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A grammar of Kumzari : a mixed Perso-Arabian language of Oman

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12 Poetics

12.1 Poetics in linguistics

Halliday accounted for poetics in linguistics thus: “a straightforward linguistic description of a literary text, in which the text is treated in exactly the same way as any other text that is being subjected to linguistic analysis, reveals a great deal both about that text in particular and about literary language in general” (Halliday 2002:8). However, it is also acknowledged that in oral societies such as that of Kumzari, literary language and non-literary language do not face each other across a great chasm as they do in societies with long written traditions (Bright 1984:81). The language of ‘prose’ in oral societies is structured similarly to the language of ‘poetry’; it is “measured and allusive speech” (McDowell 2000:213), inflected with patterns of meaning and sound at all levels of the grammar (Johnstone 1991:114). Poetic attributes are usual in a “skilfully improvised literary text” (Kossmann 2000:88). In many cultures with a long written tradition, such as in Europe, written tradition developed separately and often as a different genre (e.g. for religious or legal purposes) with distinct structures alongside a colloquial spoken language. Where literacy has become widespread across a community and over generations, many oral traditions and linguistic competencies have been lost. In contrast, in languages spoken by predominantly oral societies, literary and colloquial language is more unified, making the analysis of poetic forms essential to grammatical description.

Grammatical patterns in a language naturally create poetic qualities, which in turn create meaning and function (Blommaert 2006:8). A speaker of the language uses the grammatical resources of the language to organise a text and promote focus on the subject at hand, and accordingly “finds and exploits the *irregularity* that the patterns allow, and in doing so superimposes a further *regularity*” (Halliday 2002:9, emphasis original).

Sounds are inherently meaningless, but they function as meaning-holders once they are set into a pattern that is assigned meaning by a cultural context. So it is with poetics: poetic qualities such as rhyme and repetition in a text have no intrinsic meaning, but in a cultural context they are understood to compose meaning in literature. In that context a poem can be defined as “a text in which linguistic form—phonological, syntactic, and lexical—is organised in such a way as to carry an aesthetic content which is at least as important, as regards the response of the receiver, as is the cognitive content carried by the same text” (Bright 1984:134).

Poetics follows one of the “universal principles” of narrative structure used by Hymes in his linguistic analysis of indigenous American literature (Hymes 2003:340), namely, that “there is always a general aesthetic organisation to the story, a more global form of organisation that connects the story to culturally embedded understandings of the logic of activities and experiences.” These patterns may be accessed by the analysis of equivalences in sounds, words, clauses, and texts in a language.

Ethnopoetic analysis “brings out the intricate and delicate correlations between linguistic form, thematic development (scenes, episodes) and the general (‘cultural’) formal architecture of the story” (Blommaert 2006:7). The components of Kumzari literature have already been explicated in chapter 11, particularly in the section on plot structure (§11.4). In contrast to the grammar of discourse, the present discussion focuses on the features that contribute to the thematic development of particular texts. It examines patterns of

equivalence that hold within a text, acknowledging that “any noticeable reiteration of the same grammatical concept becomes an effective poetic device” (Jakobson 1987:122).

12.2 Repetition and Parallelism

Repetition has several functions in discourse. Observing its common occurrence in oral tales, Ong (2002:40) also noted that repetition provides a means of making a tale more fluent and allowing an audience to keep track of events. Pinault (1992:22) alludes to similar grounding functions in the Tales from Arabian Nights: “In those stories from the *Alf laylah* ... which are especially well crafted, the structure is disposed so as to draw the audience’s attention to certain narrative elements over others. Recurrent vocabulary, repeated gestures, accumulations of descriptive phrases around selected objects: such patterns guide the audience in picking out particular actions as important in the flow of narrative.”

Perhaps most obviously, repetition provides an aide-mémoire in verbal communication. Referring to Arabic sung poetry of the Gulf and to oral traditions in general, Jargy (1989:184-185) states that repetition in texts is used to facilitate memorisation, as well as “to give rhythm its predominance and color”. Jargy further notes that in fact, repetition is pre-eminent for this purpose over the text and its thematic content. This is because enacting repetition has rhetorical force beyond the lexical denotation of the words used. Holes, in his analysis of Baḥarna Arabic, calls this *iconic*: “the act of repetition has iconic meaning: it is a time-consuming act whose performance requires effort, and by making this effort the aunt is seeking to prove her point” (Holes 1995: 78). Repeating words, or using parallelism, stands for something else; in the same way that a speech act like an oath, pronouncement, curse, or spell has a function larger than its immediate meaning, repetition and parallelism are grammaticalised in many languages.

Jakobson (1960) referred to this as establishing “equivalence”, a pattern of repetition or parallelism among lines and paragraphs in a discourse that relate to the overall organisation in a text. In Kumzari, discourse equivalence can be discerned in various forms, and at all levels of the language. Examples of equivalence are reviewed below.

12.3 Phonetic parallelism

In phonetic parallelism, sound and meaning are brought together through repetition of words, alliteration, and ideophones, to form patterns that gives phonetic structure to the whole text. Phonetic assonance is achieved both by phrase repetition in the embedded poems and inter-paragraph verb repetition. In the following cases, the “combination of several identical elements to express intensity of an action or a high degree of a property” has been termed “augmentative conjunction” (Haspelmath 2007:25); repetition here denotes the passing of time or continuation of an action:

(745) B750

mād, mād, mād.

