

## Spatial Poetry of Ha'il Area as an Icon of Cultural Heritage and Touristic Identifier: An Ecocritical Reading of Selected Poems

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### ABSTRACT

This article deals with the presence of place, nature and memory of the Ha'il area (the city of two mountains) as embodied in Arabic poetry in English. The premise of this study is based on the view of what the Arab poets presented in terms of monitoring the Ha'il City and documenting the most important places and forms of nature drawing a picture of the natural life of the people of that place. It also explores how Arab poets portray the geographical and ecological features of the place, captured its mountains, valleys, and landscapes while simultaneously constructed a vivid image of the natural and social life of its inhabitants. Utilizing ecocriticism as a lens, the analysis reveals that that poetic engagement with place operates through both deliberate natural description and spontaneous memory, revealing the intrinsic connection between function as cultural and historical archives that preserve environmental memory record historical transformations and articulate a sense of place-based identity. Further, it highlights the role of Arabic poetry in recording the civilizational and tourist continuity of Ha'il, the city of two mountains, from its ancient past until the present time. By analysing selected works of canonical Arab poets, the article demonstrates how the interplay between literature, place, nature and memory enrich the understanding of environmental heritage and history and contributes to broader discussions of ecocriticism in Arabic literary academy.

**KEYWORDS:** Ecocriticism, Nature, Place, Memory, Arabic poetry, Ha'il Region, Saudi Arabia

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This study is concerned with the historical memory and geographical aspects of Ha'il Area (the city of the two mountains) through its relationship to ancient Arabic poetry. Poetry is one of the important sources of history, which gives an idea of the place, people, as well as the time, and the events that follow it, which are translated by the duality of (history and literature) that reveals many of the connections between man and his past (Khalaf, 2024). These are connections that have been linked since ancient times to the consciousness that the poet creates through his poems, so he chronicles his era before he chronicles his poetry, and thus gives a cognitive, cultural, and geographical vision of what life was looked like at that time. This is something that helps to record the spatial heritage through poetry and to introduce it to tourists (Al-Tatawī, 2020)). Arab poets have long celebrated their places,

whether those they passed through or those they inhabited. This gave rise to numerous expressions of the poet's awareness of his environment and the nature of the land he described. These expressions ranged from longing and lament to admiration, pride, and contemplation, among other themes that constitute a historical phenomenon before they are literary ones (Kassāb, 2004). Thus, the connection between poetry and the Ha'il city was firmly established through Arabic poetry in antiquity. The relationship between the poet and this place was intimate, and it was not limited to the Mu'allaqat (the seven pre-Islamic odes), but extended to many other aspects of pre-Islamic poetry, such as its prominent presence in poems about generosity, loyalty, love, knights, and others. Its influence even extended to the poets of the early Islamic period, the Umayyad and Abbasid eras, and beyond (Oppenheim, 2009).

Since Arabic poetry is a document that has recorded the history and civilization of this region throughout ancient times, it has played an important role in being a heritage record and a tourist guide, revealing many human relationships, geographical dimensions, and cultural connections (Zaza, 1997). It overflows with talk about the reality of man, his place, and his time. This is the case with poetry, even in ancient foreign literatures, as is the case, for example, in the poetry of world epics: (Gilgamesh, the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Ramayana and others). The City Ha'il was clearly present in the memory of Arabic literature, both ancient and modern. It was the stage for many events that poets narrated in their poems since the pre-Islamic era. It was not merely mentioned as a description, but rather poured into a historical and intellectual vessel that made it immortal throughout the ages. Perhaps some of the poets of the Mu'allaqat, who were famous at that time, had a substantial share in the poetic history of this region, as they poured their poetry into various parts of the Jabalayn region, as with Imru' al-Qais, Labid ibn Rabi'ah, Antarah ibn Shaddad, Zuhair ibn Abi Sulma, Tarafa ibn al-Abd, and others (Al-Baṣṣrāwī, 1988)

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### **The city of the Two Mountains in the Memory of Literature**

