

Resistance Against Colonialism in Abdul Hamid al-Farahi's Poetry During the Fall of the Ottoman Empire

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Abstract

The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century shook the Islamic world, worsened by Italy's Colonial Conquests of Tripoli (1911–1912). This study examines the representation of history in an Arabic poem by the Indian poet Abdul Hamid al-Farahi, titled *Fī Taṭāwul al-Ṭalyān 'alā Ṭarābulus*, using Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism. The research uncovers how al-Farahi's poem serves as a literary response to the fall of the Ottoman Empire during Italian colonial aggression. The historical context is analyzed in parallel with poetic expression within the New Historicism framework. The method used is descriptive-qualitative with the following stages: (1) repeated close reading, (2) translation of verses, (3) identification of historical symbols, and (4) thematic classification. Data analysis involves (1) parallel reading between the poem and historical texts and (2) interpretation based on subthemes. The results show that the poem reflects themes of colonization, the suffering of the Muslim community, the trauma of invasion, and a call to defend religious and national dignity. Through New Historicism, the study demonstrates that literature and historical narratives are interconnected, and that al-Farahi's poem can be read as a historical form of resistance against colonial oppression.

Keywords: New Historicism, Poetry, Abdul Hamid al-Farahi, Ottoman Empire, Italian Aggression

Abstrak

Keruntuhan Kesultanan Turki Utsmani pada awal abad ke-20 mengguncang luas dunia Islam diperparah oleh agresi militer Italia terhadap Tripoli (1911–1912). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji representasi sejarah dalam puisi Arab karya penyair India, Abdul Hamid al-Farahi, berjudul *Fī Taṭāwul al-Ṭalyān 'alā Ṭarābulus* dengan menggunakan teori New Historicism dari Stephen Greenblatt. Penelitian ini berupaya mengungkap bagaimana syair al-Farahi menjadi respon sastra terhadap keruntuhan Daulah Utsmaniyah era agresi kolonial Italia terhadap Tripoli. Secara formal, konteks sejarah dianalisis secara paralel dengan ekspresi puitik berdasarkan kerangka New Historicism. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif-kualitatif dengan tahapan: 1) pembacaan mendalam secara berulang, 2) penerjemahan bait-bait syair, 3) identifikasi simbol sejarah pada bait-bait, dan 4) klasifikasi berdasarkan tema. Analisis data

dilakukan melalui: 1) pembacaan paralel antara syair dan teks sejarah, dan 2) interpretasi berdasarkan subtema. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa puisi ini merefleksikan peristiwa penjajahan, penderitaan umat Islam, trauma invasi kolonial, serta ajakan untuk membela kehormatan agama dan tanah air. Selain itu, melalui *New Historicism*, penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa sastra dan narasi sejarah saling terkait dan bahwa puisi al-Farahi dapat dibaca sebagai bentuk historis perlawanan terhadap penindasan kolonial.

Kata Kunci: *New Historicism*; Syair; Abdul Hamid al-Farahi; Kesultanan Turki Utsmani; Agresi Italia

INTRODUCTION

The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century profoundly shook the Islamic world¹. The caliphate, which for centuries had been a symbol of unity and strength for Muslims, suddenly disappeared. This historic event was exacerbated by the Italian conquest of Tripoli (1911–1912), which marked the weakening of Ottoman power in North Africa². The Italian conquest underscored the critical situation for many Muslims. The fall of Tripoli not only signified the loss of Ottoman territory but also represented a humanitarian tragedy, in which Muslims were attacked by foreign forces. One representation of this tragedy is found in the *Diwan* of Abdul Hamid al-Farahi, an Indian poet, in his poem entitled *Fi Taṭāwul al-Ṭalyān ‘alā Ṭarābulus*. In his verses, al-Farahi depicts destruction, the humiliation of the Muslim community, and a call for jihad with a tone of bitterness and anger. This historical tragedy, captured in al-Farahi’s poetic language, serves as a profound reflection on the fate of the Muslim *ummah*, which was fragmented and weakened by colonialism. This reality not only reflects a historical wound but also awakens an awareness of the importance of unity and struggle amidst global challenges.

The selection of the poem *Fi Taṭāwul al-Ṭalyān ‘alā Ṭarābulus* by Abdul Hamid al-Farahi as the object of study is based on its strong historical value and its role as a literary document that records the socio-political collapse of the Muslim community while simultaneously shaping the discourse of resistance against colonialism. This research employs the theory of New Historicism pioneered by Stephen Greenblatt, which holds that literary texts cannot be separated from the social, political, and cultural contexts in which they were produced. The New

¹ Christoph Herzog and Raoul Motika, “Orientalism ‘Alla Turca’: Late 19th / Early 20th Century Ottoman Voyages into the Muslim ‘Outback,’” *Die Welt Des Islams* 40, no. 2 (2000): 139–95, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1570642>.

² Jonathan Claymore McCollum, “The Anti-Colonial Empire: Ottoman Mobilization and Resistance in the Italo-Turkish War, 1911-1922” (University of California, 2018).

Historicism approach offers a renewal in viewing the relationship between literature and history³. This theory enables researchers to read literary works not merely as personal expressions of the poet but also as historical realities.

Various previous studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between literary texts and their historical contexts using the New Historicism approach. Some of these studies have used poems as their objects of analysis, such as analyses of Arabic poems with themes of struggle and resistance⁴, Arabic poems with themes of independence⁵, poems set in royal courts⁶, poems containing socio-political criticism⁷, poems by Ada Aharoni⁸, and Iraqi poems from the World War II era⁹. In addition to poetry, there have also been New Historicism studies on novels¹⁰. There are also analyses of local literary works, both in the form of poetry¹¹ and novels¹², using a similar approach. The history of Libya, particularly during the era of Muammar al-Gaddafi, has been explored using the New Historicism approach by El-Sseid et

³ Jan R. Veenstra, "The New Historicism of Stephen Greenblatt: On Poetics of Culture and the Interpretation of Shakespeare," *History and Theory* 34, no. 3 (1995): 174–98, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.2307/2505620>.