Stayed, stayed, stayed. [things stayed the same for a time]

(746) B785

raft-in, raft-in, raft-in, raft-in,

inča ba’ada būr-in farra ā...

They **went, went, went, went**, [they kept going]

like this becoming far away...

Phonetic repetition structures the narrative; however, even within speech, assonance gives weight to the discourse. Rather than rhyming syllables at the end of a line, Kumzari more often uses anaphora; that is, successive lines beginning with words of the same sounds. Observable in the tale *Pačaxčēō*, in a speech reprimanding a girl in the desert, in four successive lines a bedouin repeats the adverb *ḥasa* ‘still’. In the first of these two lines it is negated with *na* following the adverb, and the latter three lines are joined with the conjunction *wa*.

(747) P635

dgō ba yē, “hā, tēl-ī mē na!”

dgō ba yē, “sā tō! rēsīd-ī.

ḥasa na majma gid-ī,

wa ḥasa na šaw wābur,

wa ḥasa maxluq-an č-in wā= bāla,

wa ḥasa maxluq-an tā’-in wā= zēran.”

“tēl-ī mē na!”

She said to him, “Oh, don’t leave me!”

He said to her, “Now, you! You arrived!

Still you did **not** speak,

And still it’s **not** night,

And still many people are going up there,

And still many people are coming down there!”

“Don’t leave me!”

Phonetic equivalence in the form of ideophones permeates narrative discourse, and in many cases these sound-meaning junctions help to carry the story line. In the tale of The Crow, *Ġrābō*, the cawing sound made by the crow draws auditory focus. It is said that the crow caws whenever someone lies, and so throughout the story, the plot hinges on the sound of the crow cawing:

(748) G198

nakt-ē tē bang-ō ā,

tēr āmad, ġrāb-ē.

ēka ā yā=in ar qāq tk-in ā,

yā ġrāb-an baṭna ā,

qā qā tk-in na ā,

hē, ġrāb-an gap-an.

ništ inda knār-ō.

A little before sunset,

A bird came: a crow.

You know these ones that **caw**,

These crows from the Batinah coast,

The ones that say ‘**caw, caw**’,

Yes, the big crows.

It sat in the jujube tree.

Later in the story, the crow’s cawing reveals some characters’ murderous secrets:

(749) G525

“*qā!*”

“*čumbū yē na!?*”

“*yē fēṭahit mā tk-a wa...*”

“*hā mā...! bābā!...*”

“**Caw!**”

“What is the matter with it?!”

“It is telling on us and...”

“Oh my...! O son...!”

12.4 Morphological parallelism

Morphological parallelism is displayed in the list below, with the plural suffix *-an* present on all five nouns of the semantic domain of food items, as well as the conjunction *wa* and the peak discourse marker *ka* prefacing each item in the middle of the list. The rhythm of morphological symmetry in the list also supplies phonetic assonance.

(750) P190

yā nēyt-an wās-in, bā yē na ā,

nēyt-an xōd-iš.

šām-an,

wa ka nān-an,

wa ka brinz-an,

wa ka qūt-an,

mēčūrī-an,

ya'nī, yē xōd-iš.

These charity foods that were brought, it didn't matter,
she ate the charity foods.

Suppers!

And then breads!

And then rice dishes!

And then soups!

Fish stews!

That is to say, she ate it.

Morphological parallelism is frequently employed in formulae and in the LIST section of embedded poems, discussed in §12.8.

12.5 Lexical repetition

Lexical repetition emphasises the information being communicated and effects memorability. A section of the tale *Rōran Šēxō* is given below to demonstrate its complete saturation with lexical repetition. Three types of lexical repetition are evident in this section: lexical couplets, synonymous parallelism, and inverted parallelism. The back-and-forth of the repeated lexemes shapes the story at a crucial point in the tale's thematic development; it signals the divide in characters echoed from the beginning of the story: contrasting the six macho brothers and the youngest gay brother whom they bury in a well (dropped by his *jāmağ-skirt*), and the seven princesses who decide to stay with the youngest brother rather than abandoning him.

(751) R1317

ēwō bass=im.

here enough =EX:1p

“‘Here we [have done] enough.’”

bass=im bēw ka kēš-in yē ba nummağ.

enough =EX:1p already PEAK pull:MIR-3p 3s to halfway

“‘We [have done] enough already,’ so right away they pulled him [up] halfway!’

kēš-in yē ba nummağ ā,

pull:MIR-3p 3s to halfway SUB

‘Pulling him [up] halfway,

ka kārđ-ō sī’-in ba īn-ō,

PEAK knife-the put:MIR-3p to what’s-it-called -the

‘right away they put the knife to the what’s-it-called!’

šamšir-ō sī’-in ba jāmağ-ō,

sword-the put:MIR-3p to man’s.skirt-the

‘they put the sword to the skirt!’

kard-in yē inda yē.

drop:MIR-3p 3s inside 3s

‘They dropped him [the boy] into it [the well]!’

qaşsa yē gid-in

cutting 3s do:REAL-3p

‘They cut him [off].’

kard-in yē bēw,

drop:MIR-3p 3s already...