Poetry has always been, and still is, overflowing with talk about the reality of man, his place, and his time. Throughout those distant eras, it has remained a tongue that speaks of many cognitive and civilizational aspects. It is, without a doubt, a document that chronicles civilizations, some of which have perished and disappeared, but poetry has immortalized them anew and awakened them from their long slumber (Al-Bādī, 2014) If literary historians trace the history of poetry back to the period preceding the time of the prophetic mission by about two centuries or more, then we are faced with poetry that chronicles a long period of time. However, this poetry, which is of limited lifespan, if we may say so, was not born of its moment and expressive of its day. Rather, we have seen it sometimes narrate to us the stories of the ancients and the past, in the manner of its exposure to the stories of the vanished nations, such as (Tasm and Jadis) and other extinct nations (Abū Sharab, 1996). When we reach the region of the two mountains (Aja and Salma), we find that it is varied in its poetic treatment, meaning that the poets dealt with it either as living experiences or as reminiscences. This happened, for example, with a number of pre-Islamic poets in their focus on events and places, or in their use of the phenomenon of (invoking heritage figures). Poetry, therefore, is not just a passing artistic image, but it is also a form of awareness of history and civilization (Ibn Abd Rabbih, 1998). The truth is that some of those interested in literature and its history did not stop at the issue of awareness of the history that poetry undertakes, or awareness of its civilizational and cognitive value (Al-Buḥturī, 2012). The poet's main concern is not to draw for the recipient an artistic picture that pleases and delights him - although that is beautiful - but there is something that should

be noted, which is the extent of the self's awareness of its subject that it establishes, or more precisely (does to chronicle it) from a creative angle, especially if we realize that "the subject is - in the text - the point at which the intuition of existence crystallizes." (Al-Tatawī, 2020).

The Jabalayn City, which is (Ha'il) today, was clearly present in the memory of Arabic literature, both ancient and modern. It was the stage for many events that poets narrated in their poems since the pre-Islamic era. It was not mentioned merely as a description, but rather it was poured into a historical and intellectual vessel that made it immortal throughout the ages (Ibn Hishām, 2004). Perhaps some of the poets of the Mu'allaqat - who were famous at that time - had a large share of poetic history; they poured it into various parts of the Jabalayn region, as with Imru' al-Qais, Labid ibn Rabi'ah, Antarah ibn Shaddad, Zuhair ibn Abi Sulma, Tarafa ibn al-Abd, and others (Bell, 2008). If ancient poetry has preserved for us a part of the history and civilization of this region, then prose has also had a clear impact in discovering another important part of the history of this region. Perhaps several types of prose - whether ancient or modern - prove and support this. For example, we find in some stories, translations, biographies, correspondence, letters, news, memoirs, diaries, travel literature, and others, what indicates a literary memory that summarizes a great heritage for the Jabalayn region, and expresses literary types that flow into the river of history and cooperate with it (Al-Bakrī, 2010). This is not the place to present and detail them. This intertwining of history and literature was known even in the history of other nations. We have seen Greek mythology in the Iliad, the news of the Indians and Persians in the Mahabharata and the Shahnameh, and what the Arabs transmitted of the news of extinct tribes, such as the news of Ad, Thamud, Tasm, Jadis, the flood of Al-Aram, and Bilqis (Al-Shammārī, 2014). As for what is closer to history, it is the days of the Arabs and their wars before Islam, as they fall within the core of migrations and ancient wars. However, we do not want to say that the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era had a history in the modern sense of the word. Rather, they transmitted news of events that occurred, either in their country or in the countries of the nations that lived with them (Ibn Qutaybah, 1985).

The presence of the Jabalayn City in literary genres has varied; it has been mentioned in poetry collections, and in books of biographies and biographies, especially when talking about the famous Tayy tribes. Books of literary biographies, such as "Poetry and Poets" by Ibn Qutaybah, and "The Classes of the Great Poets" by Ibn Sallam, are full of accounts of the notables of Jabalayn and mention of events and circumstances that may not have been addressed by historians in the past. Famous books of literature - such as "The Songs" by Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, and "The Unique Necklace" by Ibn Abd Rabbih - and others, speak of the history of the Jabalayn region and its civilization. (Labid, 2022) Until the Orientalists came at a later time, literature was a vehicle for them, through which they revealed the secrets of that region, especially in the era when the possibilities of history were not available. This was seen in: travel literature, memoirs, diaries, and the like. Perhaps among the examples of this are: the letters of (Ger Truwood Bell) and similar to that (A Journey to the Lands of Shammar and the Lands of Northern Arabia) by (Max Oppenheim). The journeys also revealed a feature of the cooperation between literature and history in discovering the Jabalayn region and its secrets, as in the examples of Indian and Persian journeys, and similar to what was recorded by European travelers such as: George August Wallin, William Gifford Palgrave, Carlo Guarmani, Charles Doughty, Wilfred Blunt, Lady Anne Blunt, Charles Huber, Julius Euting, and others (Al-Zawzanī (1997). But ancient Arabic poetry was perhaps more truthful and accurate in its penetration of the historical roots of the region's history. Orientalists did not chronicle history as the ancient poet did, because they proceeded from (ideological) goals and perhaps

