From Poem to Foundational Tradition: The Afterlife of Bānat Suʿād

من القصيدة إلى التقليد التأسيسي: الحياة اللاحقة لقصيدة «بانت سعاد»

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Abstract:

This article examines the long reception history of Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr's *Bānat Suʿād* as a process through which a historically situated poem became a foundational literary tradition. Drawing on a systematic survey of a large corpus of Arabic works, the study identifies and traces several overlapping modes of reception: the transmission of the narrative surrounding Kaʿb's encounter with the Prophet, the circulation of the poem and its individual verses, scholarly citation across multiple disciplines, commentarial activity, poetic opposition and rewriting, and increasingly abbreviated forms of cultural reference. The study argues that the poem's exceptional durability cannot be explained by its literary merit or its association with the Prophet alone. Rather, its longevity resulted from a process of functional accumulation: narrative memory preserved symbolic authority, textual extraction created portability, repeated quotation produced evidentiary authority, commentary established textual centrality, and literary reuse renewed the poem's productive force. Over time, these processes enabled even the formula "Bānat Suʿād" to evoke a wider narrative and literary complex. The article thus proposes a cumulative model for understanding how a poem moves from event to tradition and from textual presence to cultural memory.

Keywords: Bānat Suʿād; Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr; reception history; Prophetic praise; muʿāraḍa; commentary; cultural memory.

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الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في تاريخ التلقي الطويل لقصيدة كعب بن زهير «بانت سعاد»، بوصفه مساراً تحولت عبره قصيدة ارتبطت بسياق تاريخي محدد إلى تقليد أدبي تأسيسي. واستناداً إلى مسح منهجي لمدونة واسعة من المؤلفات العربية، تميز الدراسة بين أنماط متداخلة من التلقي وتتبعها، تشمل نقل الرواية المحيطة بلقاء كعب بالنبي ﷺ، وتداول القصيدة وأبياتها المفردة، والاستشهاد العلمي بها في تخصصات متعددة، ونشاط الشروح، والمعارضة وإعادة الصياغة الشعرية، ثم أشكال الإحالة الثقافية المتزايدة اختصاراً. وتذهب الدراسة إلى أن الاستمرار الاستثنائي للقصيدة لا يمكن تفسيره بالقيمة الأدبية أو بالارتباط النبوي وحدهما؛ بل نتج من تراكم وظيفي: حفظت الذاكرة السردية السلطة الرمزية، وأتاح اقتطاع النص قابلية الانتقال، وأنتج تكرر الاستشهاد سلطة استدلالية، ورسخت الشروح مركزية النص، وجددت إعادة الاستخدام الأدبي قدرته الإنتاجية. ومع مرور الزمن، مكّنت هذه العمليات حتى عبارة «بانت سعاد» نفسها من استحضار مركّب سردي وأدبي أوسع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: بانت سعاد؛ كعب بن زهير؛ تاريخ التلقي؛ المديح النبوي؛ المعارضة؛ الشروح؛ الذاكرة الثقافية.

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Introduction

This article argues that Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr's *Bānat Suʿād* should be understood not merely as a celebrated poem of Prophetic praise, but as a foundational text whose afterlife can be traced through the transmission of its narrative frame, its extensive citation across diverse fields of Arabic scholarship, its continuing literary reproduction, and its eventual incorporation into Arabic cultural memory. Drawing on a systematic survey of 1,793 Arabic works, the study reconstructs the *longue durée* of the poem's reception and shows how *Bānat Suʿād* gradually moved from a historically situated poem to a transhistorical cultural and literary reference. The founding encounter may explain the poem's exceptional symbolic beginning, but it cannot by itself explain the extraordinary duration and diversity of its afterlife. That durability, this study argues, was produced through the cumulative interaction of multiple forms of reception.

Scholarship on *Bānat Suʿād* has approached the poem from a number of important perspectives, including its historical setting, Prophetic praise, textual transmission, commentarial tradition, and later poetic reworkings. Yet these approaches tend to examine particular dimensions of the poem's reception rather than the historical process through which the poem itself acquired, expanded, and sustained cultural authority across different domains of Arabic intellectual life. What remains insufficiently explored is the *longue durée* of *Bānat Suʿād* as a circulating cultural text: how the narrative of Kaʿb's encounter with the Prophet, the poem itself, individual verses, later commentarial and poetic engagements, and eventually even the formula "Bānat Suʿād" came to function as recognizable and reusable elements of Arabic literary memory. (Muḥammad, 1986)

Studies of Prophetic praise provide an important context for understanding one dimension of this later reception. Nāẓim Rashīd's *al-Madāʾiḥ al-nabawiyya fī adab al-qarnayn al-sādis wa-l-sābiʿ li-l-hijra*, for example, examines the flourishing of Prophetic panegyric in the sixth and seventh centuries AH within the political, religious, and literary conditions of the period. His study documents the vitality of Prophetic praise and draws attention to poets whose compositions preserve or rework features associated with earlier panegyric models. Particularly relevant to *Bānat Suʿād* is his discussion of poems that reproduce elements associated with the Kaʿbian poetic model. Rashīd's study thus provides valuable evidence for the continuing productivity of earlier Prophetic panegyric within medieval literary culture. Its focus, however, is the development of Prophetic praise during a specific historical period rather than the diachronic reception of *Bānat Suʿād* itself across the different domains of Arabic intellectual and literary culture. (Rashīd, 2002/2003)

Studies of poetic opposition (muʿāraḍa) illuminate another important dimension of this reception. Scholarship on the genre has emphasized the continuing interaction between later poets and inherited poetic models and has treated opposition as a form through which earlier texts acquire renewed literary life. Recent work on muʿāraḍa and intertextuality similarly stresses that engagement with a prior poem may involve both formal reproduction and creative transformation rather than

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simple imitation. Such studies are particularly relevant to the extensive poetic reworking of Bānat Suʿād. Earlier discussions have indeed recognized the unusual productivity of Kaʿb's poem as a model for later opposition and other forms of rewriting. Yet the history of its muʿāraḍāt constitutes only one dimension of a considerably broader reception history. The present study therefore situates poetic reproduction within a longer process extending from narrative transmission and scholarly citation to commentary, rewriting, and cultural memory. (al-Bajārī, 2008, pp. 18–20; al-Rūmī, 2023)

To address this broader question, the present study draws on a systematic survey of **1,793 Arabic works** in which *Bānat Suʿād*, its narrative frame, or verses and expressions associated with it are transmitted, cited, discussed, or otherwise invoked. Rather than treating these occurrences as a simple bibliography of references, the study reads them diachronically and across disciplinary boundaries in order to reconstruct changing modes of reception: from narrative transmission in *sīra* and biographical writing, to quotation in linguistic, grammatical, rhetorical, literary, and other scholarly contexts, and ultimately to the poem's transformation into a recognizable cultural sign. The corpus therefore makes it possible to ask not simply where the poem occurs, but what kind of cultural work it performs in different textual environments and at different historical moments.