‘Once they dropped him,’

wa gab twāra wābur ğuzr -ō,

and suddenly shelter become:3sREAL deep -the

‘he immediately took shelter in the deep [part of the well].’

wa ka dafana ān gid-in bard.

and PEAK burying 3s.ANA do:REAL -3p stone

‘And right away they buried that one with stones.’

dafana ān gid-in.

burying 3s.ANA do:REAL -3p

‘They buried that one.’

bard kardīd-in ba yē ā,

stone drop:REAL -3p on 3s SUB

‘Dropping stones on him,’

hawz yē dār -in ba yē

level 3s give:REAL -3p on 3s

‘they levelled [the ground] over him,’

sātē murd.
 now die:REAL
 ‘‘Now he [must] be dead,’’

dgīn ba xō murd.
 say:3pIMPF to REFL die:3sREAL
 ‘They said to themselves, ‘‘He is dead.’’

dgīn ba ẓank- -an byā -ē č -im.
 say:3pIMPF to woman- -PL come:IMPER -2p go:IMPF -1p
 ‘They said to the women, ‘‘Come, we are going.’’

ẓank- -an dgīn ba šan, mā č -im na wā šmā na.
 woman- -PL say:3pIMPF to 3p 1p go:IMPF -1p NEG with 2p NEG
 ‘The women said to them, ‘‘We are not going with you.’’

mā šū mā murs -ē ba čō -ō.
 1p husband 1p die:PERF -3s in well -the
 ‘‘As for us, our husband has died in the well,’’

mā bumr -im ba čō -ō.
 1p die:IMPER -1p in well -the
 ‘‘May we die in the well!’’

šmā na wās -ē mā ā,
 2p NEG bring:PERF -2p 1p SUB
 ‘‘None of you brought us,’’

ar wās -ē mā ā, yēē.
 that/which/who bring:PERF -3s 1p SUB 3s.EMPH
 ‘‘The one who brought us was him.’’

ẓank- -an raft-in na.
 woman- -PL go:IMPF -3p NEG
 ‘The women didn’t go.’

wa šan raft-in.
 and 3p go:IMPF -3p
 ‘And they [the brothers] went.’

The first type of repetition is called lexical couplets, because the repeated words and phrases are almost always found in pairs. In the text above, spanning 54 seconds of time, more than 16 lexical couplets of exactly repeated words or phrases are found, such as the following:

(752) R1333

wa ka dafana ān gid-in bard.

dafana ān gid-in. bard kardīd-in ...

‘And right away **they buried that one** with stones.

They buried that one. Dropping stones...’

Synonymous parallelism repeats the word or phrase but uses a synonym instead of the exact word or phrase. This second type is exploited in the embedded poems, as will be described in §12.8 of the present chapter. Synonymous parallels are often found in groups of three or more, prompting linguists observing this rhetorical device in Arabic to call it “listing parallelism” (Johnstone 1991:102). In the text above, these sets of synonymous parallels are heard:

(753) R1324

kārd-ō sī'-in ... šamšir-ō sī'-in ... qaṣṣa yē gid-in
 ‘they put the **knife**’ ... ‘they put the **sword**’ ... ‘they **cut** him [off]’

(754) R1344

dafana ān gid-in. bard kardīd-in ba yē ā, ḥawz yē dār-in ba yē.
 ‘They **buried** that one. **Dropping stones** on him, they **levelled [the ground]** over him.’

The third type of lexical repetition, inverted parallelism, repeats the word or phrase but inverts its syntax or meaning. Kumzari often contrasts a negative/positive pair, as in this example from the text above:

(755) R1362

šmā na wās-ē mā ā,
ar wās-ē mā ā, yēē.
ṣank-an raft-in na.
wa šan raft-in.
 “None of you **brought us**,
 The one who **brought us** was him.”
 The women **didn’t go**.
 And they [the brothers] **went**.’

The following pair of parallel lines uses both inverted syntax and opposite meaning:

(756) R1354

dgīn ba ṣank-an, byā-ē, č-im.
ṣank-an dgīn ba šan, mā č-im na wā šmā na.
 ‘They **said to the women**, “Come, **we are going**.”
 The women **said to them**, “**We are not going** with you.”’

12.6 Syntactic parallelism

Syntactic parallelism takes various forms: anaphora, epiphora, anadiplosis, chiasmus, and word order variation. All of these exploit the repertoire of Kumzari’s clause structure for poetic effect.

Anaphora is syntactic parallelism that repeats the initial element of a clause in successive lines. It commonly occurs in speeches and in backgrounded sections of a text. In the following example from the tale *Sōntyō*, anaphora is among several types of parallelism contained in the princess’ request to her father:

(757) S82

murd-um ka bur-um inda sōnty-ō y’=ā,

inda ḥamya bur-um,
ra'-um wa=bāla,
ra'-um maḡrab,
ra'-um mašraq,
ana yā tk-ī ba mē ā,
balkē mān-um zindaḡ.
 If I should become dead on that raft,
 Should I become beached,
 Should I go up,
 Should I go west,
 Should I go east,
 If you do these things for me,
 Perhaps I will stay alive.