(archaeological) objectives only. We may find many of them to be biased, or hateful, or flattering, or favoring, or driven, or the like (Al-Buḥturī, 2012). However, we should not deny their merit in introducing many of the civilized aspects of the Jabalayn region, but poetry remains a truthful and innocent interpreter - if we may say so - especially in ancient times.

### 3. ECOCRITICISM AS A LENS

Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) argued that “ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment” (p. xviii). This approach is concerned about the link between human beings and nature in literature. It takes on an earth-centred approach in the study of literature (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996). Under the scope of ecocriticism, ecocritics are always concerned about the idea of therepresentation of nature in literature as well as the manipulation of physical settings in a certain kind of role in the literature itself. For instance, the use of a particular physical setting in a novel is significant in shaping the theme of the novel itself (Banerjee, 2020). This is why ecocritics are always focused on the natural elements, however small or insignificant they may seem, in literature. Since 1990, ecocriticism, an interdisciplinary lens for scrutinising the relationship between literature and the environment, has grown dramatically in literary studies and criticism (Johnson, 2009). It has travelled beyond American and British shores to Africa, India, Southeast Asia, and worldwide. For instance, in Africa, ecocriticism, as Mwangi observes, “was practised consciously in the African Academy, although expressions like “man’s struggle” with the environment are often heard in literary essays” (p.1). In India, works that apply ecocriticism to analyse texts depict various engagements with the environment complicate and extend the notion of place connectedness (Shikha, 2011). Notable ecocritical studies have been conducted recently in East Asia, particularly in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and China. The edited book, *East Asian Ecocriticism: A Critical Reader* (2013), is an indispensable guide to East Asian ecocriticism in the last decade. Within the Latin American corpus, the ecocriticism reading of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Nobel Prize-winning poet Pablo Neruda positions him as an “ecopoet” who couches his poetry within “the historical heritage, identity, and destiny of the Latin American people” (Khosravi et al. p. 106-107). However, in Arabic literature, ecocriticism remains in its infancy (Mohsen et al, 2023, p.15). It is still relatively unknown, and establishing a foothold in Arab academia is extremely valuable. We further argue that ecocriticism could be appropriated in the Arabic literary context, given the strong natural environment theme in most Arabic literature. We argue that the green imprint of Arab poets can contribute to the predominantly Western studies of ecocriticism (Estok, 2013). The current study uses ecocriticism as lens to analyze the selected poems to explore the theme of spatial poetry of Ha’il City as an icon of cultural heritage and touristic identifier.

### 4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Place and Nature of The City of the Two Mountains

The first thing to note here is the description of this region as "the two mountains." It is well-known that when the term "the two mountains" is mentioned, the mind immediately turns to the towering mountains of Aja and Salma. Regardless of the story behind the name and the determination of the geographical location, the name "the two mountains" was present in Arabic poetry, and it appeared in the finest poems of that time, specifically the selected poems known as the Mu'allaqat. In the Mu'allaqa of Labid ibn Rabi'ah al-Amiri, we find his saying:

In the eastern slopes of the two mountains or in a place of refuge  
So I embraced it, a single piece, and its marble.