The central question of the study is accordingly not simply why *Bānat Suʿād* became famous, but **how its cultural authority was historically produced, transmitted, expanded, and transformed**. How did a poem composed in response to a particular moment of personal and political danger become a text repeatedly transmitted, quoted, interpreted, commented upon, imitated, rewritten, and invoked for more than a millennium? More specifically, what role did the narrative of Kaʿb's encounter with the Prophet play in establishing the poem's symbolic authority? How did the poem acquire new forms of authority once individual verses began to circulate as evidence in works of language, grammar, rhetoric, literature, biography, and other fields? How did sustained scholarly attention transform the poem itself into an object of commentary? And what happens when, at a later stage of reception, a verse, a hemistich, or eventually the formula "Bānat Suʿād" itself becomes sufficient to evoke the larger poem and the cultural narrative attached to it?

Methodologically, the article distinguishes between several related but analytically different forms of reception. The transmission of the story surrounding the poem is treated separately from the transmission of the poem itself; citation of individual verses is distinguished from sustained discussion and commentary; and scholarly quotation is distinguished from literary opposition, imitation, rewriting, and allusive reuse. Formal correspondence in meter or rhyme is not in itself treated as sufficient evidence of deliberate *muʿāraḍa*, since poetic engagement may range from explicit opposition to partial imitation, quotation, allusion, and more diffuse forms of cultural recall. This distinction is consistent with scholarship that differentiates stronger and weaker forms of poetic opposition according to the elements retained from the prior text. These categories are not understood as

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mutually exclusive or as stages through which every source necessarily passes. Rather, they provide a means of tracing shifts in the functions assigned to the poem across time and genres. (al-Rūmī, 2023)

This distinction is particularly important because the reception of *Bānat Suʿād* cannot be reduced to the survival of a poetic text. From an early stage, the poem circulated together with a narrative explaining the circumstances of its performance: Kaʿb's danger, his approach to the Prophet, the recitation of the poem, and his acceptance. In later transmission, the story and the poem repeatedly reinforce one another. The narrative provides the poem with a memorable historical and symbolic frame, while the continued circulation of the poem preserves and renews the narrative attached to it. The afterlife of *Bānat Suʿād*, this article proposes, must therefore be understood as the afterlife of both **a text and the story that authorized it**.

At the same time, the evidence suggests that this reception was not static and, more importantly, not simply sequential. The poem could circulate as narrative, as a complete poetic composition, as a reservoir of quotable verses, as an object of scholarly commentary, as a model for later poetic production, and eventually as a cultural reference whose recognition no longer required reproduction of the original text. These functions did not simply replace one another. Earlier modes continued to operate while newer ones emerged, producing what may be described as a process of **functional accumulation**. Narrative memory, textual portability, scholarly authority, commentarial attention, literary productivity, and cultural recognizability could therefore coexist and reinforce one another.

Seen from this perspective, the extraordinary persistence of *Bānat Suʿād* cannot be explained by poetic merit alone, nor simply by its association with the beginnings of Prophetic praise. Its longevity resulted from the interaction of several mutually reinforcing forms of reception: the preservation of its founding narrative, the repeated transmission and extraction of its verses, their incorporation into multiple domains of Arabic scholarship, sustained commentarial attention to the poem, and its continuing capacity to generate literary response. The poem thus became more than an object of preservation. It became a **productive cultural text**: one that could be narrated, quoted, interpreted, commented upon, imitated, fragmented, and reactivated in new contexts while remaining recognizable as *Bānat Suʿād*.

The discussion that follows reconstructs this process through successive but overlapping dimensions. It begins by examining the relationship between the poem and the foundational narrative attached to Kaʿb's encounter with the Prophet, before tracing the transmission of that narrative and the poem through *sīra*, biographical, hadith, and related traditions. It then turns to the extensive circulation of individual verses as quotable material across Arabic scholarly disciplines and to changing patterns of reception across the centuries. From there, it examines the poem's continuing literary productivity through commentary, opposition, imitation, and other forms of rewriting, before considering the final movement from textual

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presence to cultural memory. The aim throughout is to explain how *Bānat Suʿād* became not merely a poem inherited from the early Islamic period, but a foundational tradition capable of sustaining recognition, interpretation, and new writing across centuries.

2. Bānat Suʿād and the Formation of a Foundational Text

The exceptional afterlife of Bānat Suʿād begins with an exceptional narrative of performance. According to the account that came to frame the poem in the Arabic-Islamic tradition, Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr approached the Prophet Muḥammad after having incurred his hostility, declared his repentance, and recited the poem that came to be known by its opening words, Bānat Suʿād. The encounter culminated in Kaʿb's acceptance and safety. Later tradition further associated the performance with the Prophet's bestowal of his mantle (burda) upon the poet, an episode that became so closely identified with the poem that Bānat Suʿād itself came to be widely known as Qaṣīdat al-Burda. Whatever questions may surround particular details of the transmitted account, their importance for reception history lies precisely in their persistence: later readers inherited not only a poem but also a story explaining the circumstances of its recitation and the extraordinary response it received.

This distinction between historical event and transmitted narrative is essential. The argument of this study does not depend upon establishing every element of the later burda narrative as equally early or historically verifiable. What matters for the poem's afterlife is that the account attached to its performance became part of the cultural transmission of the poem itself. Reception history is therefore concerned not only with what occurred at the moment of composition and recitation, but also with what successive generations believed had occurred, repeatedly narrated, and used to interpret the poem. In this sense, the narrative frame acquired a historical agency of its own.

The earliest recoverable stages of transmission already point toward the importance of this frame. The extant recension of Ibn Isḥāq's Sīra does not preserve the episode of Kaʿb in the form in which it became familiar to later readers, whereas Ibn Hishām's al-Sīra al-nabawiyya provides an early and influential account of Kaʿb's coming to the Prophet and his recitation of the poem. What is significant for the present argument is the form of transmission: the verses are embedded within the story of danger, approach, recognition, and acceptance. Bānat Suʿād thus enters a major channel of Islamic historical memory not simply as an autonomous poetic composition, but as poetry situated within a narrative of encounter. (Ibn Hishām al-Anṣārī, 2010)

The broader corpus confirms that this early reception was not simply textual but strongly narrative. In the earliest strata of transmission represented in the present survey, the poem repeatedly appears together with the story of Kaʿb's encounter with the Prophet, while individual verses also begin at an early stage to circulate beyond that narrative frame as linguistic and literary evidence. This dual mode of transmission is significant: Bānat Suʿād was preserved both as part of a remembered event and as a detachable repository of authoritative poetic language. The two

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processes developed in parallel rather than as strictly successive stages, allowing the poem to acquire symbolic and scholarly functions simultaneously. The early history of its reception thus already contains two modes that would remain fundamental throughout its afterlife: the preservation of the poem through narrative memory and the reuse of its language beyond the narrative that originally framed it.

