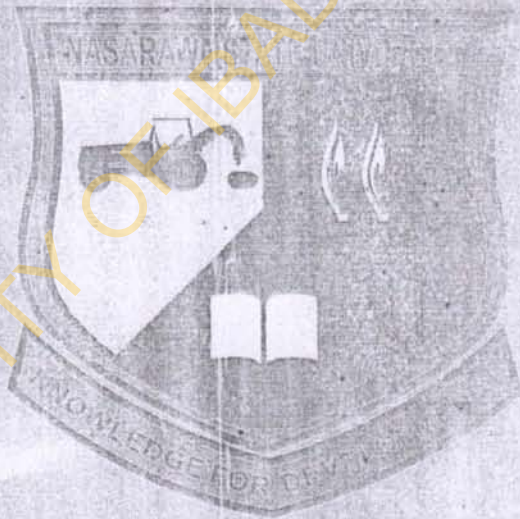


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## Table of Content

- 1- Basic Elements of Rules of Metrics in Arabic Prosody  
for Nigerian Students- Dr S.A Shittu..... 1
- 2- Religious and Inter-Ethnic Conflicts Management and  
Sustainable Development in Nigeria Adamu Iliyasu.....15
- 3- أثر 'ألف ليلة وليلة' على قصص 'الكلام رأسمال' للحاج أبوبكر إمام: قصة  
28 .....: الدكتور كبير أبوبكر أمين قمر الزمان بن شهر الزمان نموذجاً:
- 4- الدكتور مشطو أثر المجاورة في القياس الصرفي والإعرابي للقرآن الكريم  
39 .....: إبراهيم
- 5- طاهر يحيى ورقية أمين بامنغ التصعلك وأثره في شعر الشنفرى  
52 .....:
- 6- هاشم توظيف الدراسة الأدبية على ضوء نظرية جمالية التلقي للنص الأدبي  
72 .....: عمر سليمان و رابي محمد شيهو
- 7- الدكتور دراسة صرفية تطبيقية لقواعد الصوائت عند الصرفيين المحدثين  
83 .....: ناصر الدين إبراهيم أحمد
- 8- الشيخ المقرئ القوي حسن عمر ودوره في نشر القراءات واللغة العربية  
100 .....: أحمد محمد هارون و أبو حمزة محمد الراشدي

## Basic Elements of Rules of Metrics in Arabic Prosody for Nigerian Students

By

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### Abstract

While prosody has been one of the linguistic subjects in various Arabic schools, its study has been equally characterized by precarious situation ranging from the methods by the teachers particularly in the local *madrasa*. This half-baked knowledge has been the basis of the subject up to the University level which constitutes a serious problem of background to the subject. This paper wishes to correct the situation by examining the problems and attempts to simplify the method that could be adopted during the process of alteration and addition in Arabic Prosody with simple and familiar illustration to West Africa Arabic students with particular reference to Nigeria.

### Key- words

Basic Elements, Rules of Metrics, Nigerian Students, Tertiary institution, Arabic Prosody

### Introduction

The word "prosody" simply means: "the rhythmic aspect of language. In literary criticism, the term chiefly denotes the metrical structure of poetry and the study of such structure"<sup>1</sup> Paul Procter defines prosody as the science of the writing of poetry and the study of the laws that govern the ways in which its regular patterns of sound and beats are arranged.<sup>2</sup>

Traditional prosody is that which dominated English poetry between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was established in the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400) with less attention. It is based on lines measured by syllable stress and is sometimes called accentual- syllabic verse. Each line of this syllabic verse consists of basic units called "feet" with either two or three syllables in a foot. These syllables are either weak or strong ones according to the way they are pronounced. The four principal feet found in English poetry are the iambic.<sup>3</sup>

According to the view of the majority of the grammarians define *'Arūd* as: "The science of metre and the science of rhyme". Arab philologists frequently compare the science of *'Arūd* to a balance and define it as<sup>4</sup>:

العروض صناعة يعرف بما صحيح أوزان الشعر العربي وفاسدها وما يعترتها  
من الزحافات والعلل.

#### Meaning

*'Arud* is an invention by which the right metre is learnt as opposed to wrong one. It also affects incidents of elision or defects in poetry.