⁴ Qonita Qorrie, Aini Qowlits, and Arief Rahman Hakim, "A Portrait of Palestinians in Mahmoud Darwish's Poem 'Qasidatu Al - Ardi': New Historicism Analysis," *Tsaqofiya : Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Arab* 7, no. 1 (2025): 103–19, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.21154/kbvqm579>; Husain Miftahul Rizqi, "Potret Peristiwa Yaum Al-Ard Di Palestina Dalam Puisi-Puisi Palestina: Tinjauan New Historicism" (Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2024).

⁵ Ariyanti Rifa Nurhasanah, Yoyo Yoyo, and Norfaezah Mohd Hamidin, "Kemerdekaan Dalam Puisi Ahmad Syauqi 'Yā Ayyuhā Al-Sāil Mā Al-Ḥurriyyah' (Analisis New Historisisme) / Independence in Ahmad Syauqi's Poetry 'Yā Ayyuhā As-Sāil Mā Al-Ḥurriyyah' (New Historism Analysis)," *Diwan : Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra Arab* 7, no. 2 (2021): 226, <https://doi.org/10.24252/diwan.v7i2.21479>.

⁶ Umar, Mardan, and Aksa, "Poetry of the Bima Kingdom as a Counter-Narrative to Colonialism, Scientism, Anthropocentrism and Radicalism," *Yupa: Historical Studies Journal* 8, no. 4 (2024): 523–42, jurnal.fkip.unmul.ac.id/index.php/yupa%0APoetry.

⁷ Mary Francis Edmer P. Saycon, "Baisanon Poetry: A New Historicist Criticism," *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 16, no. 1 (2023): 69–90, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10441560>.

⁸ Mohammed Saleh Abdullah Hammad, "The Mythology of Defeat: The Yom Kippur War of October (1973) in Ada Aharoni's Toward a Horizon of Peace, New Historicist Reading," *International Journal of Literature Studies* 1, no. 1 (2021): 51–61, <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijts.2021.1.1.7>.

⁹ أحمد فيصل خليل, "الحرب العالمية الثانية في شعر محمد مهدي الجواهري," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 41 (2021): 129–36, www.jstor.org/stable/27002768.

¹⁰ Indra Nurcahyadi et al., "The Reflection of Humanity in Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird: From the Perspective of New Historicism," *Theory & Practice in Language Studies (TPLS)* 15, no. 6 (2025): 1766, <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1506.05>.

¹¹ Ibnu Sina Palogai, Inriati Lewa, and Gusnawaty Gusnawaty, "Kajian New Historicism Terhadap Kumpulan Puisi Museum Penghancur Dokumen Karya Afrizal Malna," *Jurnal Ilmu Budaya Universitas Hassanudin* 10, no. 1 (2022): 163–74.

¹² Mita Saputri, Nurhadi, and Deitha Nafalitha, "The Portrayal of the Student Movement's History in the Novel Laut Bercerita by Leila S. Chudori: A New Historicism Study," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Analysis* 06, no. 01 (2023): 394–400, <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijmra/v6-i1-45>.

al¹³. Meanwhile, a study specifically discussing the poems of Abdul Hamid al-Farahi was conducted by Islam¹⁴, which focused on the stylistic aspects of his poetry.

This research shares similarities with previous studies, particularly in its use of the New Historicism approach. However, the differences lie in the object of study and the direction of the reading. This research selects Arabic poem by Abdul Hamid al-Farahi, written during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, specifically during the Italian colonial period, which has not been addressed in previous studies. Although there is a study that discusses Arabic poems by al-Farahi, it is limited to the analysis of stylistic aspects alone. This research does not merely discuss the aesthetic aspects of the poems but directly explores their connection with historical facts, whether in the form of military events, the suffering of the people, or symbolic resistance. Thus, this study positions itself as a complement to previous studies in terms of its object of analysis while expanding the perspective of analyzing Arabic poetry by a non-Arab poet within the framework of New Historicism.

The objective of this research is to analyze the relationship between the poem *Fī Taṭāwul al-Ṭalyān ‘alā Ṭarābulus* and the historical context of Italian colonialism in Tripoli using the New Historicism approach. This objective is intended as an effort to fill the gap in studies on Arabic poetry that address the theme of colonialism. This research is based on the argument that literary works are not merely reflections of culture but also serve as tools to reveal history. In al-Farahi's poem, poetry does not merely express rejection of colonialism but also becomes a symbol of the spirit of the Muslim community's struggle. Therefore, this poem needs to be read not only as a literary work containing aesthetic values but also as a historical record that contributes to shaping the narrative of the Muslim community's resistance against colonialism.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative study that relies on two main approaches: library research and bibliography research. Library research is used to obtain data directly from literary and historical texts through the available library materials, while bibliography research is employed to trace the social, political, and historical contexts that underlie the emergence of the literary

¹³ Hadel El-sseid, Omar Faraj Ben Dalla, and Mohammad Ali Mohammad El-sseid, *The Political State of Libya Based on Pre and Post-Muammar Al Gaddafi Era and New Historicism Literature Review (LR)*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.23507.09767>.

¹⁴ Shafiqul Islam, "Abdul Hamid Al-Farahi's Arabic Poetry and Its Style," *Arabic Journal for Translation Studies* 3, no. 9 (2024): 59–71, <https://doi.org/10.63939/AJTS.49f5tc47>.

text being analyzed¹⁵. Using this approach, the research is conducted descriptively to compare literary texts and historical texts that are interconnected within the context of Italian colonialism in Tripoli.