This narrative setting altered the conditions under which the poem could subsequently be received. Kaʿb's composition was an accomplished Arabic qaṣīda, drawing upon established conventions of nasīb, departure, description, and praise. Yet its reception came to exceed those formal and aesthetic qualities. The poem was remembered as having been performed before the Prophet and as having participated in a decisive transformation in the poet's own position: the movement from danger to security, estrangement to acceptance. The authority later attached to Bānat Suʿād therefore cannot be reduced either to literary excellence or to religious association alone. It emerged from the convergence of poetic achievement and a narrative that located the poem at a moment of direct encounter with Prophetic authority.

This convergence helps explain why the circumstances of performance remained so important in later transmission. In literary, biographical, historical, and sīra materials across successive centuries, Kaʿb's poem is repeatedly transmitted together with the circumstances that made its recitation meaningful. In representative accounts, the narrative precedes the quotation: Kaʿb's danger, arrival, or acceptance is narrated first, and the poem is then introduced as the speech performed within that encounter. Later discussions and commentarial traditions likewise frequently return to the story before approaching the verses themselves. Such repetition does more than preserve biographical information about the poet. It continually recontextualizes the poem, instructing new readers to encounter it through the memory of its first performance. The narrative becomes, in effect, a paratext transmitted alongside the poem.

The concept of a **foundational event** is useful here precisely in this reception-historical sense. The event was foundational not because it mechanically caused every subsequent form of engagement with *Bānat Suʿād*, but because its remembered narrative supplied later readers with a durable framework through which the poem could acquire meanings extending beyond its immediate textual content. Kaʿb was not remembered merely as a poet who praised the Prophet; he was remembered as a poet whose act of praise formed part of an encounter of danger, repentance, recognition, and acceptance. The poem consequently acquired a symbolic biography inseparable from the biography of its author.

The later prominence of the mantle in this narrative further intensified that symbolic biography. Once the *burda* became associated with the poem, a material object linked to the Prophet was incorporated into its remembered history. The designation *Burdat Kaʿb* therefore did more than provide an alternative title. It condensed an entire narrative into a single word: Kaʿb, the Prophet, poetic performance, acceptance, and the mantle could all be evoked through the idea of the

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burda. The history of the term is consequently relevant not merely to nomenclature but to the gradual accumulation of symbolic authority around the poem.

The corpus offers particularly suggestive evidence for this process. By the fourth century AH, the report of the *burda* could circulate without the reproduction of the poem itself, while other sources continued to combine the story, selected verses, and the mantle episode. Such transmission indicates that the mantle narrative had acquired a degree of textual independence: the *burda* was no longer merely one detail among the circumstances surrounding the poem but had become a portable element of its cultural memory. At the same time, the continued conjunction of story and verse in later sources shows that this independence did not dissolve the connection between them. Instead, different components of the founding narrative could circulate separately while continuing to evoke the larger complex of Kaʿb, the poem, the Prophet, and the moment of acceptance.

This accumulation of symbolic associations also helps explain an important feature of the poem's later literary productivity. The Kaʿbian model offered subsequent poets more than a meter, rhyme, or set of memorable expressions. It offered what may be described as a **reproducible narrative logic**: distress or estrangement, approach to the Prophet through praise, and the hope for acceptance. Medieval Prophetic panegyric frequently articulates analogous movements of guilt, longing, supplication, praise, and expectation of intercession. It would be too strong to derive all such patterns directly from *Bānat Suʿād*, since they also belong to the broader devotional development of Prophetic praise. Yet the continued explicit invocation of Kaʿb, his poem, his safety, and the *burda* by later poets demonstrates that his story remained available as a recognizable precedent for imagining the efficacy of poetic praise.

The poetic form itself proved equally reproducible. Later Prophetic panegyrists repeatedly returned to features strongly associated with the Kaʿbian model: the language of separation and longing, the emotional disturbance of the lover, the movement from the opening *nasīb* toward Prophetic praise, and, in explicit imitations, the meter, lām-rhyme, vocabulary, and even individual expressions of *Bānat Suʿād*. Nāẓim Rashīd's study of Prophetic praise in the sixth and seventh centuries AH provides useful evidence for the vitality of this mode of poetic production, while the broader corpus examined here shows that such engagement was neither confined to those centuries nor restricted to formal poetic opposition. The model could be reproduced, fragmented, quoted, alluded to, or eventually invoked simply through its opening words.

The significance of the founding narrative therefore lies not in providing a single explanation for the poem's longevity, but in establishing the first layer of a cumulative reception history. Literary excellence made the poem memorable; association with the Prophet gave its performance exceptional symbolic significance; repeated narration preserved the circumstances of that performance; scholarly transmission detached individual verses for new functions; and poetic reuse continually renewed the text in later literary environments. These processes

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did not replace one another. They accumulated and interacted, expanding the range of contexts in which *Bānat Suʿād* could remain meaningful.

Seen in this light, *Bānat Suʿād* underwent an early transformation from **a poem produced by an event into a poem capable of representing that event**. More importantly, the relationship between text and narrative became reciprocal. The story supplied the poem with an enduring interpretive frame and symbolic authority, while the continued circulation of the poem preserved and repeatedly reactivated the story. This **reciprocal preservation** constitutes a crucial first stage in the formation of *Bānat Suʿād* as a foundational text. The poem did not survive merely because it was copied; it survived within a cultural mechanism in which narrative memory, textual transmission, scholarly reuse, and later literary production continually reinforced one another. To understand how this authority was sustained and extended across the centuries, however, it is necessary to follow both the poem and its narrative frame into the textual traditions that carried them across generations.

3. The Transmission of the Poem and Its Narrative Frame

The transmission history of *Bānat Suʿād* reveals that the poem did not move through Arabic textual culture in a single form. Different genres preserved different components of the Kaʿbian legacy and put them to different uses. Works concerned with the Prophet's life, the Companions, biography, and historical memory repeatedly transmitted the narrative of Kaʿb's encounter with the Prophet together with the poem or portions of it, whereas linguistic, grammatical, lexicographical, rhetorical, exegetical, and literary works increasingly detached individual verses from that narrative setting and redeployed them as textual evidence. These forms of reception did not constitute successive stages in which one displaced the other. Rather, the corpus reveals two overlapping and enduring modes of transmission: narrative preservation and textual extraction.

The coexistence of these modes is visible from the earliest strata represented in the survey. Abū Zayd al-Qurashī and Ibn Hishām preserve the story together with the poem and the *burda* tradition, while al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, Abū ʿUbayda, al-Aṣmaʿī, and Abū ʿUbayd already treat the poem or individual verses as material capable of circulation outside the narrative of Kaʿb's encounter. Other early sources, including Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī, al-Fākihī, Ibn Qutayba, al-Balādhurī, and Ibn Dīzīl, continue to transmit the circumstances of the poem's performance together with selected verses or its opening. What emerges, therefore, is not a simple movement from story to quotation, but an early bifurcation in the poem's reception: *Bānat Suʿād* could remain embedded within the memory of an event while its language simultaneously became available for independent reuse.