"Arabic Prosody" however, simply refers to as *'Arūd* in Arabic language was invented by al-Khalil b. Ahmad. The name given to the science led some scholars to different narrations on where the name originated. Some accounts have it that Khalil was on pilgrimage to Makkah during which he supplicated to Allah to inspire him to invent some new branches of knowledge never known or worked upon by any human. When he returned to Basrah, he identified and codified the rules of al-*'Arūd* which he observed as one of the epithets of Makkah.<sup>5</sup> Another opinion says Khalil was a native of 'Ummān and he named the science after his home town which was called *'Arūd*.<sup>6</sup> It is also said that al-Khalil named it after an obstinate camel which is described as *'Arūd*. Ancient poets were said to have developed the habit of watching the rhythmic movement of a camel's footsteps and composed poetry in imitation of the sound of the camel's steps.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, the main support

of a tent<sup>8</sup>. This last suggestion appears to be most plausible in view of the fact that many of the technical terms used in the science are taken from different parts of a tent for instance *Bayt*, *Misra'* and *Wataḍ*. The name is also referred to in Arabic prosody as the last foot of the first hemistich. *'Arūd* is thus a figurative feminine in the use of language.

### Basic Element of 'Arūd (أركان العروض)

*Al-'Arūd* being the rhythmic aspect of language. The terms therein chiefly denote the metrical structure of poetry and involve the study of such structure. Many Arabic students at tertiary institution face problem in comprehending these basic elements of *'Arūd*. They either meet the course in the University as their first attempt or second attempt but in an awkward manner or method as they were taught in local Arabic Schools. This eventually affects the interest of students in this precious area. Beside, the genius who had been endowed with art of creativity, you can hardly find an average Arabic student involve in Arabic poetry composition. The analysis of basic element of *'Arūd* in simplest manner is as follows:

Every verse in the final analysis consists of quiescent viz vowel less and "movement" that is vocalized consonants through the union of which there arises the constituent elements of the foot, the *ashāb*, (sing, *sabab*) which literally denotes "rope". This *sabab* is divided into two:

- (i) (a) سبب خفيف *sababum khafīf* (light rope) which literally connotes the combination of two consonants where the first is vocalized and the second is vowel less for instance قُمْ (stand up) قُلْ (say) خُذْ (take).
- (b) سبب ثقيل *sababun thaqīl* (heavy rope) which literally denotes combination of two vocalized consonants for instance. (لَكَ) for you (بِكَ) with you (feminine)

(ii) *الأوتاد* *Awṭād* is literally termed as pegs (singular form of it is *watad*). It is also divided into two: (a) *وتد مجموع* *Watādum majmū'* (united pegs) which technically denotes the combination of three letters wherein the first two are vocalized consonants that is *harakah* while the third has *sukūn*. It is known as united peg for instance *لقد* ( *he has* ) *غزى* .( *he participated in a war* ) *( نعم )* ( *Ye s* )

( b ) *وتد مفروق* *Watādum Mafrūq* literally means (separated pegs) technically is the combination of three consonants the *sukūn* separates the two vocalized consonants for instance: *جاء* ( *he arrived* ) *بيت* ( *house* ) and *قال* ( *he said* ).

(iii) *الفاصلة الصغرى* *al-Fāsilatus- Sughrā* and *الفاصلة الكبرى* *Fāsilatu-kubrā* is the further combination of more than two and more consonants.

(a) When a word consists of four Arabic letters and the first three letters are vocalized consonants (*muharrakah*) and the fourth is quiescent (*sukūn*), this is known as *الفاصلة الصغرى* *Fāsilat Sughrā* for instance: *جمل* ( *Camel* ) *سكنوا* ( *they live in* ) and *جلسوا* ( *they sat down* ).

(b) Also; the combination of five Arabic letters and the first four consonants are vocalized while the fifth consonant is quiescent (*sukūn*), this is called *الفاصلة الكبرى* *Fāsilat Kubrā* for instance *قتلهم* ( *He killed them* ) , *درسهم* ( *He taught them* ).

