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Krystyna Skarżyńska-Bocheńska

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Krystyna Skarżyńska-Bocheńska

AL-ĞĀḤIZ

AND HIS THEORY OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION



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BOGDAN SKŁADANEK – iranista, studiował na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim, w Leningradzie i w Teheranie. Specjalizował się w historii Persji wczesnego średniowiecza. W 1966 roku uzyskał stopień doktora, w 1977 doktora habilitowanego, w 1987 zaś tytuł profesora. Przez wiele lat pełnił fukcję dyrektora Instytutu Orientalistycznego Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

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Introduction

My studies on rhetoric and stylistics in Al-Ğāḥiz's work

The reason why I have decided to organize this book the way it is organized, is the specificity of the study I have carried out.

My intention is also to explain the differences in and the controversies around the applicable scientific terminology and to show the Readers the problems that, at the initial stage of my study of Al-Ğāḥiz's works, rendered it impossible to understand the exceptional talent shown by him in his 'theory of social communication.' I was able to present them logically and completely after making myself familiar with the doctor's thesis of Aš-Šāhid Albūšayhī Muṣṭalaḥāt naqdiyya wa balāġiyya fī Kitāb al-bayān wa at-tabayyun li Al-Ğāḥiz (Beirut 1982/1402h), and with the study of M. Bakhtin Les genres du discours, contained in his Esthétique de la création verbale (Gallimard, Paris 1984) that originated in the middle of the 80s of the past century.

Inspired by Józef Bielawski, my Master and Promoting Professor, I began my doctoral studies in Al-Ğāḥiz's Approach to Rhetoric and Stylistics, while doing my scholarship work in Cairo in 1966. In my studies, I used the Cairo editions of fundamental works by Al-Ğāḥiz: Kitāb al-ḥaya Wan Y Cawan in 1926—1926, ed. PAbli Ghan Y Clarum ekitāb al-bayān wa attabyīn (3 vol., Al-Qāhira 1926—1927, ed. Sandūbī), and Rasā'il Al-Ğāḥiz ['treaties'] (2 vol., Cairo-Bagdad 1385h/1965, ed. M. 'Abd as-Sallām Hārūn).

My research task was, typically for the oriental study method, to find Al-Šāḥiz's ideas of poetics and rhetoric in the broad context of all his works and to follow them by their systematization.

It was already at the initial stage of my studies that the translation of the title of the work $Kit\bar{a}b$ al- $bay\bar{a}n$ wa at- $taby\bar{i}n$ appeared to be difficult. Its sense was not clear. While making myself familiar with Al- $\check{G}\bar{a}\dot{h}i\dot{z}$'s, student of Mu'tazili masters, logical and precise analyses, I could not understand why the first part of the title $bay\bar{a}n$, which at that time, I translated following theoretical work of S. Skwarczyńska^[1] as 'explication', or, taking into account the scope of Al- $\check{G}\bar{a}\dot{h}i\dot{z}$'s definition ^[2], more broadly as 'expression', was followed by $taby\bar{i}n$ with its dictionary meaning being 'elucidation' i.e. additional synonym that did not bring anything new to it.

At that period, I assumed only one established version of the title of Al-Ğāḥiz's work: *Kitāb al-bayān wa at-tabyīn*, following the most renowned authority in the field – French specialist in Arabic studies Ch. Pellat^[3], and following I.J. Kračkovskij ^[4], Russian specialist in Arabic studies, theoretician of Arabic poetics from Damascus Amdjad Trabulsi ^[5], as well as following Egyptian editors: Sandūbī and 'Abd as-Sallām M. Hārūn, who based their studies on the

manuscript kept in Cairo. My checking the *Al-Ğāḥiz* entry in subsequent editions of *Encyclopaedia of Islam* confirmed that version of the title [6]. It was only C. Brockelmann who, in brackets, provided another version of transcription of the second part of the title, without any comments on it: *Bayān wa tabyīn* (*tabayyun*)[7]. None of the aforementioned researchers translated the title of the work, despite translating other titles. It seemed they were not sure what its correct translation should be.

I passed my doctoral thesis examination in Al-Šāḥiz's Approach to Rhetoric and Stylistics in 1970.

On its basis, I published two articles in the "Rocznik Orientalistyczny" and suspended my studies on Al-Ğāḥiz for a long time, focusing on studying and publishing many works in the field of contemporary Arabic literature.