The same pattern becomes still clearer during the fourth century AH. Al-Washshāʾ, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih preserve the story together with portions of the poem, while Ibn Qāniʿ and al-Ṭabarānī transmit the story and poem together more fully. At the same time, the verses circulate independently in grammatical, linguistic, and literary works, including those of Ibn al-Anbārī, al-

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Sīrāfī, al-Azharī, and Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī. Al-Marzubānī's *Muʿjam al-shuʿarāʾ* again preserves the story and poem together. The narrative frame, in other words, did not represent an early stage later superseded by quotation. Narrative transmission and textual extraction developed concurrently.

This dual transmission became deeply embedded in the textual culture of subsequent centuries. Abū Nuʿaym's *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba* preserves the story together with the poem, as do al-Bayhaqī's *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* and *al-Sunan al-kubrā*. Yet within the same broad period, al-Zawzanī, al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, al-Maʿarrī, al-Māwardī, and Ibn Sīda cite individual verses for purposes largely independent of the founding narrative. The contrast is significant because it indicates that chronological distance from Kaʿb was not, by itself, the principal determinant of how *Bānat Suʿād* was transmitted. The function and genre of the receiving work increasingly shaped what portion of the Kaʿbian legacy it preserved.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr offers an especially revealing example because different works by the same author employ the poem in different ways. In *al-Istidhkār*, *al-Durar fī ikhtiṣār al-maghāzī wa-l-siyar*, and *al-Istīʿāb fī maʿrifat al-aṣḥāb*, he preserves the story and poem together; in *Bahjat al-majālis* and *al-Tamhīd*, by contrast, selected verses appear without reproduction of the full narrative frame. Such variation makes clear that genre was not merely a neutral container for reception. It actively determined which aspect of *Bānat Suʿād* was made useful. In biographical, historical, or Prophetic contexts, the narrative supplied meaning by locating the poem within Kaʿb's encounter with the Prophet. In linguistic, legal, literary, or scholarly contexts, the verse could be extracted from that story and function as evidence in its own right.

The persistence of the narrative mode is nevertheless striking. In the sixth century, Qiwām al-Sunna al-Iṣfahānī still transmits the story and poem together, while Ibn Ḥamdūn and Ibn Khayr preserve the same conjunction in very different types of works; al-Suhaylī's *al-Rawḍ al-unuf*, as a commentary on Ibn Hishām's *Sīra*, likewise continues the narrative tradition. The continuing reproduction of the story in such contexts shows that increasing familiarity with the poem did not render its narrative frame redundant. The story remained available whenever the textual context called for the circumstances of Kaʿb's encounter to be recalled.

The pattern continues into the later medieval period. In the eighth century, al-ʿAlāʾī's *Jāmiʿ al-taḥṣīl*, Ibn Mufliḥ's *al-Ādāb al-sharʿiyya*, al-Yāfiʿī's historical writing, al-Subkī's *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, and Ibn Kathīr's hadith and *sīra* works continue to transmit the story together with the poem or substantial portions of it. In the tenth century, al-Suyūṭī can still reproduce the story in one work and combine it with selected verses in another, while al-ʿUlaymī preserves story and poem together in both *al-Taʾrīkh al-muʿtabar* and *al-Uns al-jalīl*. By the eleventh century, al-Ḥalabī's *Insān al-ʿuyūn*—the work commonly known as the *Sīra Ḥalabiyya*—still transmits the story and poem together, while contemporary or near-contemporary works employ the poem in other ways, from mentioning its occasion to quoting individual verses.

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The chronological evidence therefore suggests that the story attached to *Bānat Suʿād* should not be understood as an early layer of reception gradually stripped away as the poem achieved canonical status. It remained a recurrent mode of reception, capable of being reactivated across centuries whenever genre and textual purpose made the founding encounter relevant. Canonization did not free the poem from its story; instead, it allowed the poem to sustain several forms of cultural existence at once.

This point becomes clearer if transmission is distinguished from citation. A source that transmits Kaʿb's story together with the poem preserves the historical and symbolic unity of the episode. A source that cites a single verse performs a different operation: it extracts a fragment from that unity and assigns it a new function. Both processes contribute to the afterlife of *Bānat Suʿād*, but they do so in different ways. Narrative transmission preserves context; textual extraction produces portability. The first keeps the poem attached to its founding encounter, while the second enables its language to travel across disciplinary boundaries and enter textual environments far removed from the circumstances of its first performance.

The corpus consequently points toward a reception history that is better understood as branching than linear. The same text could circulate simultaneously as a remembered Prophetic encounter, a biographical episode, a complete or partially transmitted poem, and a reservoir of detachable poetic language. These forms did not cancel one another; they reinforced the poem's cultural durability by making it useful to different communities of readers for different purposes. The continuing circulation of the narrative gave *Bānat Suʿād* historical and symbolic depth, while the circulation of its verses extended its reach across Arabic intellectual culture.

This interaction between preservation and extraction prepares the way for a further transformation. Once individual verses could circulate independently of the narrative frame, *Bānat Suʿād* could enter grammar, lexicography, rhetoric, exegesis, jurisprudence, literary criticism, and other fields not primarily concerned with Kaʿb's biography or the circumstances of his encounter with the Prophet. The founding story did not disappear; rather, a second life developed alongside it. The next stage of the poem's afterlife is therefore best examined through the history of quotation itself: Bānat Suʿād as a quotable text.

4. Bānat Suʿād as a Quotable Text

One of the most consequential developments in the afterlife of *Bānat Suʿād* was the capacity of its individual verses to circulate independently of the narrative that originally framed the poem. As the preceding section has shown, narrative transmission preserved the historical and symbolic context of Kaʿb's encounter with the Prophet, while textual extraction allowed portions of the poem to move beyond that context. The corpus indicates that this second process began remarkably early. The quotability of *Bānat Suʿād* was not a late consequence of an already completed process of canonization; it emerged during the earliest recoverable phases of the

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poem's written reception and developed alongside the continued transmission of its narrative frame.

Already in the second and third centuries AH, verses from the poem appear in works whose primary concern was neither Kaʿb's biography nor the circumstances of his encounter with the Prophet. Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad cites material from the poem in *al-ʿAyn*; Abū ʿUbayda employs verses in *Majāz al-Qurʾān*; al-Aṣmaʿī cites a verse in *Khalq al-insān*; and Abū ʿUbayd, Ibn al-Sikkīt, al-Jāḥiẓ, and Ibn Qutayba likewise draw upon its language in works devoted to lexicography, philology, literature, and related fields. Significantly, this scholarly extraction occurs during the same broad period in which other sources continue to preserve Kaʿb's story together with the poem or portions of it. The two modes of reception were therefore not chronologically exclusive: *Bānat Suʿād* could simultaneously remain the poetic expression of a remembered Prophetic encounter and become a source of detachable verbal evidence.