The primary data in this research consist of the verses of the poem *Fī Taṭāwul al-Ṭalyān ‘alā Ṭarābulus* by Abdul Hamid al-Farahi, written in the early 20th century when the Ottoman Empire was in decline and at the beginning of the Italian occupation of Tripoli. The analysis is conducted within the theoretical framework of New Historicism, with the working steps beginning with intensive and repeated readings of the poem, followed by translation and analysis of its meanings. Subsequently, the verses are compared in parallel with non-literary historical sources to examine how this literary text captures the historical realities of its time. This parallel reading process aims to reveal the deeper meanings and historical representations contained within the poem.

The data sources in this research are divided into two categories: primary sources and secondary sources. The primary source consists of the text of the poem *Fī Taṭāwul al-Ṭalyān ‘alā Ṭarābulus* by Abdul Hamid al-Farahi, which is included in *Dīwān al-Mu’allim Abdul Hamid al-Farahi*, while the historical texts are taken from various literatures such as *A History of Modern Libya*, *The History of the Italian-Turkish War, September 29, 1911, to October 18, 1912*, *Libya: A Modern History*, *With the Italians in Tripoli*, *Libya: From Colony to Revolution*, and *Italy in North Africa: An Account of the Tripoli Enterprise*. The secondary sources include books such as *The Ottoman Empire*, *The Black Man’s Burden*, and several related articles, books, and scholarly writings.

Technically, the analysis of each part of the poem will trace its connection to historical facts sourced from relevant historical reference books. More specifically, after interpreting the analyzed verses, the discussion will be enriched with direct quotations from the non-literary sources mentioned previously. Data validation techniques are carried out by means of repeated readings, discussions with peers and academic supervisors, as well as triangulation of theories and sources to ensure the accuracy of interpretation.

¹⁵ Barbara M Wildemuth, *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science* (Britania Raya: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 165.

DISCUSSION

Abdul Hamid bin Abdul Karim al-Farahi, later more widely known as Hamiduddin al-Farahi, was one of the prominent poets and leading Islamic scholars from India. He left behind many valuable works in the field of Islamic studies and Arabic studies, particularly in the field of Qur'anic exegesis. His exegesis entitled *Nizām al-Qur'ān* received appreciation from the renowned Egyptian exegete Muhammad Rashid Rida¹⁶. Among his works in Arabic are *Mufradat al-Qur'an*, *al-Im'an fi Aqşam al-Qur'an*, *Hujaj al-Qur'an*, *Diwan Hamid*, and others. In addition, al-Farahi was also blessed with a strong poetic talent, stemming from his love for the Arabic language since his youth. His eloquence was recognized by both Arabs and non-Arabs¹⁷.

The corpus of Arabic poetry composed by Abdul Hamid al-Farahi is contained in a *dīwān* entitled *Dīwān al-Mu'allim Abdul Hamid al-Farahi*, which was compiled by Badruddin al-Ishlahi. This *dīwān* contains fifteen poems, one of which is entitled *Fī Taṭāwul al-Ṭalyān 'alā Ṭarābulus*, consisting of 33 verses¹⁸. This poem expresses the sadness and concerns of the poet, al-Farahi, regarding the fate of the Muslim community during the final days of the Ottoman Caliphate, particularly when Tripoli (Libya) was under Italian attack and the world stood on the brink of war.

Sub-Themes of the Poem Fī Taṭāwul al-Ṭalyān 'alā Ṭarābulus

The analysis of the poem *Fī Taṭāwul al-Ṭalyān 'alā Ṭarābulus* is conducted using symbolic and historical approaches, strengthened within the framework of New Historicism. The text reading process is directed toward understanding the relationship between the verses of the poem and the historical context of the Italian colonization of Tripoli in the early 20th century. To facilitate an in-depth examination of the poem's content, each part of the text is divided into several sub-themes based on the structure of the verses and the continuity of their meanings.

This division of sub-themes aims to assist the researcher in tracing and categorizing historical events reflected in the al-Farahi's poetic expressions. Each group of verses is analyzed by observing the relationship between symbols, stylistic elements, and the historical facts

¹⁶ Islam, "Abdul Hamid Al-Farahi's Arabic Poetry and Its Style."

¹⁷ محمد تنوير, "الشعر العربي في شبه القارة الهندية: النشأة والتطور," الفيل, 2018, <https://www.alfaisalmag.com/?p=12379>.

¹⁸ عبد الحميد الفراهي, ديوان المعلم عبد الحميد الفراهي (١٢٨٠ هـ - ١٣٤٩ هـ) جمعه بدر الدين الإصلاحي (عجمان: الدائرة الحميدية على نفقتها, 1967).

underlying them. Through this method, the study examines how Abdul Hamid al-Farahi depicts the suffering of the *ummah*, colonial expansion, and resistance against colonization through the literary language devices he employs. Overall, this reading structure will present a comprehensive depiction of Islamic and independence consciousness according to the poet's perspective within the context of Italian colonialism in Tripoli.

Sub-Theme 1: Italian Aggression and the Humiliation of Islam in Tripoli

كيف القرار وقد نكس
اعلامنا بطرابلس

"How can we remain calm while our banners have been lowered in Tripoli?"

This verse opens the poem with a bitter outcry over the fall of Tripoli into Italian hands. The poet expresses sadness and anger over the defeat experienced by the Muslims in Tripoli. The word نُكِّس (have been lowered) refers to the fall of the symbols of power and honor, namely the Islamic banners that had long flown under the protection of the Ottoman Empire. The poet questions how the *ummah* can remain calm while its honor is being trampled in Tripoli. This rhetorical question reveals the poet's inner turmoil while simultaneously criticizing the slow response of the Islamic world to the Italian invasion.