In 1990, I was invited to the international conference "School of Abbasid Studies" held at University of St. Andrews in Scotland. The organizers, being interested in my earlier articles, asked me to give a lecture on Al-Ğāḥiz. My speech: Some Aspects of Al-Ğāḥiz's Rhetorical Theory, was appreciated and admitted to printing. [9] Two years later, similar interest was given to my speech at the subsequent conference 'School of Abbasid Studies': Al-Ğāḥiz on Poetry and Poets. [10] At St. Andrews I met world-renowned researchers occupied with studies on the Abbasid period, such as: Wolfhardt Heinrichs, Agostino Gilardo, R. Burton, D.E.P. Jackson, H.N. Kennedy and many others. Those whose studies were of special interest to me were the researchers of Al-Ğāḥiz and to write a book on his theory of 'expression' (bayān).

Discovery of the original title in old manuscripts

The turning point in my studies was meeting at the congress "Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants" in Salamanca of Muhammad Benšarīfa, director of the National Library in Rabat, who sent me a copy of the doctoral thesis of Morocco researcher Aš-Šāhid Al-Bèšayhī (Albèšayhī) entitled *Literary Critical and Rhetorical Terms in Al-Ğāḥiz's "Kitāb albayān wa at-tabayyun*" — which has not yet been given enough interest in European and Arab countries.

Therefore, I will briefly present his ideas here. The most essential for his studies of Al- $\check{G}\bar{a}$ hiz is Albūšayhī's providing evidence that the true title of Al- $\check{G}\bar{a}$ hiz's work was: $Kit\bar{a}b\ al$ - $bay\bar{a}n\ wa\ at$ -tabayyun

Being a researcher at Al-Qarawiyyin University at Fez, he had an opportunity to study manuscript no. 1244 kept in the treasury of Al-Qarawiyyin Library, and provides us with a vocalized version of the title: *As-sifr at-tālit min al-bayān wa at-tabayyun, tā'līf Abi Utmān 'Amrū b. Baḥr Al-Ğāḥiz.* He also gives evidence of the manuscript old origin.

He also analysed another manuscript kept at the Fayd Allah Library in Istanbul (illustrated manuscript catalogue no. 1/433, 106, adab), in which Al-Ğāḥiz's title appears in obviously vocalized version: Yaštamilu hadā as-sifru 'alā ğamī' "Kitāb al-bayān wa at-tabayyun" tā'līf Abī 'Utmān 'Amrū Ibn Baḥr Al-Ğāḥiz [...]. He also found that it was the oldest of the work manuscripts ever found, dated 347 hiğra, i.e. not even one hundred years after Al-Ğāḥiz's^[13] death. Despite its vocalization, the title of the manuscript was entered in the catalogue as: Al-Bayān wa at-tabyīn [sic!]. [14]

Albūšayhī also researched the manuscript kept at the Köprülü Library in Istanbul, entitled: Al-ğuz' al-awwal min "Kitāb al-bayān wa at-tabayyun" taṣnīf Abī 'Utmān 'Amrū Ibn Baḥr Al-Šāḥiz [15]

a. Historical evidence

In addition to his research work on manuscripts, the author provided a historical proof quoting renowned oriental study specialists who were sure that the titl $\mathbf{B}ay\bar{a}n$ wa tabayyun was correct.

As early as in 1838, M. G. de Slane, in the English translation of the work made by Ibn Hallikan: *Kitāb wafayāt al-a'yān* [16] in the part dealing with Al-Ğāḥiz, follows the Arabic text reading *Kitāb al-bayān wa tabayyun* [17].

The same Cersion of the third optical by Chamiest Huar Mr Ja Palacky to Palacket Eiterature (London 1903) and in later French editions (*Littérature arabe*, Paris 1912 and 1923). Albūšayhī also quotes equal legitimacy of both title versions at Brockelmann's and the fact that famous Egyptian editor 'Abd as-Sallām Hārūn, on the occasion of publishing of Al-Šāḥiz's work in 1948, noticed two different transcription versions of the title: *tabyīn* or *tabayyun* in various manuscripts.

b. Logical proof

The author quotes the opinion of Mišāl 'Āṣī, researcher from Syria, and his study $Maf\bar{a}h\bar{\imath}m$ al- $\check{g}am\bar{a}liyya$ wa an-naqd fi adab Al- $\check{G}a\dot{h}iz$ in which it was asserted that the title appearing in several manuscripts $Bay\bar{a}n$ wa tabayyun was correct for two reasons:

- a) the word $bay\bar{a}n$ means 'clear and eloquent expression', and the word $taby\bar{t}n$ means the same and applies also to the speaker. [underlined by K. S.-B.]
- b) the word tabayyun applies to the hearer burdened with the task of the lask of the (understanding) of (what is linked with bayān of the speaker), whose task is $ifh\bar{a}m$ (providing for understanding) [underlined by K. S.-B.]