By the fourth century AH, the evidentiary life of the poem had become substantially more visible. Ibn al-Anbārī draws upon its verses in works concerned with pausing and beginning, lexical explanation, and grammatical gender; al-Naḥḥās cites a verse in *Iʿrāb al-Qurʾān*; al-Sīrāfī employs its language in his commentary on Sībawayh; and the poem also enters works of literary criticism and comparison. The pattern continues with al-Jawharī's *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, Ibn Fāris's *al-Mujmal fī al-lugha* and *Maqāyīs al-lugha*, and several works of Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī, including *Dīwān al-maʿānī* and *al-Ṣināʿatayn*. These occurrences indicate that quotation was becoming more than a means of recalling a famous poem. Its verses were being incorporated into the evidentiary practices through which Arabic scholars explained words, constructions, usages, and literary phenomena.

This development marks an important shift in the nature of the poem's authority. Within the narrative tradition, the exceptional status of *Bānat Suʿād* was inseparable from the remembered circumstances of its performance and its association with the Prophet. Once an individual verse entered a lexicon, grammatical discussion, commentary, or work of criticism, however, it could perform an argument without requiring the retelling of that story. The verse became evidence. In this sense, textual extraction did not simply remove poetry from context; it created the conditions for a different form of authority. Narrative transmission preserved symbolic authority, while repeated scholarly quotation enabled poetic language to acquire evidentiary authority of its own.

The breadth of this process becomes increasingly apparent in the fifth and sixth centuries AH. Verses of *Bānat Suʿād* occur in Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī's *Sirr al-faṣāḥa*, in al-Wāḥidī's *al-Tafsīr al-basīṭ* and *al-Tafsīr al-wasīṭ*, in al-Shīrāzī's *al-Muhadhdhab*, in al-Bakrī's works on proverbs and literary learning, and in al-Waqashī's commentary on the *Muwaṭṭaʾ*. Al-Māwardī employs verses in his Qurʾanic commentary, Ibn Sīda in both *al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ* and *al-Muḥkam*, while al-Zamakhsharī cites the poem in works including *al-Mustaqṣā* and *Asās al-balāgha*.

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Ibn ʿAṭiyya draws upon it in *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz*, and Ibn al-ʿArabī in *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*.

What matters here is not simply the number of citations but their disciplinary range. A verse could enter a lexicographical work to establish or elucidate a word, a grammatical work to illustrate a construction, a rhetorical or critical work to exemplify a literary phenomenon, a Qurʾanic commentary to illuminate language or usage, or a juridical or hadith-related discussion for yet another purpose. The poem consequently acquired no single secondary function after leaving its narrative setting. Rather, its fragments were repeatedly refunctionalized according to the epistemic requirements of the works that received them. The same poetic corpus could therefore generate different forms of evidence in different disciplines.

This disciplinary mobility is crucial to understanding the transformation of *Bānat Suʿād* into a reference text. Quotation does not merely reproduce a prior text; it relocates it. Every act of citation inserts a verse into a new argumentative environment and establishes a relationship between the authority of the quoted language and the knowledge being produced around it. Repeated across disciplines and generations, this process gave selected portions of *Bānat Suʿād* lives that were no longer dependent upon the transmission of the poem as a whole. The individual verse became a mobile textual unit, capable of entering new works while retaining sufficient recognition and authority to perform a scholarly function.

The distinction between portability and authority is especially useful here. Textual extraction makes a verse portable: it can leave the narrative, the complete *qaṣīda*, and even the immediate literary discussion of Kaʿb. Yet portability alone does not explain why later scholars continued to use the same poetic material. Repetition across authoritative scholarly works gradually gives the extracted verse a history of citation. Once quoted by grammarians, lexicographers, exegetes, critics, jurists, and other scholars, it becomes part of an inherited repertoire of evidence. In this sense, repeated quotation transforms portability into an accumulated history of scholarly use and, with it, a form of evidentiary authority. A verse survives not only because it is memorable, but because successive acts of citation confirm its usefulness and renew its place within scholarly practice.

The corpus further shows that this evidentiary life was not confined to the formative centuries of Arabic scholarship. The poem continues to supply individual verses in later works belonging to very different fields. In the eighth century, for example, verses appear across several works of Ibn Taymiyya, in al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-arab*, in Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, in al-Ṭībī's *Futūḥ al-ghayb*, and in Abū Ḥayyān's *al-Tadhyīl wa-l-takmīl*. Centuries later, the same pattern remains visible in works such as al-Buhūtī's *Sharḥ Muntahā al-irādāt*, al-Ghazzī's *Ḥusn al-tanabbuh*, and, significantly, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī's *Khizānat al-adab* and *Sharḥ abyāt Mughnī al-labīb*. The chronological persistence of quotation demonstrates that the poem's evidentiary usefulness was repeatedly renewed rather than exhausted.

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Such persistence also complicates any simple distinction between the poem's "literary" and "scholarly" afterlives. Arabic scholarly writing routinely relied upon poetry as linguistic and cultural evidence, and *Bānat Suʿād* participated fully in this practice. Yet its case is particularly revealing because its scholarly circulation coexisted with the continued transmission of its founding narrative. A verse could thus possess more than one kind of cultural value at the same time: it belonged to a poem remembered for its association with the Prophet, but it could also be treated independently as evidence for Arabic usage. The symbolic and evidentiary dimensions of its authority need not have been identical, nor can every scholarly citation be attributed directly to the poem's Prophetic association. What the corpus demonstrates is that both forms of authority remained available and could reinforce the continuing visibility of the same text.

The case of *Bānat Suʿād* therefore suggests a cumulative rather than substitutive model of textual authority. The narrative frame was not erased when verses became quotable; nor did scholarly citation require the abandonment of the poem's symbolic biography. Instead, each new mode of circulation enlarged the range of contexts in which the poem could remain active. The founding narrative preserved the memory of the encounter; transmission preserved the poem; extraction released individual verses from the whole; and scholarly citation repeatedly assigned those verses new functions. Narrative preservation sustained continuity, textual extraction enabled portability, and repeated citation built upon that portability a cumulative history of scholarly use.

Seen from this perspective, the extraordinary diffusion of *Bānat Suʿād* across Arabic scholarship constitutes more than evidence of fame. Fame alone explains recognition; it does not explain sustained functional use. What the corpus records is a long history of disciplinary refunctionalization, in which successive scholarly communities found different reasons to preserve and employ the poem's language. Its afterlife was therefore generated not simply by repeated remembrance but by repeated usefulness. Each citation represented a small act of renewal, placing an inherited fragment of the poem into a new intellectual context and thereby extending the range of meanings and functions the text could sustain.

This history of quotation also prepares the next stage of the argument. Once *Bānat Suʿād* could circulate simultaneously as narrative memory, complete poem, scholarly evidence, and detachable verbal material, its cultural presence no longer depended upon any single mode of transmission. The question is therefore no longer simply whether the poem survived, but how the balance among these modes changed across time. Tracing those changes makes it possible to identify broader patterns in the poem's reception and to ask when particular forms of engagement became more prominent, receded, or acquired new functions. It is to these changing patterns across the centuries that the discussion now turns.