Italy seized upon alleged Ottoman hostility to its economic activities in Libya as a casus belli, sending an ultimatum to the sultan on 26 September 1911 that included its intention to occupy Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. A seaborne invasion the following month allowed Italy to occupy the major coastal cities — Tripoli, Benghazi, Darna, Homs, and Tubruq — where they were met by a number of small but determined Ottoman garrisons. These had been augmented by the local population who, while not favorable to the sultan, still considered him as their "commander of the faithful." The Italian government announced the annexation of the two provinces on 5 November 1911 and formally annexed them on 25 February 1912, but these were largely empty gestures.¹⁹

As stated in *A History of Modern Libya*, the Italian invasion of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica was driven by Italy's exploitation of the purported economic hostility of the Ottoman Empire towards Libya, serving as a casus belli for the aggression. An ultimatum was sent on 26 September 1911, and a naval invasion was launched shortly thereafter, resulting in the occupation of key coastal cities such as Tripoli, Benghazi, Derna, Homs, and Tobruk. On 5

¹⁹ Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 24–25.

November 1911, Italy officially declared that Tripolitania and Cyrenaica had become part of its territory.

The lowering of the banners in Tripoli in the verse of the poem refers to the fact that Italy had succeeded in capturing Tripoli, even though it had not yet fully secured military control over it. This reflects the humiliation of the Muslim community in losing an important city to a foreign power that invaded with colonial ambitions. The poet portrays this event not merely as a military matter but also as a symbolic tragedy for the Islamic world, signifying the fragility of Ottoman power.

...the 8th Company of the 84th Infantry, in a furious bayonet encounter, succeeded in wrenching from the enemy the green banner of the Prophet, that sacred symbol of his faith and incentive to his valour.²⁰

A historical quotation in the book *With the Italians in Tripoli* contains a narrative about the forcible seizure of the green banner of the Prophet Muhammad by Italian forces, specifically by the 8th Company of the 84th Infantry during intense combat. This banner was not merely a piece of cloth but a religious symbol within the military and spiritual context of the Muslim community at that time. Its seizure by the colonizers represented a grave insult to the religion, faith, and honor of the Muslims.

The phrase “وقد نُكِّسَ أعلامنا” emphasizes that what occurred was not merely a military defeat but a symbolic humiliation of Islam. The lowering of the sacred banner on the battlefield by foreign soldiers signified the loss of honor, not merely the loss of territorial power. This aligns with the spirit of al-Farahi’s poem, which rejects calmness or silence in the face of such humiliation.

كيف القرار وحولنا الاعداء ترتقب الخلس

“How can we remain at peace while the enemy is secretly lurking around us?”

In this verse, the poet uses the word الخلس, which means secretly or stealthily, indicating that the enemy does not only launch open attacks but also strategically lurks and plans assaults in a hidden manner. This expression implies that although the situation may appear calm, threats are surrounding the Muslim territories, particularly Tripoli. The poet highlights the passive attitude

²⁰ Chevalier Tullio Irace, *With the Italians in Tripoli* (London: John Murray, 1912), 152–53.

and false sense of security amidst a situation that should make the ummah remain vigilant, as the enemy could strike at any moment.

Thus on January 9 four columns carried out a reconnaissance from Ain Zara towards the four positions Bir El Turki, Bir Tobras, Fonduk Ben Gashir and Bu Selim. The two central columns sighted considerable bodies of the enemy, but no attempt was made to engage. Other reconnaissances placed the enemy along the line that runs from Bir Tobras to Suani Beni Adem, and it was reported that a strong Turkish contingent had moved forward from Azizia to this latter oasis—the Garden of the Sons of Adam.²¹

The historical statement quoted above from the book *Italy in North Africa: An Account of the Tripoli Enterprise* describes the military conditions in early January 1912, when Italian forces sent four large groups to conduct reconnaissance to the south of Tripoli, specifically in the areas of Ain Zara, Bir el-Turki, and the surrounding regions. They found that Ottoman forces and local Arab troops had already positioned their forces significantly at strategic points. However, the Italians did not launch an immediate attack; instead, they continued to observe carefully from various directions. This situation illustrates a form of gradual and covert encirclement.

At that time, it was not a situation of peace but rather a tension hidden behind the silence of weapons. The enemy forces had not disappeared; they were present around the area, waiting for an opportunity to strike. Al-Farahi's poem captures this situation precisely, showing that the Muslim community was in a vulnerable position yet had not realized it. This serves as a critique of complacency while simultaneously calling the ummah to be aware of their position of being surrounded by the enemy.

من كل ذئب ان رأى
من عزة فينا اختلس
او افعوان مطرق
ان لم نبادره نهس

*“Every wolf that sees remnants of honor in us immediately steals it.
Or like a male serpent that slips in stealthily; if we do not strike first, it will bite.”*

In these two verses, the poet depicts the enemy using two sharp and fearsome metaphors: “ذئب” (wolf) and “افعوان” (male serpent). Both symbolize the cunning and dangerous forces of colonial power. The “ذئب” (wolf) here represents the colonizing nations that will seize the honor of the

²¹ W. K. McClure, *Italy in North Africa: An Account of the Tripoli Enterprise* (London: Constable and Company LTD, 1913), 121–22.

Muslim community the moment they find a weakness. The “افعوان” (male serpent) symbolizes an intruder that will suddenly strike, indicating that danger often comes unexpectedly, and if left unchecked, will attack first and inflict deep wounds. The poet seeks to emphasize that the only way to survive is to strike first and remain vigilant.