In the type of syntactic parallelism called epiphora, the latter part of a clause is repeated, and may be paraphrased or elaborated in successive lines. In the tale *Bāḡ al-Mowz*, seven women use epiphora in explaining to a beggar what they are doing:

(758) B69
pī ṭāraf mā ā, kār-an tk-im,
ya'nī, qadar qayit-an tk-im,
wa qadar kār-an tk-im.
 From our side, **we're working,**
 That is to say, **we're doing some embroidery,**
 And **we're doing some work.**

As is often the case in repetition, the meaning of the epiphoric clause may be amplified or may alternate with synonyms or negated antonyms:

(759) B281
wa mām-ō mād baḡa kōr.
kōr būr na.
 And the mother **remained without blindness.**
 She **did not become blind.**

Anadiplosis, also called 'lexical overlap' (Thompson, Longacre, & Hwang 2007:275), repeats a clause, whole or in part, in the next line. In many languages, anadiplosis contributes to cohesion in a discourse. In the Indo-Aryan language Palula, repeated clauses unify a text by "not adding any new information but instead highlighting the temporal relationship between the two events" (Liljegren 2008:315). In Kumzari, anadiplosis and other types of syntactic repetition are commonly found in the introduction of a tale, and represent backgrounding devices. The repeated clause in anadiplosis is followed by the subordinator *ā*, and an independent clause that continues the progression of the tale:

(760) A69
rēs-id dbay. rēs-id dbay ā, ... čōt dukkan-ē.
He arrived at Dubai. Arriving at Dubai, ... he goes to a shop.

Anadiplosis is often found at episode boundaries, recapitulating what has happened and moving on to tell about something new in the foreground of the story. For this reason it has

been called a ‘bridging device’ in clause-linking syntax (Dixon & Aikhenvald 2008:8). In the following example of anadiplosis, the repeated line is about a couple who agree to adopt a boy if he helps them with work. After they take the boy in, they discover that he has a crow that caws whenever someone is not telling the truth:

(761) G331

lumrād gid-in yē ba xō. gid-in yē ba xō ā, xābr-in ba yē sā yē ġrāb-ō...

So **they took him in**. **Taking him in**, they found out from him that now there was this crow...

Chiasmus is a type of syntactic parallelism that repeats words or clauses but reverses their order. In just twelve seconds of speech given by a sorcerer in the tale *Bāġ al-Mowz*, there are three pairs of lines showing chiasmus:

(762) B104

1. *dō-um ba šmā af-ta ḥabb ānar.*

af-ta ḥabb ānar dō-um ba šmā ā...

I will give to you seven pomegranate seeds.

Seven pomegranate seeds I will give to you...

2. *wa=angar zā-ē,*

wa af-ta rōk-an tār-ē wa=angar...

All together, you will give birth,

and you will bring forth seven sons all together...

3. *lakin yak-ē ba mē.*

yak-ē dē ba mē ā...

But one of them to me.

One of them give to me...

Chiasmus on a larger scale is seen in this passage from the tale *Sōntyō*, in which lines from the first half are mirrored in lines of the second half:

(763) S516

mē dit āmō xō tāt-um na.

yē ar č-um ba yē xāna ā, tāt-um yē na.

č-um xāna ba sōnty-ō.

čābē č-ī xāna ba sōnty-ō ā?

yā lōḥ-ē ā?!

sāl-ē di-sāl kaft-ē durya-ō!

palla gū, palla kār,

čābē č-ī xāna ba sōnty-ō ā?

mē č-um xāna ba sōnty-ō.

kaw tubr-um ba sōnty-ō.

dit āmō xō tāt-um na.

“As for me, I do not want [to marry] my uncle’s daughter.

The one whom I am to marry, I do not want her.

I will marry the raft.”

“How is it that you would marry the raft?!

This wooden thing?!

For a year or two, it has been in the sea!
 It is full of excrement, full of things,
 How is it that you would marry the raft?!”
 “As for me, I will marry the raft.
 I will sign the marriage contract with the raft.
 I do not want [to marry] my uncle’s daughter.”

The diagram below outlines the passage’s chiasmus structure.

A	“(As for me,) I do not want [to marry] my uncle’s daughter.
B	The one whom I am to marry, I do not want her.
C	I will marry the raft.”
D	“How is it that you would marry the raft?!
	this wooden thing?!
E	For a year or two, it has been in the sea!
	It is full of excrement, full of things,
D	How is it that you would marry the raft?!”
C	“(As for me,) I will marry the raft.
B	I will sign the marriage contract with the raft.
A	I do not want [to marry] my uncle’s daughter.”

Aside from the two *mē* declarations, lines A, C, and D are repeated word for word in reverse order. The lines B are semantic mirror images of each other, both regarding the formalities and traditions of the marriage contract. Three lines E in the centre of the passage are on the same subject, degrading the raft’s qualities.

Variation in word order is a syntactic device that can produce foregrounding, drawing out certain information as more salient to the text. Johnstone (1991:94-95) calls this the creation of ‘rhetorical presence.’ A subject or object may be pre-posed or post-posed from its regular position vis-à-vis the verb. Dislocation of constituents can even “function grammatically as a topic-switching mechanism,” as Givón points out (1984:193). A sentence in the tale *Rōran Šēxō* introduces *čō’-ē* ‘a well’ at a point in the discourse where the six brothers are thirsty and need water, incorporating both lexical repetition and word order variation to convey its centrality to the plot:

(764) R1225

čō’-ē ām ba šan, čō’-ē.

A well they came upon, **a well**.

An illustration of pre-posing a subject can be found in this sentence, where a clause begins with “as for us...” (lit.: 1PL) to foreground a topic [‘us’] that is different from the subject of unmarked syntax [our husband]:

(765) B124

mā wana šū mā af-ta rōr wā yē ā, yak-ē čō, šaš kas wā yē.