In order to have a full grasp the above analysis of each aspect of the above discussed elements, it has been compressed into a sentence which as an acronym :

( *لم أر على جبل سمكة* ) *Lam Ara ala jabalin samakatan*

Meaning

I did not see a fish on a mountain

It is the combination of these *Asbāb*, *Awtād* and *Fawāsil* that become a foot technically means *Taf'ilah* (تفعلة) in Arabic Prosodic metres for instance: *Mufā'ilatun* (مفاعلتن), *Mufā* (مفًا) is عِلّ وتد مجموع (*ala*) is سبب ثقيل and *tun* (تن) is سبب خفيف. These names, like most of the metrical terminologies have been borrowed from Bedouin Arab especially from the tent.<sup>9</sup>

Prosodists claim that there are about 10 primary feet that were formed from *Asbāb*, *Awtād* and *Fawāsil*. They are:

- *Mufā'ilatun* مُفَاعِلَتُنْ, *Mustaf'ilun* مُسْتَفْعِلُنْ, *Maf'ūlātu* مَفْعُولَاتُ These are regarded as primary feet
- *Fā-i'lātun* فَاعِلَاتُنْ, *Mufā'ilatun* مُفَاعِلَاتُنْ, *Faūlum* فَعُولُنْ, *mafā'ilun* مَفَاعِيلُنْ, *Fā'ilātun* فَاعِلَاتُنْ, *Fā'ilātun* فَاعِلَاتُنْ These are all regarded as secondary feet.<sup>10</sup>

It must be noted that the three letters of elongation in Arabic Alif, wā' and yā' are regarded as quiescent consonants in Arabic Prosody.

#### Alterations and Additions in Arabic Prosody:

The metrical structure of poetry involves the study of certain alterations which constantly occur in every part of a verse. The analysis runs thus: *Al-Zihāfāt* literally means Elisions and *illa* literally denotes (Defect).

*Al-Zihāfāt* can be defined as such alterations which affect the *asbāb* of a verse. For example: the vocalized *kaf* in *laka* (لَكَ) could be turned into quiescent consonant and became *lak* (لَك) or *sīn* of *mustaf'ilun* (مُستَفْعِلُنْ) could be elided and become *mutaf'ilun* (مُتَفْعِلُنْ). Since this form is linguistically impossible, it will now be converted into metrical equivalent such as *mufā'ilun* (مُفَاعِلُنْ). The modern prosodic scanning system has really helped the learner in Arabic metre identification, assist a learner to choose appropriate *taf'ilah* for his own composition and a guiding instrument to pinpoint exact alteration that affects the



verses of poem. Word such as ( لك ) *laka* represents two vocalised consonants, could be scanned as thus (v v) that is letter (v) represents *harakah* (vocalized consonant). Besides, word such as في ( *fī* ) could be scanned as thus (-) represents one vocalised consonant and the second letter with *Sukūn*. The scan of the above examples reveal the new method of scanning against that of the old system which seems confusing (11) and (10) stroke like Arabic figure one represents *harakah* while small zero stands for *sukūn*.<sup>11</sup> For instance ( مُتَفَاعِلُنْ )

*Mutaf'ilun* (v - v -) ( مَفَاعِلُنْ ) *Mafā'ilun* (v - v -).

Alterations in 'Arūd did not make the knowledge complex as assumed by some learners, it only needs a careful identification either the alterations is a single elision or complex, whether defect by increase or by decrease. The following analysis in clear and simple form shall assist a quick assimilation of the terms and its divisions: ..

There are twelve types of metric elisions with a technical term for each, which a poet can utilise at will in individual feet. Eight of these twelve comprise of single elision which is known as ( الزحاف المفرد ) ; *al-Zihaf al-Mufrad* while the remaining four are ( الزحاف المزدوج أو المركب ) *al-Zihaful Muzdawij Aw Murakab* "A complex elision".

It is worthy to note that *al-Zihafāt* (elisions) only affect (*asbāb*) either by changing the vocalised consonant into quiescent in the foot or eliminate the quiescent consonant (*sukūn*) as can be seen in the following:

1. *Idmār*: This is changing the second vocalised consonant in the foot into quiescent as in (*ta*) of مُتَفَاعِلُنْ (*mutafā'ilun*) becomes

مُتَفَاعِلُنْ *mutafā'ilun*.