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5. Patterns of Reception across the Centuries

The reception history of *Bānat Suʿād* is best understood not as a sequence in which one mode of engagement replaced another, but as a process of cumulative expansion. Across the centuries, earlier forms of reception remained active while new ones were added to them. The poem continued to be narrated, transmitted, and quoted even as it became the object of commentary, literary imitation, rewriting, and eventually highly abbreviated forms of cultural reference. What changed over time, therefore, was not simply the presence or absence of the poem, but the range of functions it was able to perform within Arabic literary and intellectual culture.

In the earliest centuries of written transmission, the dominant modes of reception were narrative preservation, partial or complete transmission of the poem, and the early use of individual verses as evidence. Abū Zayd al-Qurashī and Ibn Hishām preserve the story together with the poem and the *burda* tradition, while al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, Abū ʿUbayda, al-Aṣmaʿī, Abū ʿUbayd, Ibn al-Sikkīt, and al-Jāḥiẓ already cite verses independently. Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī, al-Fākihī, Ibn Qutayba, and al-Balādhurī likewise illustrate the coexistence of narrative and textual forms of transmission. The earliest reception of *Bānat Suʿād* was therefore already functionally plural: the poem could be remembered as part of an event and simultaneously used as linguistic or literary material.

During the fourth and fifth centuries AH, this plurality widened into disciplinary diffusion. Citation became increasingly common across lexicography, grammar, literary criticism, rhetoric, Qurʾanic exegesis, and related fields, while the narrative tradition remained active in sīra, biographical, hadith, and historical works. The reception of *Bānat Suʿād* in this period is particularly revealing because the same scholar could participate in more than one mode. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, for example, preserves the story and poem together in some works while citing selected verses independently in others. Such cases indicate that reception cannot be explained by chronology alone. The genre and purpose of a work shaped the form in which the poem was received, allowing the same text to perform different functions in different intellectual settings.

A further shift becomes visible when *Bānat Suʿād* itself begins to generate independent works devoted specifically to its explanation. This development marks the movement from a poem used within books to a poem around which books were written. Among the identifiable examples are commentaries associated with al-Wāḥidī (d. 468 AH), al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī (d. 502 AH), al-Silafī (d. 576 AH), Abū al-Barakāt al-Anbārī (d. 577 AH), and al-Suhaylī (d. 581 AH). The emergence of such works indicates that the poem had achieved a new level of textual centrality. Its language no longer merely supported arguments elsewhere; it had itself become an object requiring sustained explanation, organization, and scholarly attention.

This commentarial reception did not remain isolated. In later centuries, it consolidated into a durable scholarly tradition. The ninth century AH, for example, preserves a cluster of commentaries by ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Washtānī,

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Khayr al-Dīn, Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Haytī, and Mūsā ibn Abī Zayd al-Maqdisī. The significance of this concentration lies not merely in the number of commentaries but in the fact that commentary had become a recognized and repeatable mode of engagement with the poem. *Bānat Suʿād* was no longer simply a text transmitted or quoted; it had become a text around which an exegetical tradition could accumulate.

By the eleventh century AH, this tradition had become sufficiently established to generate works not merely on the poem, but on earlier works devoted to it. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī, for instance, composed *Sharḥ al-abyāt allatī waqaʿat fī Sharḥ Ibn Hishām li-Bānat Suʿād* and a separate biographical index of the scholars and poets mentioned in Ibn Hishām's commentary. Such works demonstrate a further stage of reception: the commentarial tradition had become self-generating. The afterlife of the poem was no longer limited to direct engagement with Kaʿb's text; it now included engagement with the scholarly tradition that had already formed around that text.

The longevity of this commentarial activity is equally significant. Commentaries continued to be produced into the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries AH, including works by scholars who died in 1292, 1296, 1300, and 1303 AH; one of these was printed in Cairo in 1321 AH/1903 CE. Additional commentaries survive in manuscript form in collections in India, Iraq, Morocco, and elsewhere, even when the dates of their authors remain uncertain. The persistence of such activity demonstrates that *Bānat Suʿād* did not cease to function as an object of scholarly production with the end of the medieval period. Its commentarial afterlife remained active into the early modern and modern eras.

Alongside this scholarly expansion, a parallel literary process was also taking place. *Bānat Suʿād* became not only a text to be explained but a model to be re-created. Later poets engaged with Kaʿb's poem through formal opposition (*muʿāraḍa*), imitation, rewriting, *takhmīs*, *tashṭīr*, and related forms. Studies of Arabic poetic opposition have emphasized precisely this capacity of later poems to reactivate inherited texts through a combination of formal continuity and creative transformation. In such cases, the earlier poem does not merely survive as an object of memory; it becomes productive again through the generation of new texts. In the case of *Bānat Suʿād*, this productivity is particularly visible where the relationship is explicit. Taqī al-Dīn Shabīb al-Kaḥḥāl (d. 695 AH), for example, is recorded as having composed a substantial poem explicitly opposing *Bānat Suʿād* in the *basīṭ* meter and lām-rhyme. Such examples show that the poem's later authority extended beyond quotation and commentary: it could provide a recognizable formal and cultural template for new poetic production. (al-Bajārī, 2008, pp. 18–20)

At the same time, the evidence requires methodological caution. Scholarship on *muʿāraḍa* itself recognizes that poetic relationships may differ in degree according to the elements reproduced from the prior text, and the corpus examined here makes such differentiation indispensable. Not every later poem containing the phrase "Bānat Suʿād," sharing its meter or rhyme, or reproducing an isolated expression can be treated as a formal opposition to Kaʿb's poem. Some cases

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explicitly announce or unmistakably enact a relationship with the Kaʿbian text; others reproduce only part of its formal or verbal repertoire; still others may reflect quotation, allusion, or the wider circulation of a recognizable formula. The case of ʿAdī ibn al-Riqāʿ, for instance, illustrates the need to distinguish verbal coincidence or wider formulaic circulation from demonstrable literary imitation. The later poetic reception of *Bānat Suʿād* should therefore be understood as a spectrum extending from explicit *muʿāraḍa* through partial imitation and rewriting to quotation, allusion, and possible verbal resonance, rather than as a single undifferentiated category of influence. (al-Bajārī, 2008, pp. 18–20)

This distinction is important because the long history of the poem is not a history of one stable form of influence. Rather, it is a history of increasing functional density. Earlier modes of reception remained available while later ones accumulated around them. The story continued to be narrated; the poem continued to be transmitted; individual verses continued to serve as evidence; commentaries accumulated; earlier commentaries generated further works; and poets continued to imitate, reshape, or invoke the text. At any given point in the later tradition, *Bānat Suʿād* could therefore exist simultaneously as historical memory, poetic artifact, scholarly evidence, object of commentary, and literary model.

The development of this functional density also explains why the reception history of *Bānat Suʿād* cannot be adequately represented as a linear progression from event to text, from text to citation, and from citation to imitation. Such a sequence is useful only as an analytical abstraction. Historically, the processes overlap. Later sīra works could still preserve the founding narrative at the same time that grammarians quoted individual verses, commentators explained the entire poem, and poets composed new works in conscious dialogue with it. The defining feature of the poem's afterlife is therefore not replacement but functional accumulation.