“**As for us**, if our husband has seven children, one leaves, he [still] has six.”

There are also instances of post-posed subjects. In the following case, post-posing the subject functions in participant reference in the text; the object of the previous sentence *rōk-ō* ‘the

boy' is becoming the subject of this sentence, so post-posing it draws attention to the fact that there is a different subject:

(766) B248

ṣayaḥa gid-iš y'=ā rōk-ō.

Shouted **this boy**.

An example of the function of word order variation in discourse grammar is the use of factive syntax to track participant reference by expressing the “coming into existence” of a character or key object in a text, when they are introduced for the first time in a scene. In factive syntax, the entity that ‘comes into existence’ is post-posed to clause-final position (see §4.3.2.3 on factive verb phrase syntax):

(767) A514

ka ām šēx-ō.

Immediately came **the sheikh**.

12.7 Semantic parallelism

Cohesion is discerned more generally in a text through semantic equivalence. Clive Holes (1995:67) notes that this subtle strategy is used in the Arabic spoken in Bahrain, where he describes “repetitive routines which involve larger chunks of language, and which serve higher-level cohesive and presentational discourse functions.”

Equivalence in the content of the discourse is similar to the parallelism of action distinguished by Kossmann in his study of Eastern Moroccan Berber fairy tales (2000:46,99). Whole sections may be previewed or reviewed, as in the Kumzari tale *Bāḡ al-Mowz*: the horse instructs the boy in minute detail what will happen with the sorcerer, and when it actually happens, the entire scene is recounted. In the same way, the sorcerer foretells what will happen when the women eat the magic pomegranate seeds, and the events are repeated when they actually occur in the story.

This kind of preview in Kui (Mon-Khmer) discourse is explained: “when the narrator aims to underline an event as crucial information, she may alert the listener by letting a participant talk about that event before it actually happens” (Burusphat 1993:156). Not only does this semantic repetition highlight certain key elements in the tale; it also perfects the intrinsic balance of expectation and fulfillment in the story.

In the tale *Pačaxčēō*, one character displays a juxtaposition of traits: rationality and rashness. The boy's divergent decisions in the story correspond with his contrasting movements away from home and back to it. He first makes a rational financial decision to go to Kuwait to work, then “drops money” at the souq to impulsively buy an expensive locked chest without knowing what was inside it. Later in the tale, the boy makes a rational financial decision to go on the *hijj* pilgrimage to fulfill his community obligations, then he “drops money” in Mecca for a costly voyage back home to appease his paranoia over a false rumour. His sensible decisions were made at home, in consultation with his family. His foolish expenditures were made in faraway lands, incited by his reckless mind. Such parallels as are seen in the boy's decisions and locations in this story have been termed ‘semantic rhyme’ (Blommaert 2006:17).

Semantic parallelism is observed too in thematic formulae in a text. As described in chapter 11, like narrative formulae these are repeated, but thematic formulae are specific to a text and its thematic content. They are “closely linked to the contents of the story, and may be an inomissible part of the story-line” (Kossmann 2000:75). The tale just discussed contains in its thematic formula a warning against foolish presumption: *bağa s’āl, jwāb* ‘Without a question, an answer’. These two lines are repeated throughout the text. When formulae encapsulate general themes, they resemble proverbs in that they “encourage the audience to reflect on their position in the real world, and to connect this to their reception of the story. In this way the storyteller links the narrative universe with the real one...” (Yamamoto 2010:256).

As a text progresses, semantic parallels facilitate the development of expectation structures on the part of listeners. They also lend coherence to the sequence of events, creating an intersection of “linguistic form, thematic development... and... architecture of the story” (Blommaert 2006:7).

12.8 Embedded poems

The linguistic forms already discussed for their poetic qualities come together in a certain pattern to build poems that are embedded into the Kumzari tales. Poetic language such as they exhibit has been defined simply as “a highly patterned and organised mode of verbal expression” (Stankiewicz 1960:70). However, since the tales themselves have been shown to be highly patterned, the embedded poems represent a structure within a structure: they have their own linguistic patterns within the discourse grammar of the tale.

Utas (2006:240) notes that in Persian folktales, dramatic language builds a sort of skeleton for the storyteller to structure the details of the story around, and these points function as traditional memorising notes. Embedded poems in Kumzari have their place within the context of the discourse as well; they usually occur in the accalmie of a tale, that is, in the backgrounded section just before the peak. Although the content of the poems is often intriguing or surprising in nature, it also tends to hold information that is crucial to the plot of the tale. Falling just before dramatic high points in the story-line, further action is contingent on what has taken place as expressed in the poems.