The commentators on the Mu'allaqat, both ancient and modern, have unanimously agreed that the two mountains here are either the mountains of Tayy, or the mountains of Aja and Salma. This was mentioned by Al-Anbari, Al-Zawzani, and Al-Tabrizi in ancient times, and it was confirmed by Abdulaziz Al-Faisal, in his time (Ibn al-Dhahabī, 1996). The mention of the "two mountains" is not found only in the poetry of the Mu'allaqat, but we also see it in other pre-Islamic poems, such as in the works of the great Al-A'sha, Maymoon ibn Qais Al-Bakri, where he depicted the "two mountains" in a beautiful artistic scene with the rain in his verse:

But do you see a flash of lightning on the  
From the fallen branches of this tree  
Two mountains, I admire their emergence.  
A verse that his clouds have nurtured

And this confirms that the term "the two mountains" is deeply ancient, extending back more than fifteen hundred years approximately, and this has been proven by the pre-Islamic poets in their odes and elsewhere. The two mountains, (Aj'ah) and (Salma), have been specifically mentioned in several places in pre-Islamic poetry, whether in the Mu'allaqat or elsewhere. This also indicates the antiquity and authenticity of the two names. In the Mu'allaqa of Amr ibn Kulthum al-Taghlibi, this verse was narrated:

Her young camels are from the eastern side of Salma  
And its amusement is the entirety of Qudaa'a

As the mention of (Aja) appeared in pre-Islamic poetry outside the Mu'allaqat, as in the saying of Imru' al-Qais:

Aja refused to surrender its neighbour, the year.  
So whoever wishes, let him rise up against her with a fighter.

The two names (Aj'ah) and (Salma) also appeared together in pre-Islamic poetry among many poets, whether they were from the two mountains or their neighbours. For example, Zayd ibn Mehleh al-Ta'i, known as Zayd al-Khayl, who visited the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and converted to Islam, said:

We brought the horses from Aja and Salma  
They gallop, shedding their burdens, the sound of the saddles echoing.

And similar is the saying of Labid ibn Rabi'ah al-Amiri describing the strength of the battalion of al-Nu'man ibn al-Mundhir:

Like the pillars of Salma when they appeared, as if they were  
The peaks of Aj'ah when its streams appeared

And from here, poets did not stray from this spatial and temporal awareness in their portrayal of the (Jabalain) region. In truth, they were drawing a civilisational path for poetry and a historical line filled with events and occasions that affirm the depth of the identity

that this region is distinguished by in terms of strength, pride, generosity, openness, expansiveness, brightness, and the goodness of the land and air, among other meanings that poetry has long celebrated. These meanings, in fact, are what made a great poet like Imru' al-Qais often sing about the Jabalayn and its people, referring to them all as "the mountain," in the sense of using the specific to refer to the general. He does not cease to mention other locations in the Jabalayn to define the nature of the place, drawing its environmental features and civilisational landmarks. He is the one who says in praise of Banu Thual, one of the branches of the Tayy tribe:

O Thualan, where are the sons of Thual?  
 I settled at the house of Amr ibn Darmā', a place of comfort.  
 My horses remain between the air and the plain.  
 Would that there were people who settle in the mountain!  
 Oh, the generosity of the neighbour, and how beautiful the place!  
 The chicks that roam freely from the partridge.

The poet did not stop at merely identifying the place, nor did he stop at describing it, its nature, and its beauty. In fact, he gives a clear indication of the generosity, both psychological and physical, that the inhabitants of this place were known for. Even his she-camel (laboona) enjoyed this generosity, feeling at home with the partridges between (Balta) and (Jaww) and (Mastah), places still known by these names today, and partridges still graze in their vicinity to this day (Ibn al-Athīr, 2012). And Imru' al-Qais himself is the one who made his (she-camel) share with him in enjoying this land, and feeling safe and secure in it, to the extent that it would sleep safely in (al-Qurayyah), a place in the land of al-Jabalayn, a diminutive of village. He would release his she-camel occasionally, letting it wander freely in the outskirts of Ha'il, the city known today He says:

My mare sleeps in the village, our mother  
 And I let her graze occasionally in the outskirts of Ha'il.