*Al-Khabru*: refers to suppression of the first quiescent consonant of a foot as in (*sīn*) of مُسْتَفَاعِلُنْ *mustafā'ilun* becomes

- مُتَفَعِّلِينَ *mutaf'ilun*. It will thus be converted into مُفَاعِلِينَ *Mufa'ilun* for easier pronunciation.
3. *Al-Waqs*: is the suppression of the second vocalised consonants as could be found in (*ta*) of مُتَفَاعِلِينَ *Mutafa'ilun* thus becomes مُفَاعِلِينَ *Mufa'ilun*.
  4. *Al-Tayy*: suppression of the fourth consonant that is quiescent as could be found in (*fa*) of مُسْتَفَعِّلِينَ *Mustafa'ilun* thus becomes مُسْتَفَعِّلِينَ *Musta'ilun*. It can now be converted into مُفَاعِلِينَ *Mufa'ilun*.
  5. *Al-'Asb* is changing the fifth vocalised consonant into quiescent as could be done in *lām* of مُفَاعِلَاتُنْ *Mufa'alatun* becomes مُفَاعِلَاتُنْ *Mufa'altun*. It could be converted into مُفَاعِلِينَ *Mufa'ilun*.
  6. *Al-Qabd*: suppression of the fifth quiescent of a foot as could be done in *Nūn* of فَعُولُنْ *Fa'ulun* becomes فَعُولُ *Fa'ulu*.
  7. *Al-'Aql*: suppression of the fifth vocalised consonant of a foot, as in *la* of مُفَاعِلَاتُنْ *Mufa'alatun* becomes مُفَاعِلَاتُنْ *Mufa'atun*. It could be converted into مُفَاعِلِينَ *Mufa'ilun*.
  8. *Al-Kaff*: suppression of the seventh quiescent consonant of a foot, as in *nun* of فَاعِلَاتُنْ *fa'ilatun* becomes فَاعِلَاتُ *F'ilatu*: مُفَاعِلِينَ *mufa'ilun* also become مُفَاعِلِينَ *mufa'ilu*

#### الزحاف المزدوج أو المركب Complex (Elision)

Once the single alteration and elision are perfectly mastered and digested, it is the combination of these terms that make *Zihafatul Murakkab* or *Muzdayij* The analysis goes thus:

1. الخيل *Al-Khail*: for instance comprises of *Khabnu* and *Tayyi* in a foot. For instance; مُسْتَفَعِّلِينَ *Mustafa'ilun* – becomes مُتَفَعِّلِينَ *Muta'ilun*, because quiescent consonant *Sin* of the second letter has been elided and quiescent consonant *Fāf* of the fourth letter

has also been eliminated مُسْتَفْعِلُنْ become مُنْفَعِلُنْ then مُنْعِلُنْ converted into فَعِلَاتُنْ

2. *Al-Khazl*: Comprises of the combination of *Idmār* and *Tayyi* in a foot. For instance; مُتَفَاعِلُنْ *Mutafa'ilun* becomes مُنْفَعِلُنْ *Mutfa'ilun* vocalised-consonant *ta* has changed into quiescent consonant while the elongation after the vocalised consonant will be deleted. مُتَفَاعِلُنْ become مُنْفَاعِلُنْ then مُنْعِلُنْ converted into مُنْفَعِلُنْ
3. *Al-Shakl*: it is the combination of *Khābn* and *Kaff*. For instance; فَاعِلَاتُنْ *Fā'ilātun* becomes فَاعِلَاتُ *Fā'ilātu*. The elongation *alif* after (*faf*) is now deleted while the seventh quiescent consonant (*nun*) is also eliminated. فَاعِلَاتُنْ become فَعِلَاتُنْ finally become فَعِلَاتُ
4. *Al-Naqs*: It is a combination of both *Asb* and *al-Kaff*. For instance مُفَاعِلَاتُنْ *Mufā'alatun* becomes مُفَاعِلَتْ *Mufā'altu*. The fifth vocalised consonant *lam* has been changed into quiescent consonant while the seventh quiescent consonant is finally deleted مُفَاعِلَاتُنْ become مُفَاعِلَاتُنْ then مُفَاعِلَتْ however converted into مُفَاعِلُ

*al-'Illat* literally means "Defect":

It is worthy to note that *'illah* only affects the end of the last foot of a particular hemistich. It arises through addition of one or more letters; *'illah Ziyadah* (عِلَّة الزيادة) or omission *'illah naqs* (عِلَّة النقص) on that basis. Its two divisions shall be discussed as follow:

A. عِلَّة الزيادة *'Illatuz-Ziyādah* defect through addition are three:

1. الترفيل *Al-tarfil* is an addition of *sababun khafif* on a foot that ends with *watadun -majū'*. For instance: the last *Nūn* of فَاعِلُنْ *Fā'ilun*

will be turned into *alif* فَاعِلًا then a *sababun khafif* will be added to it that is: تُنْ *tun* it will now become فَاعِلَاتُنْ *fā'ilātun*. When we observe the change, we discover that *fā'ilun* is converted to *fā'ilā* at first instance, then added *tun* which become *fā'ilātun*. The end which was *watadun Majmu'* has accommodated *tun* which is the added *sababun khafifun*.