In the Kumzari story *Bāğ al-Mowz*, a sorcerer abducts a boy and takes him to his abode on a faraway mountaintop, where there are seven houses containing the makings of black magic. This poem is set at the point in the tale just before the boy discovers a talking horse in the seventh house, who helps him make his dramatic escape:

Table 61. Poem: The Seven Houses (B313 from the tale *Bāğ al-Mowz*)

Poetic Structure	Kumzari	Translation
this boy TOP go in this house TOP one house full of {sorcerer’s things} one house full of {sorcerer’s things} one house full of {sorcerer’s things} one house full of {sorcerer’s things} one house full of {sorcerer’s things} one house full of {sorcerer’s things} own things great things in NEG go in this house NEG	<i>mād yā rōk-ō ā,</i> <i>raf yā šiš-ta xānağ-an ā:</i> <i>tā xānağ palla xwā,</i> <i>tā xānağ palla gātaf,</i> <i>tā xānağ palla knux-an ādamī,</i> <i>tā xānağ palla ādam-an alaqa,</i> <i>tā xānağ palla šumr, ēmağ šumr</i> <i>tā xānağ palla qiz’an,</i> <i>ar tā-ē ya’nī ba kār-an xō.</i> <i>iš kār-an jwān inda yē na,</i> <i>ğēr yā xānağ-ō ar dgō ba yē</i>	He kept going, this boy, into these six houses, you know: One house full of salt, One house full of rope-wood, One house full of worn-out people, One house full of people hanged, One house full of samar, samar firewood, One house full of cauldrons, Each one of them, I mean, had its own things. There was nothing great inside them, except that house which

	<i>raf na inda yē na.</i>	he was forbidden to enter...
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The characteristic that most distinguishes embedded poems from their discourse context is the parallelism they exhibit. Jakobson calls parallelism “the fundamental problem of poetry” (1960:368), suggesting that likeness and difference be explored to determine equivalence on different linguistic levels.

The Kumzari poems’ structure is that of a FRAME and LIST, with both parts displaying parallelism at all linguistic levels. The first and last few lines of a poem constitute its FRAME, which encompasses the poem’s topic. The FRAME surrounds the sequence of parallel lines that comprises the list. The poem’s topic is brought into focus in the FRAME with a subordinator-topicaliser (*ā*) at the beginning and/or end, as well as demonstratives (*yā*) and stated subjects (rather than default pronoun-drop) in a highlighting function. Most frames exhibit grammatical symmetry between the opening and closing of the poem, giving the audience an “expectation of outcome” as described in Hymes’ ethno-poetics analyses (2003: 248). In the poem ‘The Seven Houses’ above, the repeated elements in the FRAME are the verb *raf* ‘go’, the demonstrative *yā*, and the topic *xānağ* ‘house’. The clause-final subordinator *ā* on the first two lines is paralleled by the clause-final negator *na* on the last two lines. In the last three lines of the poem, both the preposition *inda* ‘in’ and the noun *kār-an* ‘things’ are repeated.

Within the FRAME is a LIST of semantically similar items. The LIST is comprised of different types of one item, or related actions, or reiterations of a statement; however, the varying items in the LIST are connected grammatically by using the same verb, or the same heading, demonstrative or adverbial phrase. In “The Seven Houses” poem, the repeated part of the LIST is the anaphoric phrase *tā xānağ palla* ‘one house full of...’, while the variation is shown in the contents of each house, which are different kinds of things typically belonging to sorcerers (firewood, cauldrons, and salt for eating people).

In “The Clairvoyant Camel” poem below, the FRAME repeats the word ‘camel’ four times, and the LIST repeats the verb ‘knows’ four times. Of the four morphemes in each line of the LIST, epiphora of the same three morphemes *-an dān-a* illustrates phonetic parallelism. The other morpheme constituting the ‘slot’ in the LIST is filled with different things about thieves that the clairvoyant camel knows, each item taking the plural suffix.

Table 62. Poem: The Clairvoyant Camel (A397 from the tale *Ahmad Tka*)

Poetic Structure	Kumzari	Translation
now camel, camel, camel.	<i>sā šēx-ō... jāmal wā yē, jāmal-ē.</i> <i>jāmal-ē...</i>	Now, the sheikh... he had a camel, a camel. A camel...
he knows {about thieves},	<i>īn-an dān-a.</i>	He knows these.
he knows {about thieves},	<i>kār-an dān-a,</i>	He knows the happenings,
he knows {about thieves},	<i>zīn-an dān-a,</i>	He knows the thieves,
he knows {about thieves},	<i>šīgl-an dān-a. hē!</i>	He knows things. Yes!
now this camel,	<i>sā yā jāmal-ō ā,</i>	Now, this camel,
see future	<i>ka pīš xō ba yē wāk-iš.</i>	he could see before him what would happen.

Ferioli (2010) explains how this system of listing is useful in the oral composition of poetry, as it functions in the poetic eddas of Iceland. The lists “follow a very strict pattern with minimal variations, so that most of the times only the concept-word [...], filling a specific metrical slot, and few other elements change in the stanza.” Citing Acker (1998:64), Ferioli notes that the lists “build up a “slot-filler system” which can perfectly be filled *ad libitum* and

potentially *ad infinitum* by the poet. This provides him with a very useful tool to remember not only poetic synonyms (and kennings) for substantives, but also the verbs and phrases which are most likely to accompany them in a context of oral composition.” A poem with such a listing structure is “exactly the kind of poem which, although on the one hand featuring a very fixed structure, is on the other hand extremely flexible, in that it can be reduced or extended according to the needs of the poet, and its constituents can be substituted with anything the poet considers relevant” (Ferioli 2010). The paradox of patterned variation is evident in the lists of Kumzari embedded poems. In the poem below, the LIST is composed of the things the girl has taken: a camel and all of its owner’s belongings. Although each item in the LIST is different, all of them are subjects of the same prepositional phrase and are members of the same semantic domain: weapons and supplies. Epiphora is exhibited in the phrase ‘she has’ occurring eight times, and numerical and semantic parallelism in the general summary or ‘et cetera’ following each set of four times: *kār-an* ‘things’ or *kawada* ‘heaps’ or ‘all kinds’. The topic of the poem’s FRAME is the motion of the camel and a character’s movements with regard to the camel; synonymous parallelism is shown in the six different verbs used in the FRAME to describe their movements.