*The battleship Emanuele Filiberto arrived at 5 a. m. with the torpedo-boat Ostro, off Bathi, the chief port of the island of Samos which has 10,000 inhabitants, and without any notice immediately opened fire on the infantry barracks for 1200 men, and completely destroyed them.*²²

The historical event described above, recorded in the book *The History of the Italian-Turkish War, September 29, 1911, to October 18, 1912*, shows how Italy launched a sudden and unannounced attack. The Italian warship *Emanuele Filiberto*, along with the torpedo boat *Ostro*, arrived at the main port of the island of Samos at dawn and immediately opened fire on the military barracks without negotiation or prior notice. The barracks were completely destroyed. This incident precisely reflects the image of “a serpent that bites stealthily” and “a wolf that steals” in al-Farahi’s poem. The colonial enemy came suddenly, gave no room for resistance, and struck directly at a weak target. Al-Farahi captured the nature of the colonizers with powerful metaphors: dangerous, cunning, and ruthless.

Sub-Theme 2: The Cruelty and Massacre Committed by Italy Against Muslims

نبكي على اخواننا	بين القتل ومن حُبس
كم من تقى طاهر	فهم ونحرير ندس
نبكى لربات الخدو.	ر شرقت بالماء السلس
جرت الحتوف على الالو.	ف من الزحوف ومن جلس
هم اهلنا وعشيرنا	افياُمون ولا نُحس

“We weep for our brothers, among those killed and those taken captive.

How many among them were devout and pure, and scholars who were oppressed and humiliated.

²² William Henry Beehler, *The History of The Italian-Turkish War, September 29, 1911, to October 18, 1912* (Annapolis: the Advertiser-Republican, 1913), 68.

We also weep for the veiled women who were forced to drink water from the hands of vile enemies.

Death befell thousands of souls, both from the battlefield and from those who were merely sitting quietly.

They are our families, our relatives—do we not feel pain and sorrow?”

In these verses, the poet reveals a profound sense of humanity. He depicts the condition of the oppressed Muslim community, where fellow believers are killed, imprisoned, and stripped of their honor. The word إخواننا (our brothers) indicates that the victims are not strangers but are part of the Muslim community itself. Al-Farahi mentions the presence of تقي طاهر (the devout and pure) as well as نحري (scholars) who are humiliated and oppressed. Even women, known for their honor and purity (ربات الخدور), are forced to drink from the hands of the colonizers, a symbol of humiliation and the violation of their dignity. Al-Farahi emphasizes that those who are killed are not only the fighters on the battlefield but also the unarmed, such as the elderly, women, children, and even those who are merely sitting quietly. The poet closes this verse with a sharp question: do we not feel any pain when our brothers experience all of this?

For three days the oasis was given over to massacre in wholesale and detail. Some 4,000 men, women and children perished in the course of it – the vast bulk of whom were certainly innocent of any participation whatever in the Italian defeat. They were murdered in the streets, in their houses, farms, gardens, and according to a peculiarly horrible narrative by a British officer serving with the Turkish forces, in a mosque, where several hundred women and children had taken refuge. ... All the newspaper correspondents were in agreement as to the main facts.²³

This quotation reveals the cruelty of Italy in its mass massacre at a Libyan oasis. For three full days, around 4,000 people were brutally killed. The victims included men, women, and children, including those who had no involvement whatsoever in the armed conflict. There was even a report from a British officer stating that hundreds of women and children were killed inside a mosque where they had sought refuge.

This tragic historical event becomes a tangible representation of what al-Farahi expresses in the verses of his poem. The weeping over those who were killed and imprisoned is not merely a metaphor but a reaction to the brutal reality experienced by Muslims in Libya. Al-Farahi

²³ Edmund Dene Morel, *The Black Man's Burden* (Manchester: National Labour Press, 1920), 99.

highlights that the victims were not only armed fighters but also scholars and innocent women. The story of the massacre in the mosque, where hundreds of women and children sought shelter, is a painful depiction of a community stripped of its honor and safety. Al-Farahi portrays the profound sorrow felt by Muslims toward this tragedy.

By describing them as أهلنا وعشيرنا (our families and our relatives), al-Farahi emphasizes that this suffering is not merely a distant event in a foreign land but a wound that should be felt by the entire Muslim community. Through the structure of his verses and his powerful choice of diction, he calls upon the ummah to feel, not merely to witness.

Sub-Theme 3: A Warning Against the Threat of Expansion and Christianization by the Colonial Powers

يا امة الاسلام يا	ابناء آباء شُمس
هل تنعسون وخصمكم	عن كيده ما ان نعس
الا تهبوا اليوم فا.	لاسلام تيعس بل تعس
قد زلزلت اركانه	حتى تقعقت الأسس
فالخصم يجهد ان يرى	الاسلام في بؤس بؤس

*“O Muslims, O children of noble and honorable ancestors!
Are you asleep while the enemy never grows tired of devising schemes?
Will you not rise today? Islam is being humiliated, even trampled underfoot.
Its foundations have been shaken, until even its base has begun to crack and tremble.
The enemy is determined to see Islam in humiliation and ruin—how vile that ambition is!”*

This verse is a cry filled with anger and sorrow from the poet toward the Muslim community, which has become lulled into heedlessness. He calls them with the honorable title “أبناء آباء شُمس”, the descendants of the great figures who once prevailed but who now sleep while the enemy remains vigilant. The words “هل تنعسون وخصمكم عن كيده ما أن نعس؟” serve as a rebuke against the contrasting attitude of a community that slumbers while the enemy actively plots their destruction. Furthermore, the poet emphasizes that Islam has reached a critical point where its very foundations are being shaken, and the colonial powers seek to bring it down to its worst state. The call “ألا تهبوا؟” is an appeal to rise immediately, for remaining silent is a form of betrayal against a religion that is being wounded.