2. التذييل *Al-tadhyil*: is an addition of a quiescent consonant on a foot that ends with *watadun Majmu'*. فَاعِلُنْ *Fā'ilun* becomes فَاعِلَانْ *Fā'ilān*, and مُسْتَفْعِلُنْ *Mustaf'ilun* turns to مُسْتَفْعِلَانْ *Mustaf'ilān*. It should be observed that *nūn* has been replaced with *alif* which indicates that both are quiescent consonant irrespective of their places of articulation.
  3. التسيبغ *Al-Tasbīgh*: is an addition of quiescent consonant on a foot that ends with *Sababun khafifun* for instance. فَاعِلَاتُنْ *Fā'ilātun* into فَاعِلَاتَانْ *Fā'ilātān*. It takes the same process except that the former occurs with a foot that ends with *watadun- majmū'* while the latter affects a foot that ends with *sababun- khafif*.
- B. علة النقص *'Illatul- Naqs* literally denotes defect through Omission. There are ten kinds of defects through omission; they are discussed with its technical term as thus;
1. *Al-Hadhf*: elision of *Sabab Khafif* (لُئِنْ) from the last foot of a hemistich. For instance: مَفَاعِلُنْ *Mafā'ilun*, becomes مَفَاعِي *Mafā'i*. It will be converted into مَفَاعِلُنْ for easier pronunciation.
  2. *Al-Qatf*: elision of *Sabab Khafif* in مَفَاعِلُنْ and changing the last vocalised consonant into quiescent. For instance: مَفَاعِلُنْ *Mafā'ilātun* becomes مَفَاعِلْ *Mufā'al*. تُنْ "tun" will be firstly

dropped then consonant "lam" which is in accusative case will be changed into quiescent. This can be converted into فَعُولُنْ *Fa'ūlun*.

3. *Al-Qasr*: This is the elision of a quiescent consonant of a *Sabab Khafif* that is *nūn* as could be found in فَاعِلَاتُنْ and فَعُولُنْ, hence the changing of the vocalised consonant into quiescent. For instance: فَاعِلَاتُنْ *fā'ilātun* into فَاعِلَاتُ *fa'ilātu* then the sound *ta* in accusative mark will be changed into quiescent فَاعِلَاتُ and فَعُولُنْ thus become فَعُولُ whereas *lam* with nominative case will be changed into quiescent فَعُولُ.
4. *Al-Qat'u* : elision of a quiescent consonant of al-Watadu-Majmu' and changing the immediate vocalised consonant into quiescent. For instance فَاعِلَاتُنْ and مُسْتَفْعِلَاتُنْ *Mutafā'ilun, Mustaf'ilun* and فَاعِلَاتُنْ *Mutafā'ilu* into مُسْتَفْعِلَاتُنْ *Mutafā'ilu* and فَاعِلَاتُنْ *Mustaf'ilu* then become مُسْتَفْعِلَاتُنْ *Mutafā'il* and فَاعِلَاتُنْ *Fā'ilu* then become مُسْتَفْعِلَاتُنْ *Mutafā'il* and فَاعِلَاتُنْ *Fā'il* will be converted into فَاعِلَاتُنْ *Fa'ilātun* فَعُولُنْ *Maf'ūlun* and فَعُولُنْ *Fa'lun*
5. *Al-Tashīth*: Elision of the first or second letter of *watad majmū'*. For instance فَاعِلَاتُنْ *Fā'ilun* becomes فَاعِلَاتُنْ *Fālun* or فَاعِلَاتُنْ *Fā'in* in which will be converted into فَاعِلَاتُنْ *fā'lun*.
6. *Al-Hadhadhu*: is an elision of a complete *Watadun majmu'* in the last foot of a hemistich. For instance: مُسْتَفْعِلَاتُنْ *mustaf'ilun* becomes مُسْتَفْعِلَاتُنْ *mustaf.* will be converted into فَاعِلَاتُنْ *fa'lun* or فَاعِلَاتُنْ *fu'lun* or فَاعِلَاتُنْ *fi'lun*.