Table 63. Poem: Girl Takes off with the Camel and Weapons (P724 from the tale *Pačaxčēō*)

Poetic Structure	Kumzari	Translation
go {camel}	<i>bō pē yē wā=bāla nakt-ē</i>	“Go ahead, upward a little bit
go {camel} gallop {camel}	<i>wa čōt wa ka sō ba yē.</i>	and it will go and it will break into a gallop.”
speed {camel}	<i>tā bārē wa</i>	One for speed and
hurry {camel}	<i>tā māzad yē tk-a.</i>	One for hurrying it along.
she has {weapons and supplies}	<i>tāfaq wā yē wa</i>	She has a gun and
she has {weapons and supplies}	<i>tāha wā yē wa</i>	She has weapons and
she has {weapons and supplies}	<i>maḥzōm-ō wā yē wa</i>	She has the cartridge-belt and
she has {weapons and supplies}	<i>bīšt-ō wā yē wa</i>	She has the cloak and
things.	<i>kār-an,</i>	things,
she has {weapons and supplies}	<i>ammū wā yē,</i>	She has everything,
she has {weapons and supplies}	<i>šang-ē wā yē,</i>	She has a comb,
she has {weapons and supplies}	<i>mēčūrī wā yē,</i>	She has fish stew,
she has {weapons and supplies}	<i>ngāl wā yē,</i>	She has headrings, and
heaps!	<i>wa kawada!</i>	so many things!
run {camel}	<i>sā jāmal-ē tirwā ā,</i>	Now, when a camel runs [away],
run after {camel}	<i>tō tirwāi pištu yē!</i>	you, you run after it!
bring {camel}	<i>tār-ī yē pi gīya ā?</i>	Where are you bringing it from?
take {camel}	<i>wa gur yē!</i>	And take it!

Jakobson commented on the ‘same and different’ elements of poetry by explaining that “grammatical categories, whether reiterative or contrasting, [have] compositional function” (1980d:112). The following poem, about people giving charity grain, displays both repetition of the ‘grain’ topic in the FRAME and variation in the quantities of grain in the LIST. Three lines in the FRAME begin with the word *gēla* ‘grain’ and end with the third-person plural suffix *-in* on semantically-related verbs for harvesting grain. The semantic subject (different people) varies in the list, but the words referring to the people are in pairs with the subordinator-topicaliser: demonstrative *y’ā* in the first two lines and anaphoric pronoun *ān ā* in the second two lines. Also prominently repeated and creating assonance in the poem is the verb phrase *tāra ba šan* at the end of each LIST line. Jakobson recognised the interplay of rhyme and repeated grammatical elements as a general characteristic of poetry: “Rhymes may hinge on similar derivational and grammatical suffixes or may emphasise certain phonemic features at the expense of other, more marginal features” (Jakobson 1960:77).

Table 64. Poem: People Giving Charity Grain (G20 from the tale *Ġrābō*)

Poetic Structure	Kumzari	Translation
harvest grain gather grain, grain	<i>ġēla tkard-in,</i> <i>ġēla, ġēla dg-in.</i> <i>wa xuṣbā.</i>	Grain they were harvesting, Grain, grain they were gathering. [The land] was flourishing.
these brought to them {quantity} these brought to them {quantity} those brought to them {quantity} those brought to them {quantity}	<i>y'=ā xā... man-ē tāra ba šan,</i> <i>wa y'=ā nīmi tār-a ba šan,</i> <i>wa ān ā, rub'-ē tār-a ba šan,</i> <i>wa ān ā, nuṣnuṣif tār-a ba šan...</i>	These [people], of a house...brought them a measure, and these [people], brought them a half, and those [people], brought them a quarter, and those [people] brought them a small share...
{quantity}	<i>laba pañj mā,</i>	about five months' [worth],
{quantity}	<i>šaš mā,</i>	six months' [worth],
{quantity} get grain	<i>pañj mā ġēla ḥasala tk-in.</i>	five months' [worth] of grain they were getting.

Tannen (1989:51) explained that this type of repetition in a text, including both same elements and varying elements, “foregrounds and intensifies the part repeated, and also foregrounds and intensifies the part that is different.” The view that repetition lends to foregrounding makes clear that the significance of the list in the poem above is not specifically each quantity of grain and who brought it, but rather the fact that there were many people who brought it and that there were all kinds of grain. The storyteller could have just as properly inserted different quantities; in fact, in other poems, items in the list seem to be almost random, as long as they follow the pattern. Stankiewicz recognised that the inherent flexibility of poetic language, sometimes disparaged as “deviation”, is actually regularised, patterned, and systematic (1960:70).