As Italian interest in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania — and to a much lesser extent Fazzan — had become palpable, local citizens were not oblivious to what the Italian pressures would likely mean for the independence of the provinces. Although religion remained a strong bond between them and the Sublime Porte, and although there was little evidence of separatist sentiment throughout the three territories, many were critical of the actions of the Ottomans vis-a-vis Italy and the European powers. This was in part because they considered that the Porte's often reactive, rather than pro-active, policies made the loss of their independence at the hands of the Italians more likely. The reformist Young Turk movement in Istanbul in the first decade of the century therefore was watched with some weariness. There was little open affection for the Turks in light of their administration of the territories since 1835 — but a reformed leadership in Istanbul, local people hoped, would perhaps keep a check on Italy. Representatives from Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and Fazzan participated in the Young Turk Parliament in Istanbul in 1908, but they returned home disappointed. Italian occupation now seemed all but inevitable.²⁴

This historical quotation describes the political and social tensions leading up to Italy's occupation of the Libyan territories (Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fezzan). Although there was a strong religious bond between the Arab communities in Libya and the Ottoman Caliphate, their dissatisfaction with the central government remained significant. This criticism arose because they perceived the Ottomans as too slow and unresponsive to the real threat posed by Italy, which at that time was aggressively pursuing its ambitions to control North Africa. The Young Turk movement, which was expected to bring change, was instead met with skepticism, as the previous Ottoman administration was seen as having failed to manage the region justly.

Against this backdrop, the involvement of local representatives in the Young Turk parliament in 1908 appeared to yield no promising results. Disappointment with Istanbul further reinforced the conclusion that the Italian occupation was only a matter of time. This paragraph underscores that the rift between the center (Istanbul) and the provinces (Libya) was not a matter of separatist ideology but of dissatisfaction with leadership and the inability to defend the territory against European colonialism.

This is the situation depicted by al-Farahi in his verses: a community that is asleep in the heedlessness of history while the enemy never sleeps. He criticizes the slow response, the emotional detachment from the threatening reality, and the delay in taking a stance. The poet recognizes that Islam is caught in the vortex of a great threat, and if the community does not

²⁴ Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, 22.

rise immediately, Islam will be swept away and crushed by the ambitions of those who wish to see it destroyed gradually.

هل لا ذكرتم ما اصاب
بالمسلمين باندلس

سلبوكم شطر البلاء
دوما لها من ملتمس

*“Do you not remember what befell the Muslims in Andalusia?
They seized part of your land, and there is no way to reclaim it.”*

In this verse, the poet emphasizes that what is happening in Tripoli is not something new in the history of the Muslim community. He calls upon the readers to remember the tragedy of the fall of Andalusia, the symbol of Islamic glory in Western Europe, which eventually turned into a bitter story of expulsion and destruction. The phrase “هل لا ذكرتم” (“Do you not remember?”) serves as a moral rebuke to a community that is negligent in reading its own history. The poet seeks to show that the loss of a part of the Muslim lands could very well be the beginning of losing all of them. When he says “وما لها من ملتمس” (“and there is no way to reclaim it”), it means that once a land has been seized, there is no path to take it back. This is a warning that time and opportunity can run out if the community remains silent.

In 1556, King Philip II of Spain (reigned 1556–1598) established a policy requiring the Muslims who remained in Andalusia to abandon and renounce their religion, as well as to give up their language, traditions, and way of life. Later, in 1609, his successor, King Philip III (1598–1621), forcibly expelled the entire Muslim community from Andalusia. They were faced with two harsh choices: to convert to Christianity or to leave their homeland. This event marked the end of Islamic rule throughout the Iberian Peninsula²⁵.

The above history shows that the loss of Andalusia from Muslim hands did not occur solely due to war but was also the result of the community’s negligence in preserving their religious, cultural, and political existence. The oppression of Muslim identity in Spain began gradually, eventually culminating in the complete expulsion of the Muslim community. In this verse, al-Farahi highlights that the destruction of Islam in Andalusia is a concrete example of the

²⁵ Muh. Dahlan Thalib, “Kemunduran Dan Hapusnya Islam Di Andalusia Spanyol,” *Jurnal Al-Ibrah* 7, no. 2 (2018): 155–59.

consequences of the collective negligence of the ummah, and a similar situation is now looming over Tripoli and other Islamic territories.

افكل يوم ينكص	الاسلام حتى يندرس
هل يذهب الحق النقي	ي ويغلب الكذب الرجس
هل ترتضون بذل دين	كم وليس بملتبس
والله لا نرضى به	ما دام فينا من نفس
فاليوم ان لم تدفعوا	فليا تين يوم نحس

“Will Islam continue to retreat day by day until it finally disappears completely?

Will the pure truth vanish, and will falsehood and filth prevail?

Are you willing to see your religion humiliated when it contains not the slightest doubt?

By Allah, we will never accept it! As long as there is a single breath within us!

If you do not act today, then await the coming of a dreadful day of destruction.”

This verse expresses deep concern for the fate of the Muslim community. The poet pours out his anxiety with a series of sharp questions directed at the Muslims: will they continue to allow Islam to decline until it truly disappears? The truth, described as النقي (pure), does not deserve to be defeated by الكذب الرجس (filthy falsehood). Al-Farahi questions the attitude of a community that seems willing to witness the humiliation of a religion whose truth is clear. The oath “والله لا نرضى به” (By Allah, we will never accept it) becomes an affirmation of commitment and allegiance: as long as there is life within us, the humiliation of religion will not be accepted. The phrase “فليأتين يوم نحس” (then let a day of misfortune come) is a warning that if silence is chosen today, a day of misery and destruction will inevitably arrive.

Behind the harsh rhetoric, al-Farahi instills the conviction that the honor of Islam will not disappear as long as the spirit of struggle remains within the ummah. He places the weight of historical responsibility in the hands of every Muslim individual, to choose between defense or silence, between honor or humiliation. His verses are not merely calls for enthusiasm but also rebukes to anyone who chooses silence when their religion is trampled upon.