That is how contemporary Arab researchers brought back true meaning to Al-Šāḥiz's word being so essential to the title of his work and to his whole theory – the meaning that had been

changed by careless copyists, who tried to correct the author [20]. Here, I give many thanks to those researchers and to M. Benšarīfa, who enabled me to get acquainted with Albèšayhī's work.

On the basis of the above convincing evidence that the title of Al-Ğāḥiz's work was *K. bayān wa tabayyun*, I translated it using the words 'communication and perception'. Next, I formulated the hypothesis that Al-Ğāḥiz was the first in the Arab world and in Europe to invent and formulate the theory of social communication Having compared his ideas with works of M. Bakhtin, I found that Al-Ğāḥiz's theory was more extensive and formulated more precisely than Bakhtin's. Therefore, I accepted the invitation extended by Professor Miklós Maróth to take part in the conference in Piliscsaba, organized by Pázmány Péter Catholic University, and delivered to the Arabic study specialists my speech entitled *Entre Al-Ğāḥiz et Bakhtine*. [21]

At that time, I took Al-Ğāḥiz's advice:

If you wanted to be occupied with that art ($sin\bar{a}'a$) [...], you made $qas\bar{\imath}da$, produced oration or wrote a treaty [...], present your work to researchers. And if you see they are listening carefully, their eyes looking at you and [can hear] those who ask for it [...], serve it [...] [B., t. 1, p. 176].

The Arabic literature researchers were surprised to see an attempt at comparing Al-Šāḥiz, Arab researcher of the 9th century, with M. Bakhtin, famous theoretician who inspired the modern web with a control of the century. However, when piece the with a control of the century of the centur

For the content, if alive – likes to shine, and if obvious – wants to call out. [22]

Life and work of Al-Ğāhiz

Abū 'Utmān 'Amr Ibn Baḥr al-Fukamī al-Baṣri, known under the nickname Al-Ğāḥiz (Boggle Eyes), which he accepted with his inborn sense of humour, was born in Basra ca. 776. His family was probably of Ethiopian origin and taken care of by Arab tribe Banū Kināna. He was educated in Basra, which in his young years was one of the two famous centres of Arabic science and literature, the other one being Kufa.

Al-Ğāḥiz felt himself one hundred per cent Arab and throughout his whole life he consistently defended Arabic tradition and culture, both old-Arabic of the *al-ǧāhiliyya* time (6th century) and Muslim, against the influence of the old culture of defeated Persians (*aš-šuʿūbiyya*), which, beginning from mid 8th century, was disseminated by Persian origin secretaries of the caliph chancellery, and next, during the rule of Harūn ar-Rašīd (786–809), his viziers of the Persian Barmakid family and their caliph court confidents.

Al-Ğāḥiz was an exceptionally talented pupil of philologists from Basra. Those were famous scientist: Abū 'Ubayda (died 825) and Al-'Aṣma'ī' (died 828), his teachers of Arabic language, old and his contemporary Arabic poetry, history, geography, as well as Arabic customs and traditions. It was not long that, thanks to his talents, brightness and independence of thinking, he was admitted to intellectual elite circles of Mu'tazilites, inspired by Greek knowledge. Contacts with them broadened Al-Čāḥiz's creative and scientific horizons. Mu'tazilites allowed conducting philosophical discussions of religious or scientific issues. They introduced the rationalist doctrine in order to explain provisions of the Koran and Islam tradition (ḥadīt). They were adherents of five principles:

- 1. There is One God and he is the Creator of the world
- 2. Koran has been created by God [and not ever existing as maintained by Muslim orthodoxy]
- 3. Koran is 'splendid' as regards the content and form
- 4. A Muslim who has committed a serious sin [e.g. polytheism, apostasy] is in the 'middle position' between 'the faithful' and 'non-faithful' (*munāfiq*)
- 5. They assumed personal responsibility of an individual faith involves avoiding sins, specifically serious ones; in the Koran God specified what is good and what is bad, and this is to be observed; thereby rejecting the principle of predestination and promoting differentiating between 'good' and 'evil' on the basis of provisions of the Koran. Wydawnictwo Dialog(C) Copyright edycja elektroniczna Mu'tazilites were named ahl al-'adl wa at-tawhīd, i.e. people of righteousness and of single

Mu'tazilites were named *ahl al-'adl' wa at-tawhīd*, i.e. people of righteousness and of single [God]. They were most influential during the time of the ruling of caliphs Harūn ar-Rašīd (786–809) and Al-Mā'mūn (813–833). The latter one acknowledged their doctrine as applicable throughout the whole caliphate.

