

KAAMIL, WAAFIR, RAMAL

1. Kaamil

- Unambiguously modeled on the Arabic meter
- Probably the most popular meter for written poetry
- 140 poems in current database (825 poems/songs total, 535 “written”)
- Stanzaic forms

	Dimeter	Trimeter	Trimeter with catalexis in last line	Catalectic trimeter
Couplets	8 ¹	54	55	5
Quintains	6 ²	5 ³	0	4 ⁴
Other		1 in triplets 1 w. no fixed line #	1 in triplets	1 in quatrains

¹One adds a – to the end of the second line.

²One has a single syllable (v or –) rather than vv at the beginning of each line.

³One mixes trimeter and catalectic trimeter. One has a number of apparent regularities.

⁴One has a single v rather than vv at the beginning of each line.

Scansion

Full trimeter: vv – v – / vv – v – / vv – v –

Catalectic trimeter: vv – v – / vv – v – / vv – –

Dimeter: vv – v – / vv – v –

Examples: Yusufu Kantu Isa, “Wakar Duniya” [Song about the World]

Akilu Aliyu, “Hausa Mai Ban Hausa” [Hausa, the Giver of Vexation]

2. Waafir

- Unambiguously modeled on the Arabic meter
- Fairly popular, but not nearly as frequently used as *kaamil*
- 36 poems in current database (825 poems/songs total, 535 “written”)
- Stanzaic forms

	Dimeter	Trimeter	Trimeter with catalexis in last line	Catalectic trimeter
Couplets	6 ¹	0	1	19
Quintains	6 ²	0	0	0
Quatrains	2	1	0	1

¹Two of these, by the same poet (Ibrahim Yaro Muhammad), scan as *waafir* dimeter if one scans the whole couplet as a unit. However, as printed, the first line in many couplets is catalectic, but if the first syllable of the second line is added to the first, the

first line scans as a full dimeter and the remainder of the second line is also a dimeter. Filling out the two lines of the couplet in this way results in massive *enjambement*.

²One may not be *waafir* at all. It scans – v – vv – / v – –

Scansion

Full trimeter: v – vv – / v – vv – / v – vv –

Catalectic trimeter: v – vv – / v – vv – / v – –

Dimeter: v – vv – / v – vv –

Examples: Muhammadu d'an Amu, “Wakar Birnin Kano” [Song of Kano City]
Aliyu Namangi, “Wakar Keke” [Song of the Bicycle]

3. Ramal

- *Traditional* vs. *Caji*: There seem to be two similar meters, one of Arabic origin (which I will call *traditional*), one a native Hausa meter (which I will call *caji*)
- *Traditional* ramal is not common. I found only three examples in my corpus, all dimeters. Two are from the 19th century (HDS_YGM in couplets, ADF_CBA in quintains¹) and one from the twentieth century (MSi_MSi in quintains)
- *Caji* ramal is fairly widely used among poets who compose in writing:² 23 in the current database by 11 poets

	Dimeter	Dimeter with alternate last line
Couplets	1	0
Quintains	3	16 ¹
Quatrains	1	1
Triplets	0	1

¹This number is inflated because nine of the exemplars are the nine published cantos of what should be considered a single work, *Imfiraji* (see footnote), plus an additional unpublished canto of which I have only a recording.

Scansion

Xalilian base form: – v – – / – v – –

Traditional Hausa ramal: v v – v / v v – –

Caji ramal: – v – vv / – v – –

Alternate last line of *caji* ramal: vv / – vv – v / – v – –

¹ Most quintains among 19th century poems seem to be *tahmisi*, i.e. original couplets to which three lines have been added by the poet or someone else, usually before the two lines of the original couplet. This poem seems to be an original quintain. If any three lines from the stanzas are removed, the text doesn't make much sense.

² Better would be poets who “compose in the written tradition”. By far the best known work in this meter is *Imfiraji* [Song of Comfort], composed by the blind poet, Aliyu Namangi, and transcribed from his oral rendition by his daughter

Examples: Traditional – Hayatu an Sa’idu, “*Ya Ghiyatha l-Mustaghithi*” [Arabic: Oh Helper of Those who Cry for Help]
Caji (written) – Aliyu Namangi, “*Imfiraji*” (6th Canto) [Song of Comfort]
Caji (oral) – Hamza Caji, “*Ta’aziyyar Kai’*” [Self Eulogy]