Therefore, this verse was considered a witness to the antiquity of the name (Ha'il) as well. However, many who read this verse only inferred the name from it, without recognising it as an ancient cognitive and geographical document that proves the nature of the land, the beauty of the place, and the generosity of its people, whose generosity extended beyond celebrating humans to celebrating animals as well. Here, we glimpse another civilisational impression of the place; poetry is not merely a documentation of the place and a recording of time, but it is much more than that, as described by the attributes of Imru' al-Qais in the aforementioned poem. Poetry has had a significant role and a clear impact in establishing "nomenclatural relationships" that do not define the features of a place, but rather leave an impression in documenting its events and depicting its civilisation through a collection of verses. Therefore, through poetry, we no longer need to learn about the region of Al-Jabalayn through geographical dictionaries, and that it is a passage "a valley in the mountains of Tayyi," for poetry has proven this, and even expanded in detailing the place, revealing its history and civilisation, and even the nature of its water and air. One of the Tayyi poets, attributed to Suwayd ibn Bujayla and Jabir ibn Ralan, says:

Oh, how my soul longs whenever I touch a painting  
 The water of sorrow shimmered in them and met.  
 On a sip from the pools of water, O Tabb.  
 Upon them are the breaths of the playful winds.

And (Yathb) mentioned by the poet here is a beautiful site located east of the city of Ha'il, teeming with ancient inscriptions and writings. It seems that the investigator of the poetry and history of Tayyi in the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, Dr. Wafa Al-Sindioni was mistaken when she claimed that these verses were said "in longing and nostalgia for the first homes of Tayy in the land of Yemen, where the clear, sparkling waters of Ma'rib are." And I say: The inhabitants of the Jabalain region know this place well, and they are aware of its distinctive features, such as the pleasant air and the clear, sparkling waters when it rains. Additionally, Yaqut al-Hamawi definitively confirmed this when he mentioned that "Yatab, with a broken ta and a single ba, is an improvised name for the waters in Ajad." I have personally visited it, and today it is close to Ha'il, just a few kilometres away, especially after the city expanded in terms of urban development. And often the places and locations mentioned by the poet in the Jabalayn region indicate significant events, perhaps most of which were wars and campaigns (Ibn Ḥamdūn, 1996). Therefore, we find some of them referring to incidents that occurred in areas whose names have been forgotten or changed. For example, in the saying of Alqamah Al-Fahl, who referred to "Al-Hayma," which Al-Bakri mentioned as being in the lands of Tayy, and is known today as "Qafar." Alqamah says:

**He caught up with them short of Al-Hayma.**

And it was common to mention them in pre-Islamic poetry, which often did not go beyond the bounds of pride, nostalgia, and perhaps belonging and honour, as one of the 'Tayyi' poets said, for example:

And in the two mountains, we have a stronghold  
We ascended to it with the dark steeds of the mountains.

Indeed, the two mountains have become a landmark through which the poet fortifies himself by documenting his deeds, remaining a towering witness and a testament to the history of the place on one hand, and the history of the event on the other; thus, Antarah ibn Shaddad used it in his poetry when he wanted it to signify the scene of the events. He said at the beginning of a poem of his after a battle between the Arabs and the Persians:

Ask, O 'Abla of the two mountains, about us.  
We annihilated their gathering when they came to us.  
And what the non-Arabs have faced from us  
The processions of humans and jinn swirl.

The two mountains have been a source of inspiration for poets from various angles; they evoke longing, grandeur, pride, strength, resilience, generosity, and purity. Their numerous locations and places—many of which we have not yet captured in poetry.

**4.2 Place and Memory of the City of the Two Mountains**

The region of Al-Jabalayn acquired a different character during the Prophethood era, distinguishing it in terms of meanings, values, and events, which increased its status and fame. The arrival of Zaid Al-Khayl in the delegation of Tayy, as well as the arrival of Adi ibn Hatim and the story of the capture of his sister Safana, both of whom were companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), clearly indicate that this region was neither absent nor distant from the stage of events, but rather from the most significant events, which was the mass conversion of people to the religion of God. This

transformation made the region influenced by the new Islamic character, elevating its status and value. Zayd al-Khayl - may Allah be pleased with him - was a poet who lived during both the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras. His poetry witnessed many events, and perhaps the most significant event was his end; for poetry drew the curtain on his life, depicted his fate, and marked his demise. Most sources have referenced these two verses to indicate the final place of his life:

I set out towards the eastern lands of my people at dawn.  
Oh, how many days, if I fell ill, would they come back to me.  
And I am left in a house with a single cushion  
The habits of those who have not been trained among them struggle.