This cumulative model also changes how the poem's endurance should be understood. Survival alone is too weak a category. Many texts survive because they are copied, but *Bānat Suʿād* remained culturally active because it repeatedly acquired new uses without losing earlier ones. Its durability was produced by the coexistence of several mechanisms: narrative memory, scholarly citation, commentarial attention, literary imitation, and later cultural allusion. The poem's long life was thus not passive preservation but recurrent activation.

Seen across the longue durée, the history of *Bānat Suʿād* can therefore be described as a movement from survival to functional accumulation. The poem first entered the tradition as part of a remembered encounter and a transmitted qaṣīda; it then became a source of scholarly evidence, an object of commentary, a generator of further scholarship, and a model for new poetry. None of these later functions erased the earlier ones. Instead, each added a new layer to the poem's cultural presence. The result was a text that became progressively denser in function while remaining continuously recognizable across radically different intellectual and literary environments.

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This accumulation prepares the final major transformation examined in the present study. Once a poem has become narratable, quotable, explainable, imitable, and reusable across disciplines and genres, it can begin to function through increasingly abbreviated forms of recognition. At that point, the full poem is no longer always necessary; an opening phrase, a familiar expression, or the title itself may be sufficient to activate the cultural memory of the whole. The next section therefore turns from the accumulation of modes of reception to their condensation into memory: from citation to cultural memory.

6. From Citation to Cultural Memory

The movement of *Bānat Suʿād* from citation to cultural memory marks a further stage in the poem's afterlife. Citation, commentary, and imitation all depend upon some form of textual presence: a verse is reproduced, a poem is explained, or a later composition announces its relation to an earlier model through meter, rhyme, vocabulary, or explicit reference. Cultural memory can operate differently. Once a text has become sufficiently recognizable, increasingly small fragments may be capable of evoking a much larger literary complex. In the case of *Bānat Suʿād*, the long history of narrative transmission, scholarly quotation, commentary, and poetic reuse gradually created conditions in which a verse, a hemistich, the opening formula, or eventually the name "Bānat Suʿād" itself could activate the memory of Kaʿb's poem.

The transition is clearest when explicit poetic reproduction is distinguished from increasingly abbreviated forms of reference. At one end of the spectrum stand formal oppositions and other deliberate reworkings in which the relationship to Kaʿb's poem is demonstrable through explicit testimony or a substantial combination of meter, rhyme, structure, and verbal correspondence. At the other end stand increasingly compressed forms of reference in which only a phrase, an expression, or the name of the poem remains. What matters for the present argument is the distance between these two poles: the earlier text can remain culturally active both through extensive formal reproduction and through minimal verbal evocation.

Indeed, the opening formula cannot simply be treated as Kaʿb's invention. The collected evidence includes poetry attributed to al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī, who predates Kaʿb, beginning "Bānat Suʿādu wa-amsā ḥabluhā injadhama." The corpus therefore explicitly classifies this as evidence for a poetic formula preceding Kaʿb rather than as an imitation of him. Other early cases likewise require caution concerning chronology, attribution, and the direction of influence. Rabiʿa ibn Maqrūm, for example, is associated with the opening "Bānat Suʿādu fa-amsā al-qalbu maʿmūdan," but the direction of textual dependence remains uncertain. The existence of such material means that recurrence of the formula cannot by itself demonstrate reception of Kaʿb.

This qualification, however, makes the later history of the phrase more, rather than less, significant. Kaʿb need not have invented the words "Bānat Suʿād" for his poem eventually to become their dominant cultural referent. The question is

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therefore not whether every occurrence of the formula derives from Kaʿb, but how one particular poem came to appropriate, through centuries of transmission and reuse, a formula that had wider poetic currency. The argument developed in the preceding sections provides the answer: the founding narrative gave the poem exceptional symbolic visibility; transmission preserved that visibility; scholarly quotation dispersed its language; commentary established it as an object of sustained textual attention; and poetic rewriting repeatedly renewed its literary presence. Through this cumulative process, "Bānat Suʿād" became increasingly capable of naming not merely an opening formula but a recognizable cultural text.

Later poetry demonstrates different degrees of this recognizability. Some poets reproduce a distinctive portion of Kaʿb's opening, especially the familiar combination of "Bānat Suʿād" and "fa-qalbī al-yawma matbūlu," making the reference nearly explicit. Others mention the poem by name within a new composition. Aḥmad Muḥarram, for example, can write "fa-ghanni idhan wa-qul Bānat Suʿād," while Muḥammad Iqbāl refers to Kaʿb as having recited his praise "min Bānat Suʿād." In such cases, the full poem is absent. The phrase works because poet and audience are expected to share sufficient knowledge to complete the reference.

This difference between citation and cultural memory may be formulated more precisely: citation requires textual presence, whereas cultural memory can operate through textual absence. A grammarian quoting a verse places a fragment of the poem visibly before the reader. A later poet who merely names *Bānat Suʿād* relies instead upon what the reader already carries. The referential burden shifts from the quoted text to the cultural competence of the audience. The less text that must be reproduced for recognition to occur, the stronger the evidence that the poem has entered a shared repertoire of literary memory.

Abbreviation therefore becomes analytically meaningful. The history traced in this study reveals a spectrum extending from the complete poem, to selected verses, to a single verse, to a hemistich or recognizable expression, to the opening phrase, and finally to the title-like formula "Bānat Suʿād" itself. These forms should not be treated as a rigid chronological succession, since they coexist across periods. Yet their coexistence reveals an important principle: increasing abbreviation of reference is evidence of increasing cultural recognizability. A little-known poem must be quoted to be identified; a deeply embedded one may be evoked by a fragment.

The reader consequently becomes central to this final stage of reception. Cultural memory does not reside in textual fragments alone; it depends upon readers capable of reconstructing the absent whole from the surviving sign. An allusion succeeds only when the audience can recognize what has not been said. In this respect, the afterlife of *Bānat Suʿād* was produced not only by authors who transmitted, quoted, commented upon, or imitated it, but also by communities of readers whose familiarity made abbreviated reference possible. Cultural memory depends upon a reader capable of completing the reference.

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This continuum also explains why the later poetic evidence should not be reduced to a numerical catalogue of "oppositions." The significance of the corpus lies not simply in how many poets wrote on the same meter or rhyme, but in the variety of ways in which the Kaʿbian text remained available for reuse. Some later poets sought to rival or reproduce the poem; others borrowed expressions; still others named it, invoked Kaʿb's achievement, or used "Bānat Suʿād" as a ready-made cultural signal. Such forms represent different intensities of textual dependence, but together they reveal the broadening reach of the poem's literary memory.

At this point the logic of the poem's afterlife comes full circle. The earliest reception preserved a poem through the memory of an event. The later tradition increasingly preserved the event through the recognizability of the poem. Narrative and text had already entered a relationship of reciprocal preservation; cultural memory carried this process still further by allowing fragments of the text to evoke the larger narrative-literary complex. The poem could now summon Kaʿb, the Prophet, the performance, the *burda*, and the accumulated history of later reception without narrating all of them anew.