انى ارى فتنا تمو.	ج وقد ظهرن لمن حدس
نارا تاجج في البلا.	د وقد تلهبت الاطس

ة وبعدها ارض القدس

يبغون قسطنطيني

“Indeed, I see waves of turmoil rising, and their signs have become clear to those who can see. A fire has blazed in this land, and its scorching embers are fiercely erupting. They are targeting Constantinople, and after that, the land of al-Quds (Jerusalem).”

In this verse, the poet describes a situation that is extremely critical and turbulent. The phrase “فتنا تموج” (waves of turmoil) depicts continuous, uncontrollable chaos, like great waves threatening a ship. This turmoil is no longer hidden but has become clear to anyone with sensitivity and insight. He also mentions a fire blazing in the land (نارا تتأجج), growing so hot that even the mountains (الأطس) feel its heat, a metaphor for the political and social chaos engulfing the region. At its peak, the poet states that the enemy’s ambitions do not stop at Tripoli; they will also target the heart of the Islamic world, namely Constantinople and Jerusalem.

The failure of the revolution of the Young Turks, along with military defeats in 1911 to 1914, deeply divided Ottoman society along ethnic, religious, and linguistic lines, leading to outbreaks of violence among Muslims and Christians. The Ottoman Empire thus fragmented under the impact of World War I.²⁶

The quotation from the history book *The Ottoman Empire* explains that the failure of the Young Turk Revolution and a series of military defeats between 1911 and 1914 caused deep fractures within Ottoman society. These divisions occurred along ethnic, religious, and linguistic lines, ultimately triggering internal violence, including between Muslims and Christians. This condition further weakened the Ottoman Empire until it eventually disintegrated.

Al-Farahi’s verse describing the emergence of great *fitnah* (turmoil) and the blazing fire sweeping through the land aligns with the crisis faced by the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century. The *fitnah* in the verse is not limited to religious or moral meanings but encompasses political chaos, inter-ethnic conflicts, and the breakdown of Muslim solidarity. When al-Farahi states that the fire of *fitnah* has appeared, he is referring to the fragmentation of the Islamic world due to colonialism and internal conflicts.

²⁶ Kenneth W. Harl, *The Ottoman Empire* (Virginia: The Great Courses, 2017), 2.

The statement “يبيغون قسطنطينية وبعدها ارض القدس” (“They are targeting Constantinople, and after that, the land of al-Quds [Jerusalem]”) refers to the real threat posed by Western powers (such as Italy, Britain, and France), who were not only targeting Libya but also the key centers of Islam. What happened in Tripoli was merely the beginning of a larger colonial project aimed at erasing Islamic power on a global scale. Al-Farahi perceived the direction of this historical trajectory and conveyed it through sharp and evocative metaphors.

قد صيح في حجراتها ولتسمعن لها الجرس

“A cry has been heard from within it, and you will surely hear the ringing of church bells there.” In this verse, the poet depicts how the sacred and private places belonging to the Muslims, once tranquil, have now been infiltrated and defiled. The word “صيح” (“a cry has been heard”) indicates the sound of suffering and oppression that has reached even the most sacred inner spaces. The verse “ولتسمعن لها الجرس” (“and you will surely hear the ringing of church bells there”) portrays that the ringing of church bells (a symbol of Christianity) will soon replace the call to prayer and the Islamic symbols in that land. This serves as a stark warning that colonization is not merely about territorial control but also about cultural and religious domination.

*Why, then, this hostility to a nation which is waging war not merely in her own interest, but for the sake of the supremacy of Europe in Northern Africa, and of Christianity over Islam?*²⁷

This historical quotation is an explicit acknowledgment from the colonial narrative of that time. In the statement, it is declared that Italy was not only waging war for its national interests but also to realize European supremacy over North Africa and the victory of Christianity over Islam. This reveals the ideological motivations behind colonialism targeting Muslim regions, aiming not merely to seize land but also to gradually erase the influence of Islam through the symbols of Western civilization.

This verse clearly illustrates how Western colonialism deliberately carried out Christianization and domination over the Islamic world. The church bells mentioned in the poem are not merely about the physical construction of churches but also symbolize the shift in the way of life and beliefs of the colonized societies. The historical quotation reinforces the meaning of al-Farahi's

²⁷ Irace, p. 195.

verse, indicating that the Italian occupation of Tripoli was not simply a territorial conquest but part of Europe's broader plan to control and displace Islamic influence, starting from strategic regions such as North Africa. By depicting suffering that is heard even within “*ḥujarāti-hā*” (its inner chambers), al-Farahi reminds us that the damage caused by colonialism is not only visible outwardly but has also tainted the identity of Muslims from within.

Sub-Theme 4: The Call for Jihad

عن قدسنا القوم النجس	فلننضحن أو نقتلن
البيضاء كالأسد الشكس	فاحموا ذمار الملة
تجرى السفين على اليبس	واستجمعوا عُددا فما
فع والكتائب والحرس	اعنى المراكب والمدا.
ب لتغلبو الخصم الشرس	وتعلموا حيل الحرو.
وتلبّوا لوغى ضرر	فتأهبوا وتألّبوا
من فى العشى وفى الغلس	واستنصروا الله المي
يَنْصُرُهُ، فليحتمس	وَلْيَنْصُرَنَّ اللهُ مَنْ

“So let us rise or attain martyrdom, fighting against the impure ones who defile our sacred land!

Protect the honor of this ummah with courage like that of a fierce lion that knows no fear!

Gather all your strength, for a ship will not sail upon dry land.

By this I mean: ships, cannons, armies, and armed guards.

Learn the strategies of war so that you may overcome those savage enemies.

Prepare yourselves, unite, and strengthen your resolve to face this biting war!

Seek help from Allah, the Supreme Giver of Victory, in the darkness of evening and morning.

‘And indeed, Allah will surely aid those who aid Him.’ So seek His help!”