Poetry draws on the grammar of a language to make metaphors. Jakobson called this the “poetic exploitation of morphological possibilities” (1987:127) and he explains, “By full exploitation of the resources of the linguistic system, the poet is able to arrange his themes or the formal elements, such as rhyme and syntactic parallelism, to coincide with phonemic or grammatical oppositions” (Jakobson 1960:77). Systematic use of linguistic potentials in the Kumzari embedded poems reveals parallelism at various levels of the grammar, often in combination. This poem in the tale *Kan'ēdō* makes use of the placeholder pronoun *īn-ē* to create chiasmus through syntactic variation, reversing the order of the prepositional phrase *wā yē* ‘he had’ and the subject noun *zōraq-ē* ‘a *zōraq* boat’:

(768) K32

īn-ē wā yē, zōraq-ē.

zōraq-ē wā yē ā...

He had a what's-it-called, a *zōraq* boat.

Having a *zōraq* boat...

The same poem uses the limits of the vocabulary to create lexical and semantic parallelism. The boy asks about his late father's livelihood, and most of the poem is the grandmother explaining what he did. At the beginning of the poem, she uses the words ‘boat’ and ‘go’, and the boy echoes these words at the end, thus completing the FRAME of the poem. Synonymous lexemes for ‘small fishing boat’ –*zōraq* and *māšuwē*— are repeated in the frame, both with the indefinite suffix. The same verb ‘go’ is in the third person at the beginning of the frame and takes the first-person suffix at the end of the frame:

(769) K35

zōraq-ē wā yē ā,

ču dirya.

[...]

sā ka māšuwē-ē xujmu k-um ba xō ā,
č-um.

Having a *zōraq* boat,
 He would go fishing at sea.

[...]

Now as soon as I build myself a *māšuwē* boat,
 I shall go.

As well as repetition pairs in the FRAME, numerical forms in listing parallelism are very clear in this poem, which contains four sets of three-item lists. Below is the entire poem, constructing an account of the boy's father's profession. There are sets of three fishing activities, kinds of fish, mentions of different people's houses, and types of small payments given to the fishers:

Table 65. Poem: Boy Asks about his Father's Livelihood (K32 from the tale *Kan'ēdō*)

Poetic Structure	Kumzari	Translation
3s said to 3s: have a boat have a boat: go {fishing activity} {fishing activity} {fishing activity} fish: {kind of fishes} {kind of fishes} {kind of fishes} to house carry to house sheikh to house people: some give to us {small payment} and some give to us {small payment} and some give to us {small payment} and our living from this work 3s said to 3s: make a boat go	<i>dgō ba yē kān awwal,</i> <i>īn-ē wā yē, zōraq-ē.</i> <i>zōraq-ē wā yē ā,</i> <i>ču dirya.</i> <i>li jēl tka.</i> <i>mī'ī sayya.</i> <i>kan'ēd-an wa</i> <i>mēy-an wa</i> <i>būt-an wa...</i> <i>tēbar-a ba xānağ-an,</i> <i>ba xā šēx-ō wa</i> <i>ba xānağ-an ādamī,</i> <i>qadar ya'nī nakt-ē arma dī-in ba mā</i> <i>wa qadar habbē brinz dī-in ba mā wa</i> <i>qadar-ē pē qrūnī dī-in ba mā wa</i> <i>tī'it mā pi yā kāra-ō, ya'nī.</i> <i>dgō ba yē bā yē na.</i> <i>sā ka māšuwē-ē xujmu k-um ba xō ā,</i> <i>č-um.</i>	She said to him, "Before, he had a what's-it-called, a <i>zōraq</i> boat. Having a <i>zōraq</i> boat, He would go fishing at sea. He would lay out fishing nets. He would catch fish: <i>kan'ad</i> fishes and fishes and <i>būt</i> fishes and... He would take them to the houses, to the sheikh's house and to people's houses. Some, well, would give us a few dates, and Some would give us a bit of rice, and Some would even give us a <i>qrūnī</i> coin, and Our living was from this work, I mean." He said to her, "All right, then. Now as soon as I build myself a <i>māšuwē</i> boat, I shall go."

Covering background information of the discourse, the poem is artfully placed at a point within the tale where it signals an imminent dramatic turn in the protagonist's fate. The grandmother's description of his family's profession is the impetus for the boy to take up fishing. The poem thus launches the boy into adventure. Soon afterward he repeats his father's actions from the poem: he has a boat, he catches a *kan'ad* fish, he takes it to the sheikh's house. But the boy finds a huge pearl in its stomach, and throughout the story endeavors to keep his fortune. The conclusion of the tale reflects the outcome of the boy's livelihood discovered in the poem: he regains his pearl that he had earned by making a boat, catching a *kan'ad* fish, and taking it to the sheikh's house.

The embedded poems are an encapsulation of patterning grammatical potentials to highlight semantic symmetry. Holes' assessment of the 'iconic meaning' of the act of repetition (1995:78) has particular relevance to the embedded poems. It does not matter what exactly the LIST of things literally entails, rather that there is much of it: much work to do, many kinds of fish, many houses to sell to, and much payment to earn, and the LIST section in the *Kan'ēdō* poem is summarised by the statement *tī'it mā pi yā kāra-ō* 'our living was from this work'. By elaborating using synonyms and types of the same, the storyteller is giving

evidence for the truth of what he is saying. Johnstone, also citing Arabic, explains how this has representative impact: “restating until the reader’s only defense is to concede the importance of the problem” (1991:93). Looking only for literal explanations of what are actually higher-level grammatical functions can lead to dismissal of their importance in the logical progression of the tale. As Jakobson said, “poeticalness is not a supplementation of discourse with rhetorical adornment but a total re-evaluation of the discourse and all of its components whatsoever” (1960: 377).