcycle (Ridge) once quite popular in Hausaland.

that keeps you from reciting your prayers?²⁶

Is it the female entertainer who praises you with her beautiful voice

who prevents you from thinking about death?²⁷

Do you ever think about Judgment Day?

Only bread, cake, and millet cakes,

then sandwiches of bread and honey that interest you!

Whenever you hear someone preaching, you take a deep breath,

and remain speechless. Yet, you will not stop

sinning against the Lord!

You use pimps to invite women to adultery,

and you are quick to pay for his services with lots of money!

Yet, you refuse to give your families their rightful resources!

Even to Allah, who has blessed you with wealth,

you don't care about his prohibitions!

People without faith in God,

who make noise in the streets,

²⁶ Here the poet directs his message to Hausa people in rural villages where the floors are considered cool and comfortable, which might make some people lazy and disinclined to perform their *dhikr* (recitation of litanies involving prayers upon the Prophet). The comfort of cool floors in Hausa society is analogous to the comfort of contemporary airconditioned rooms.

²⁷ Here the poet uses the word *zabiya*, which refers to female praise singers in the royal houses in Hausaland. Traditionally, these singers praise Hausa leaders such as sultans, emirs, and nobility, reminding them of their ancestors and their exploits. These Hausa singers do this to urge Hausa leaders to emulate their great ancestors.

those who treat alcohol as if it were tea,

are peoples' role models now.

They refuse to emulate those who glorify Allah.

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Look at adolescent boys now,

those who traditionally should

be educated from the outset!

Truth should take precedence over evil.

Today, they are not prepared for adulthood appropriately.

They prefer fun and smoking cigarettes.

They do not cherish repentance.

They prefer listening to evil plotters,

and if you warn them about death,

before long, they will treat you as an enemy!

When will people with such mindsets

protect the true way of Allah?

Similarly, old people with bad habits

[and evil plotters] have the worst occupations.

No one surpasses them in evil doing!²⁸

We again implore the Lord,

the Owner of Greatness, to purify us

in heart, body, and our works,

so that in our dreams

we may see the Prophet without fear!²⁹

Whenever I pass by an abandoned old graveyard,

I reflect on life on earth and on the afterlife

and how everyone will experience them.

Today, the sharp knife of the head butcher [death]

has changed [cities] into a graveyard of valiant hunters!³⁰

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Not far from here you will see a blacksmith's shop;

there is nobody there now, except hyenas!

You will see hunting dogs barking there

²⁸ Here the poet describes two types of people: the first group is comprised of evil plotters, and the second consists of elderly people with unrighteous habits. He concludes that these two groups of are the worst in his society.

²⁹ As for the poet's longing to see the Prophet in dreams, see the following hadith: Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Whoever sees me in a dream has truly seen me, for Satan cannot assume my form." Source: Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith No. 6592 and Sahih al-Muslim, hadith No. 2266.

³⁰ Hunters are considered the bravest and strongest of men in Hausa society. That they, too, have been cut down by death should put us all on notice.

with their red velvet marks for hunting,³¹

as if the shop had never accommodated humans!

Yet, the location was once inhabited by powerful people.

But now there is no one there, not even trap-setters!

Only Ceiba and Baobab trees.

Repent, you who want to show your superiority;

you cannot even imagine the power of those who once lived there!

Now, at their dining places,

there is no one there, except cobras!

In their bedrooms, you will find foxes sleeping!

If death could be averted,

then Jan Gwarzo would not have died!³²

He died along with his son Yunfa,

even though he had become a notable leader.³³

Arabs of great nobility

have also died! Who has found a way

³¹ Red velvet refers to the markings on hunting dogs, which are marked with a red stripe to distinguish them from other dogs and to make them easy to spot when they strike their prey.

³² *Jan Gwarzo* was the King of Gobir (1776-1794), known for his oppression of the growing Muslim minority.

³³ *Yunfa, King of Gobir* (reign 1801-1808) was the son of *Jan Gwarzo*. He was a leader of the resistance against the jihad of Usman dan Fodio.

to avoid witnessing the Judgment Day?

My friends, be careful!

No one can outwit death!

When you shout, it is a waste of time!

Not even the mouse's or rat's hole

will protect you if you run to hide there!

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When death arrives, your wandering will stop!

To armed robbers and thieves,

death will also come by surprise.

It does not care if you are ill,

nor does it care if you are in good health.

Knowing that death will come inevitably,

and knowing its suddenness,

let us stop talking about its features!

My friends, let us prepare for its arrival,

before our souls are separated from our bodies.

Preparing for it means adhering to established norms.

The heart should be accustomed with
forsaking immoral acts, whether open or hidden,
so that we may achieve our purpose of being [in this world],
not waiting until our health is gone.³⁴

Oh Lord, preserve us from humiliation,
ignorance, or deviating from the path of righteousness!

Oh The Greatest, Guide us in your path,
and let our hearts follow the path
that will not lead us to destruction!

My mentor Abdulra'ufi,
from the time I was a small child,
he has raised me righteously,
until I grew up and became strong.
He has kept me away from confusion and sin.

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He advised me to study,
even though I could not see any writing.³⁵

³⁴ Here, the poet urges us to repent before we experience our last illness on the sickbed that eventually leads to death.

³⁵ The poet, Dr. Aliyu Namangi, is blind. Despite this, his mentor advised him to study.

“If you are determined, you will succeed.

Focus on the verbal takhmisi!”³⁶

I have never seen anything as valuable as knowledge.

Knowledge is like a mother [to those who have living ones],

and like a father to orphans.

Knowledge is security.

To anyone who is frightened, it is a safe town.

Anyone who enters in it will not tremble [with fear]!

Knowledge can transform a mere servant

into a highly eminent person.

Its benefits are boundless.

With it, you can face anyone,

and you will not live in fear.

If you attain knowledge, hold onto it,

and do so with strength and do not let it go!

If it slips away, do your best to regain it!

³⁶ Here the blind poet, Aliyu Namangi, shares the advice his mentor (Shehu Abdura’ufi) once gave him. By *verbal takhmisi* (from Arabic: *takhmīs*), he recalls that his mentor had urged him to focus on verbal composition, memorizing, and recitations of poems with stanzas of five verses like this one.

These words will never be disproved!

With them, you will never lack guidance.

Knowledge is attained through intent

and determination from the start.

No matter how serious the hardships you encounter,

hold on to knowledge with your right hand.

A coward will not enjoy its honey!³⁷

The poem ends with gratitude to Allah

From the pen of

Ibrahim Gusau

³⁷ A knowledgeable person or someone seeking knowledge must be courageous. Cowards, those who are not courageous, in the quest for knowledge will not taste the sweetness and happiness that knowledge, like honey, provides.