And the (Farda) mentioned here is the one that Yaqut referred to in his dictionary as being in the lands of Tayy, and that his grave is there. Perhaps the indication of the word (Mashariq) also clarifies this, but what definitively confirms it is his saying:

May God water what lies between Al-Qafil and Ta'ba.  
And the desire for Ermam, and what surrounds the guide.

And (Tabah) and (Irmaam) are places mentioned by Al-Bakri as being in the land of Tayy. It appears that (Tabah) today is the one that lies on the slopes of the (Salma) mountains, and this is confirmed by its proximity to (Fayd) which neighbours it. It has been narrated in the biography that the Prophet (peace be upon him) granted Zayd Al-Khayr (Fayd) and two lands with him. Then Zayd left Medina returning to his people; he was struck by fever in (Fardah). When he felt his end was near, he recited the previous verses. Thus, poetry arose here to immortalise this incident from different perspectives (Ibn al-Anbārī, 2004). The poetry of that period immortalised the significant events that had the merit—after God Almighty—in changing the course of history. On the day of Buzakha, which is a location in the region of Al-Jabailain, Khalid ibn al-Walid (may Allah be pleased with him) fought the apostates after the death of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). This was when Tulaifa ibn Khawlid al-Asadi apostatised and claimed prophethood. The poetry documented this incident, as in the words of Mukannaf ibn Zaid al-KHa'il, who witnessed the battle against the apostates with Khalid ibn al-Walid (may Allah be pleased with him).

Ask the camels of the birds who has wounded them.  
They strayed and were deceived by the false hopes of Tulaitha.  
When they saw us in the open field, they turned away.  
They fled, and the spears urged them on.

The calamity of Buzakha, and the blood is pouring.  
Lying, but our Lord's call does not lie.  
We call to the religion of the Prophet and we desire it.  
And in every way they turned, they did not desire.

So, the poetry here summarises the details. The poetry here summarises the many important details of the events, as if the poet is conducting a military analysis of what happened and transpired on that day, from the defeat of the enemies, their trembling, and their flight.

And it is narrated about Khalid ibn al-Walid - may Allah be pleased with him - that he praised the Tayyis who performed excellently on that day and others, as we find these verses

expressing that, he says:

May God reward 'Tayy' in their homeland on our behalf.  
They are the people of the banners of generosity and hospitality.  
In the battlefield of heroes, the best reward  
When the breeze has wrapped itself around every tent

The poets of the Umayyad dynasty referred to the day of (Buzakha) in their poems, where that day became a paragon of bravery and pride. Al-Baith Al-Majashi'i, while praising Caliph Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik and alluding to one of the notable figures of that day, his uncle (Qais ibn Zuhair ibn Judhama), says:

And your uncle repelled the people on the day of Buzakha  
And he charged fiercely, while the spears were shattering.

The region of Al-Jabalayn provided Muslims with sources of strength, equipment, and supplies; and poetry has proven its merit in this regard. Therefore, the companion Abdullah ibn Rawaha - may Allah be pleased with him - mentioned in one of his poems the bringing of horses from the region of Al-Jabalayn, encouraging and urging the conquering armies.

We brought horses from Ajah and Far'a.  
We set out, and the steeds were marked.  
She is lured by the grass, its branches.  
Poison breathes in her nostrils.

These verses are from a poem he recited during the Battle of Mu'tah in the year eight, when people descended into (Ma'an) from the land of the Levant and saw the large enemy army. He recited this poem, encouraging and boasting, and there is no doubt that poetry was a powerful weapon against the infidels during the Prophet's mission - peace be upon him. These two verses indicate that strong horses were selected from the land of (Ajl) and (Far') which is the tallest and central mountain in Ajl, as mentioned by Yaqut in his dictionary. And even in ordinary events, poetry never ceases to depict important places and identify influential locations, especially if they hold value for their owner or those who belong to them. For instance, when Bashar ibn Abu Khazim al-Asadi praised Aws ibn Haritha al-Tai, the noble companion who narrated from the Prophet - peace be upon him - and came to him with seventy riders from Tai and pledged allegiance to Islam, we see the poet hinting—out of appreciation and celebration of the praised one—to the places connected to the roots of the praised. He might say, for example:

I wish I had seen the camels throwing  
Pillars of the people and the southern regions of Salma  
To Aws ibn Haritha ibn Lam  
So neither a crack in a robe nor a stride  
With her hands, the vast lands of Shiraaf  
On her hindquarters are the dark spots of the saddle.  
For your Lord, know if you do not fear.  
On the slippery slopes of the cunning

The mention of places in the Jabalayn region is always associated with events, and this is natural. In fact, we found that the capital of Jabalayn (Ha'il) is rarely mentioned except in

contexts where an important event occurs, as in the saying of Anif bin Zaban Al-Nabhani Al-Ta'i when he mentions Ha'il:

So when we reached the foothills from the heart of Ha'il  
We called upon Nizar and allied ourselves with Tayy.  
So that her thorns and her flow meet  
Like the lions of the desert, her bravery and her battles

And indeed, the Umayyad poets frequently played on the themes of strength and pride that characterised the region of the two mountains. For example, Al-Farazdaq employs Mount Salma's strength in the context of patience in the face of calamity, saying:

We were afflicted with what, if Salma had been afflicted with it,  
It would have collapsed, but Darim endured the calamity.

The region of Al-Jabalayn during the time of the Prophethood and the Umayyad era acquired a beautiful character; it adorned itself with noble values and honourable traits that were no longer limited to strength, steadfastness, pride, and belonging, but extended to the commemoration of noble deeds and great stances that witnessed its greatness, especially when it played a supportive role in serving the Islamic religion.

### **4.3 Place, Nature and Memory of the City of the Two Mountains**

Perhaps the fame of the Jabalayn did not reach the heights during the Abbasid era as it did in the pre-Islamic era, the era of Prophethood, and the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. This is because the center of the Muslim world shifted from the area adjacent to the Jabalayn (the city of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him) to Damascus during the Umayyad period, and then to Baghdad during the Abbasid period. It is known that the Abbasid state lasted for about five centuries and more, and it was filled with events that changed the course of history and added new dimensions to Arab and Islamic civilisation. The pride in the glorious history and the heroic deeds of the Jabalayn region in supporting the Islamic armies and the War of Apostasy continued; hence, we find Abu Tammam Al-Ta'i in one of his poems boasting about it, recalling the day of Buzakha, saying:

And we were soldiers for the Prophet  
On the day of the Buzakhat, we came to the watering place.

However, the presence of the Jabalayn region in the poetry of the Abbasid era has diminished in terms of impactful events related to history and civilisation. The celebration of the Jabalayn region in poetry remained within the bounds of pride in that region, belonging to it, reminiscing about its past, or mentioning some of its locations connected to the poet's suffering. This is Al-Abbas ibn Al-Ahnaf, the author of delicate love poems, and he is the Najdi poet who lived in the early Abbasid era. He mentioned one of the locations in Al-Jabalayn in some of his love poems, where he referred to Al-Ajfar, a place known today, near Ha'il. Yaqut defined it in his dictionary and mentioned that it is about thirty-six parasangs from Fayd. Al-Abbas ibn al-Ahnaf says, addressing the moon, speaking to it about the distance of his beloved who has been separated by the journey:

O radiant moon,  
Look at your counterpart in beauty.  
For I come to you alone with it.

(Garbage) without him and (misery)  
Look with your eyes, do you see?  
Perhaps you will reach or discover.  
And I confide in you what I conceal.

(Zubala), (Al-Shuquq), and (Al-Thalabiya) are all locations near the region of Al-Jabailin, between the ancient lands of Tayy and Asad. Several geographers have mentioned them, including Al-Bakri in his dictionary. As for Al-Ajfar, it is one of the villages belonging to the eastern region of Al-Jabailin, an agricultural area known for its fertile land. When Al-Buhturi praised one of the Tayy people, he mentioned the capital of Al-Jabailin (Ha'il) and some of the characteristics and features of the place that hint at the most prominent signs and indications of the nature of the land, which is the (palm tree). He reminds the praised person of their Tayy kinship and ancient glories.