The transformation of *Bānat Suʿād* into cultural memory therefore represents more than the persistence of a canonical poem. It marks the point at which the text became capable of functioning through absence, compression, and recognition. The complete qaṣīda remained available, and its story continued to be told, but neither was always required. A fragment could stand for a poem, and the poem could stand for a cultural history. It is at this point that *Bānat Suʿād* can most fully be described as a foundational tradition: not simply because later writers preserved or admired it, but because it supplied Arabic literary culture with a reproducible, recognizable, and self-renewing repertoire of narrative, language, form, and memory.

7. Conclusion: From Poem to Tradition

This study has argued that the afterlife of *Bānat Suʿād* cannot be adequately explained by literary excellence, religious association, or textual transmission taken separately. Its longevity emerged from the interaction of several modes of reception that accumulated across the centuries and repeatedly renewed the poem's cultural functions. The result was not simply the preservation of a famous *qaṣīda*, but the gradual formation of a foundational literary tradition.

The process begins with the remembered circumstances of performance. Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr's poem entered Arabic-Islamic memory together with the narrative of his encounter with the Prophet, his danger, his recitation, his acceptance, and, in later tradition, the bestowal of the *burda*. Whatever historical questions surround individual details of that narrative, its reception-historical importance lies in the fact that it travelled with the poem and helped shape the conditions under which later readers encountered it. The poem therefore acquired, from an early stage, a symbolic biography inseparable from the story of its performance.

The corpus shows, however, that this narrative mode never constituted the whole history of reception. From the earliest centuries, individual verses were also

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detached from the story and reused in linguistic, grammatical, lexicographical, rhetorical, exegetical, literary, juridical, and other scholarly contexts. Narrative preservation and textual extraction therefore developed concurrently. The first preserved context and symbolic memory; the second produced portability. Repeated quotation then built upon that portability a cumulative history of scholarly use and, with it, a form of evidentiary authority.

This distinction is central to understanding the poem's expansion across Arabic intellectual culture. A verse cited in a lexicon, grammatical commentary, work of rhetoric, *tafsīr*, or jurisprudence no longer required the retelling of Kaʿb's story in order to function. It could operate as evidence in its own right. Yet this did not erase the narrative frame. Instead, symbolic and scholarly forms of authority accumulated alongside one another, giving the same text several cultural lives at once.

A further transformation occurred when *Bānat Suʿād* ceased merely to be used within other works and became the object around which independent works were composed. The development of an extensive commentarial tradition marks a significant stage in the formation of textual centrality. Once scholars began writing books on the poem itself, and later books on earlier commentaries to the poem, the reception tradition became partially self-generating. The poem was no longer simply inherited; it had become an institution of scholarly attention.

Parallel to this scholarly development, the poem also became a generative literary model. Later poets engaged with it through opposition, imitation, rewriting, *takhmīs*, *tashṭīr*, allusion, and other forms of poetic reuse. These forms should not be collapsed into a single category, nor should every occurrence of the phrase "Bānat Suʿād" be treated as dependence on Kaʿb, especially since the formula itself predates him in Arabic poetry. What matters is that, over time, Kaʿb's poem became a widely recognizable cultural referent through which the phrase and its associated poetic patterns could increasingly evoke the Kaʿbian text.

The history traced here is therefore not linear. The founding narrative did not disappear when quotation began; quotation did not disappear when commentary developed; commentary did not disappear when poetic imitation intensified. Rather, the poem's afterlife was characterized by functional accumulation. Earlier modes remained active while new ones were added, producing increasing functional density. At different moments, *Bānat Suʿād* could operate simultaneously as remembered event, transmitted poem, scholarly evidence, object of commentary, poetic model, and cultural sign.

This cumulative process also explains how the poem entered cultural memory. Once repeated transmission, citation, commentary, and rewriting had made the text sufficiently recognizable, increasingly abbreviated forms of reference became possible. A complete poem could be reduced to selected verses, a verse to a hemistich, a hemistich to a familiar expression, and eventually the phrase "Bānat Suʿād" itself could suffice to evoke the larger textual and narrative complex. In this

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sense, the increasing abbreviation of reference became evidence of increasing cultural recognizability.

The movement from citation to cultural memory also changes the role of the reader. A quotation supplies the relevant textual material; an allusion depends upon a reader able to reconstruct what is absent. The long afterlife of *Bānat Suʿād* therefore depended not only upon authors who preserved, cited, explained, and imitated it, but also upon communities of readers whose familiarity with the poem made increasingly compressed forms of reference intelligible.

The central question of this study—how a poem produced in a specific historical situation became a foundational literary tradition—can therefore be answered only through this cumulative model. Bānat Suʿād acquired durability because several mechanisms reinforced one another: the founding narrative gave the poem exceptional symbolic visibility; narrative transmission sustained contextual memory; textual extraction enabled portability; repeated citation built a cumulative history of scholarly use; commentary established textual centrality; literary rewriting renewed formal and imaginative productivity; and cultural memory eventually allowed the poem to function through recognition alone.

Seen in this perspective, the transformation of *Bānat Suʿād* may be represented not as a rigid chronology but as an interacting sequence of cultural operations:

founding event → symbolic authority → narrative preservation → textual extraction → portability → scholarly authority → commentarial consolidation → literary reproduction → cultural memory.

The significance of this sequence lies precisely in its cumulative character. Each stage added a new function without necessarily eliminating the previous one. The poem's extraordinary longevity was therefore produced not by a single cause but by the repeated expansion of what the text could do.

This conclusion also clarifies what is meant here by a "foundational tradition." *Bānat Suʿād* is foundational not merely because it is early, famous, or associated with the beginnings of Prophetic praise. It is foundational because later Arabic literary culture repeatedly returned to it as a text capable of authorizing memory, supplying linguistic evidence, attracting commentary, structuring new poetry, and providing recognizable signs through which later writers could communicate with an inherited literary past. Its foundation was therefore not a single historical moment but a continuously renewed cultural relation.

The afterlife of *Bānat Suʿād* ultimately demonstrates how a literary text can move from event to tradition without ceasing to carry the traces of each stage in that movement. The story remained within the poem's memory; the poem remained within scholarly citation; citation fed commentarial and literary productivity; and later cultural memory compressed these accumulated histories into increasingly economical forms of recognition. What began as a poem performed in a particular encounter thus became, across the *longue durée*, a text capable of generating and organizing memory beyond its original occasion.

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Bānat Suʿād, in other words, did not merely survive. It learned, through centuries of reception, to exist in multiple forms at once. That multiplicity—narrative, textual, scholarly, poetic, and mnemonic—is what transformed the poem from a celebrated *qaṣīda* into a foundational tradition.

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العام	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
معامل أرسيف	0.2692	0.1954	0.3759	0.3068	0.5978
معامل التأثير العربي	1.60	1.73	1.25	1.55	1.59