7. *Al-Salm*: is the elision of *watad mafrūq* completely from the last foot of a hemistich. For instance: مَفْعُولَاتُ *Maf'ūlāt* becomes مَفْعُو *Maf'u*. will be converted into فَعْلُنْ *Fa'lam*.
8. *Al-Kasfu*: is the elision of the last consonant in *watad mafrūq*. For instance: مَفْعُولَاتُ *Maf'ūlāt* into مَفْعُولَا *maf'ūlā*. will be converted into مَفْعُولُنْ *maf'ūlun*.
9. *Al-Waqf*: is changing of the last letter of *watad mafrūq* into quiescent. For instance: مَفْعُولَاتُ *Maf'ulātū* becomes مَفْعُولَاتُ *Mafū'lāt*
10. *Al-Butr*: is the combination of *Hadhf* and *Qat'i* that is; to eliminate the *sabab khafif* from the last foot of a hemistich. For instance فَعْلُونْ *Fa'ūlun* becomes فَعْو *'fa'ū* again to remove a quiescent consonant of the remaining letters of *watad majmū'* becomes فَعْو *fa'u* and changing the second letter to quiescent فَعْو *fa'u*. In another instance: فَاعِلَاتُنْ *Fa'ilatun* is elimination of *sabab khafif* فَعْو "tun" become فَاعِلَا *Fā'ilā* whereby remove the quiescent consonant to become فَاعِلَا *Fā'ila* and finally change the last consonant with *harakat* into فَاعِلْ *Fā'il* which will be converted into فَعْلُنْ

There are other types of defects that affect the last foot of a hemistich. This includes *'illa ghayr lāzimah* meaning; defects that are not consistent either through addition or omission for example *Khazm and Kharm*. This aspect will be given a comprehensive study along with poetical license in a forthcoming article which will expose students to real Arabic poetical composition.

There are certain terms that need to be understood to avoid confusion during the learning process of *'Arūd*. They are as follow;

A full poetical verse is called *Bayt* and it consists of at least three feet and falls into halves called hemistich. For instance:

إِذَا مَا شِئْتُمْ فِي الدَّارَيْنِ تَسْعُدُ // فَكَلِّبْ بِالْمَلَأَةِ عَلَيَّ مُحَمَّدٌ  
 مُفَاعَلُنْ مُفَاعَلُنْ مُفَاعَلُنْ مُفَاعَلُنْ // مُفَاعَلُنْ مُفَاعَلُنْ مُفَاعَلُنْ مُفَاعَلُنْ

The underlined Arabic poem are called hemistiches (*masraf*). The last bold foot of the first hemistich being called '*Arūd*' and that of the second bold foot is called *Darb*. The other feet besides the '*Arūd*' and *Darb* as a whole (not in bold) is called *Hashw* (stuffing). *Hashw* is regarded as less essential, because competence of a poet lies on how he judiciously utilise the rules in '*Arud*' and *Darb* as we can observe in above quoted example. The Sababun Khafif (سبب خفيف) of the foot in each hemistich was deleted and the vocalized consonant letter (lam) as in مُفَاعَلُنْ was changed into quiescent مُفَاعَلُنْ which in turn converted into فَعُولُنْ for easier pronunciation. It will eventually read thus:

مُفَاعَلُنْ مُفَاعَلُنْ مُفَاعَلُنْ مُفَاعَلُنْ // مُفَاعَلُنْ مُفَاعَلُنْ مُفَاعَلُنْ مُفَاعَلُنْ

A line of poem composed by a poet is called *Mufrad* or *Yatimah*, two lines of poem composed by a poet is called *Nutfah*. Three to six lines of poem composed by a poet is called *Qit'ah* while lines of poem from seven and above is regarded as *Qasidah*.

In conclusion, this paper has provided a lead way to an easier understanding of the basic elements of '*Arūd*' which serves as a facilitator to the interest of Arabic students in this Arabic art of versification and the science of structure of verses. In order to ensure that this humble rendition and explanation in English are fruitful, answer to the following questions serves as an evaluation which must be provided with ease; What is '*Arud*' literally and contextually, who invented and name the discipline. Explain these prosodic terminologies; (a) *al-Bayt* (b) *Nutfah* (c) *Darb* (d) '*Arud*' (e) *Wataf*

(f) *Asbāb* (g) *Fawāsil* .Discuss *‘illatul Naqṣ and Ziyadah* with good illustration.Explain *al-Zihāfatul Muzdawijjah* as in Arabic Prosody and discuss *al-Zihāfatul Mufrad* with good example.

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