Your kin, do not wrong them, for they will send forth  
She has the noble lineage that you know.  
So do not ask her about her ancient heritage.  
Those with the green palm trees in the heart of (Ha'il)

Upon you are chests whose grudges do not die  
And in it are the rarest treasures of excellence and their ancient roots.  
Its blacksmithing is from what its iron has benefited.  
And in (Falaaj) her speeches and her eloquence

And what is noteworthy in this verse is not only the poet's reference to (Ha'il), but also the allusion to the (palm tree), which is a symbol of heritage and authenticity. The people of Al-Jabalayn have used it since ancient times to this day as a symbol of generosity and growth. Our Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has also used it today as a symbol on the green flag of Tawheed, along with the two swords that symbolise strength and justice. Al-Buhturi does not stray far from the (Jabals) whenever he wants to bestow upon his praised one the attributes of strength and pride; therefore, he sometimes draws inspiration from the grandeur of (Ajl) to support his position of praise and commendation, saying for example:

Majestic as the blade of a sword, if it were cast upon it  
The peaks of (Aji) remained, and its banners were unfurled.

And it is remarkable that we find the poets of this era amusing themselves in the caliphs' courts by mentioning the region of the two hills in the recitation of their poems before the caliphs; for Hamdun ibn Ismail narrated that he was present with Al-Ma'mun in the land of the Romans, with a candle in his hand on a dark night with lightning and thunder, and before he could tell him a story he was eager to hear, he began to present some poetry, reciting verses from it:

If someone were to spend the night beside a mound  
Sitting until the shadow shortens there  
To the mountain of Tiy, where the rope has fallen  
They departed, and all the people were united in their longing for it.

And we can finally point out that the region of Al-Jabalayn during the Abbasid era was not only a source of poetry, but we also saw it sometimes as a source of criticism. This was

noted, for example, by Al-Asma'i, who commented on the saying of the pre-Islamic poet Zuhair bin Abi Sulma:

Then they continued and said: "Indeed, your appointment  
Water in the east of Salma: Fayd or Rakak.

Al-Asma'i said: "I asked the noble women of Faid about (Rakak), and it was said: The water here is called (Raka), so I realised that Zuhair was in need and weakened." Yaqut mentioned in his dictionary that "Rakk" is "a place in the vicinity of Salma, one of the mountains of Tayy." (Abū Tammām, 2000). Today, it is one of the villages of Ha'il, located on its eastern side, about sixty kilometres away. As we mentioned earlier, poetry in the Abbasid era continued to recall some events that took place in the Jabalayn region and was influenced by the mention of some locations and places that were referenced in the poetry of previous eras, whether the pre-Islamic era, the early Islamic period, or the Umayyad era. Additionally, some meanings in the poetry of this time drew their value from the environment, nature, and civilisations of the Jabalayn region.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Arabic poetry serves as a vital medium through which the place, nature, and memory of the Ha'il region, particularly the Jabalayn City (the city of the Two Mountains), are preserved and reimagined across time. While literary historians may differ in defining the chronology of early Arabic periods, poetic texts remain among the most reliable cultural archives for reconstructing both the environmental and social realities of these eras. Through the works of pre-Islamic and later Arab poets, the Jabalayn region emerges as a richly textured landscape, where mountains, valleys, and natural features are not merely described but are deeply embedded in the lived experiences of its inhabitants. These poetic representations go beyond aesthetic expression to document ecological details, patterns of settlement, and the rhythms of daily life, thereby constructing a vivid and enduring image of the region's natural and human environment. Employing an ecocritical lens, this study has shown that the poets' engagement with place operates through both intentional depiction and spontaneous evocation. In doing so, poetry functions as a form of environmental memory—preserving geographical knowledge, recording historical transformations, and articulating a strong sense of place-based identity. Although the classical Arab poet did not consciously assume the role of historian, his close association with tribal life enabled him to capture events, landscapes, and cultural practices with remarkable immediacy and depth, effectively bridging the gap between literary expression and historical documentation. Moreover, the continuity of poetic engagement with Ha'il from the pre-Islamic period to modern times highlights the region's enduring civilizational and cultural significance. Poetry thus becomes a means of tracing the transformation of place while simultaneously affirming its stability as a site of memory, heritage, and identity. In this light, the Jabalayn City is not merely a geographical location but a dynamic literary and ecological space, continuously shaped and reshaped through poetic discourse. The interplay between literature, landscape, and memory revealed in this study contributes to a deeper understanding of environmental heritage in Arabic literary traditions and reinforces the importance of ecopoetics as a critical framework within contemporary Arabic literary studies.

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