In these closing verses of the poem, the poet calls for jihad as a means of defending the sacred lands and the honor of the Muslim ummah. He employs firm and direct language, such as *فلننضحن أو نقتلن* (“let us slaughter or attain martyrdom”). The phrase “القوم النجس” (“the impure people”) refers to the infidel colonizers. The word “النجس” here indicates that colonialism is not merely an act of occupation but also an affront to the sanctity of Islam. The poet then urges

Muslims to protect the honor of the religion, which he describes with the metaphor “الملة البيضاء” (“the pure white religion”), a symbol of the purity and truth of Islam. He calls upon the ummah to preserve this dignity with the spirit of “الاسد الشكس” (“the fierce, ferocious lion”), a symbol of courage, strength, and unwavering determination. This call directs toward an unyielding spirit in defending the faith.

The following verse emphasizes the importance of thorough preparation. The expression “فما تجرى السفين على اليابس” (“for a ship cannot sail upon dry land”) is a metaphor indicating that a struggle will not succeed without planning and adequate resources. The poet stresses that jihad must be accompanied by military readiness, such as ships, cannons, armies, and armed guards, because spirit alone is insufficient without strategy and tangible strength. Beyond that, the poem urges the ummah to learn the tactics of war, for the enemy they face is “الخصم الشرس” (“the fierce adversary”). The war, described as “لوغى ضرس”, is portrayed as a painful and harsh battle, yet it is a battlefield that must be faced in the defense of religion and the honor of the ummah. Therefore, the poet calls upon the ummah to prepare and unite in confronting this great challenge.

In its conclusion, the poet reminds that true victory comes from Allah ﷻ. He encourages the ummah to continually seek assistance from “الله الميمن” (“Allah, the Supreme Giver of Victory”), both in the evening and in the darkness of dawn, as a form of complete reliance upon Allah ﷻ alone. The poem then closes with an *iqtibas* (quotation) from the Qur’an, Surah Al-Hajj, verse 40: “وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ” (“And indeed, Allah will surely aid those who aid His cause”), reinforcing the faith that sincere struggle will always receive the help of Allah ﷻ. With a tone that is firm yet spiritual, the poet does not merely call upon Muslims to wage war against the colonizers but also revives the spirit of jihad that unites faith, courage, and wisdom.

*Libyans fought alongside Turks as Muslim subjects of the Sultan, who had by then been rather belatedly recognised as Muslim North Africa’s best defence against European Christian encroachment of a country which, in the words of a British Red Cross doctor who served on the Turkish side, ‘does not give the impression that it is worth fighting for’.*²⁸

The key point from the historical excerpt in *Libya: A Modern History* is how religious identity and Islamic solidarity played a crucial role in uniting the Libyan people and the Turkish forces.

²⁸ John Wright, *Libya: A Modern History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 27.

The Libyans fought alongside the Turks as fellow Muslims and subjects of the Sultan, who at that time, although somewhat belatedly, came to be recognized as the best defender of Muslim North Africa against the threat of European Christian colonization. The comment from a British Red Cross doctor, who described Libya as a land “not worth defending,” highlights how colonialism often disregards local values and views the colonies solely through a strategic and materialistic lens. Meanwhile, the Libyan people proved that their land was indeed worth defending, not because of material wealth, but because of religion, honor, and independence.

*Devout Libyan Muslims generally viewed Italian colonial policies as an attack against Islam and responded by declaring holy war. In this sense, it was religious zeal more than European-style nationalism that provided the motivation to resist Italian occupation.*²⁹

This historical excerpt from *Libya: From Colony to Revolution* describes how the Muslim society of Libya viewed Italian colonial policies as a direct assault on the religion of Islam. The response that emerged was not merely nationalistic but took the form of a call for jihad (holy war). This means that the resistance against Italian colonization was not simply political or territorial in nature, but a call of faith that urged the people to rise in defense of their religion and homeland.

What al-Farahi conveys in this verse aligns with the historical reality in Libya during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, where Muslims resisted because the honor of Islam had been trampled upon. When al-Farahi calls for jihad and refers to the enemy as “القوم النجس” (the impure people), he is expressing a moral and spiritual outrage at colonial actions that not only seized land but also insulted the faith and identity of the Muslim community.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the poem *Fī Taṭāwul al-Ṭalyān ‘alā Ṭarābulus* by Abdul Hamid al-Farahi using the New Historicism approach has produced the following findings. First, the historical background of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, particularly during the period of Italian colonialism over Tripoli, is explicitly reflected in the verses of this poem. Second, reading the poem through the lens of New Historicism serves as a means to understand how historical events are articulated poetically. Each verse portrays the events of colonization, the suffering of the Muslim community, and the call to defend the honor of religion and homeland. The

²⁹ Ronald Bruce St John, *Libya: From Colony to Revolution* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2012), p. 63.

connection between the literary text and historical texts within this poem is very close, forming a unified and coherent meaning. Through this poem, the social, political, and religious conditions of the Muslim community, shaken by colonial aggression and the increasing fragility of the greatest symbol of Muslim power at the time, the Ottoman Empire, are clearly depicted. This poem presents a form of resistance through literature, in which al-Farahi calls for jihad, rejects humiliation, and raises historical consciousness.

This poem enriches our understanding of the intellectual Muslim response to colonialism in the early twentieth century, particularly from the Indian subcontinent. Finally, through reflection on this phenomenon, the poem serves as a reminder that independence and the honor of religion are essential and non-negotiable principles. Therefore, it is important for future generations to preserve the legacy of history, revive the values of struggle, and never forget that colonialism is not merely a military issue but also a seizure of the dignity of the ummah. Future research may explore the comparison of al-Farahi's literary resistance with other anti-colonial poets across the Muslim world to broaden the perspective on intellectual and cultural resistance during the colonial period.

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