The most distinguished scientist Mu'tazili were Ibrāhīm Ibn as-Sayyār an-Nazzām (died ca. 825) and Bišr Ibn al-Mu'tamir (died between 835 and 840). Their works were lost, or destroyed on purpose, during the time of the ruling of caliph Al-Mutawakkil (847–861), who condemned their doctrine as heretic. Their teaching has remained only in fragments, as quoted in Al-Ğāḥiz's books. He studied Greek philosophers' works at An-Nazzām's, specifically Aristotle's Logic and Zoology, thanks to which he acquired the skill of precise reasoning and developed his interest in nature. Another master, Bišr Ibn al-Mu'tamir, made his talented student take interest in art of words and rhetoric, which later on resulted in Al-Ğāḥiz's original, first time formulated theory of social communication He truly appreciated scientific terminology developed by Mu'tazili scientists, which is visualized in preciseness of the terms used by him in his works. First of all, however, he took from his masters' deep religious Muslim thinking, seeking justice and truth, and ethical principles, and made them the basis of his thinking. His work is characterized by precision and logic of scientific discourse despite purposeful 'work embellishing with poetry, anecdote and stories' in order to provide readers with entertainment, so characteristic for adab type works.

Al-Ğāḥiz was a scientist of very broad interests, strong critical mind, intelligent and keen observer of life and nature. He had outstanding literary talent and sense of humour.

He died in 868, as the legend says, buried among books in his library.

Work

The life and work of Al-Ğāḥiz took place at the turn of the (8^{th} and the 9^{th} century – a very interesting period of flourishing Arabic-Muslim culture, in which there still concurrently existed: spoken word (lafz), i.e. poetry, tribal speeches, evening storytelling while sitting by the fire (samar) – preserved from the period of al-ğāhiliyya, as well as official speeches of caliphs, judges and governors, preaching in mosques and by wandering preachers. Writing (hat) was already appearing, with old Arabic poems written down by philologists, as well as written down speeches, preaching, stories, etc. It was at that time that short treaties (rasāil) appeared, and next, extensive scientific works and adab – beautiful, erudite, popular science prose. The term adab had several meanings – from personal culture, good manners acquired through knowledge required to be learnt by an educated man ($ad\bar{t}b$), to the above-mentioned kind of educational and entertaining prose, embellished with poem quotations.

Al-Ğāḥiz achieved fame as the writer of many-volume works of *adab* type, and as the author of concise, logically composed treaties.

In his Myatias (Rica in Palaleg) (With polygigethrogy polygigethrogy politics, and customs, presenting details of life of the complex community of the Abbasid time. This subject area also includes his social-tradition work *Kitāb al-buḥalā*' ['Book of Misers'], in which he ridicules greediness, always criticised by Arabs since pre-Muslim times. Al-Ğāḥiz attributes that feature mostly to people of Persian origin, adding to the text attractive satirical poems and entertaining anecdotes.

Selected chapters and fragments of his extensive works are erudite and at the same time, strictly scientific in nature e.g. those of: *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* ['Book of Animals] and *Kitāb al-bayān wa at-tabayyun* ['Book of Communication and Perception']. 'Book of Animals' contains much interesting information about animals and descriptions of animal kinds, inspired to some extent by Aristotle's *Zoology*^[25] Al-Ğāḥiz also provides findings resulting from own observation of the nature, quotes folk beliefs and legends pertaining to particular animals, finally poetic quotations, in which animals are named, with descriptions of hunting, and even a detailed list of subjects of poetic comparisons, e.g. a ruler may be compared to a lion or an eagle, a beautiful girl to a gazelle, etc. The author passes from one animal kind to another and adds many digressions in order to keep the reader interested, and by no means, make him bored.

Probably already during the process of writing of *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* and of observation of the manner in which animals communicate, or their reaction to impulses coming to them from surrounding nature, Al-Ğāḥiz began to think of and develop the idea that brought him to formulate his theory of communication and perception He devoted his whole next

work to that theory.

So, he presented his basic principles of 'communicating' already in 'Book of Animals', and their final version in *Kitāb al-bayān wa at-tabayyun*. Some issues belonging to the area of rhetoric, poetics, and eloquence were additionally included by him in his later written 'treaties'. As it is known, at that time, works were written by hand and copyists were commissioned to do that work. Thus, it was impossible for the author to supplement or develop individual topics; this was possible in his next works. Therefore, it is very difficult to trace individual elements of Al-Ğāḥiz's theory, being so exceptional in the 9th century. Surprisingly, all his works examined in details reveal their elements as a clear, coherent, logical composition.

Majority of his contemporary researchers, later Arab authors, and European Arabic philologists being their successors, used to underline 'chaos' in his works. There were only a few who were able to see his genius. One of them was Józef Bielawski – my master and promoting professor, who, while inspiring me to choose *Discovering of Elements of Rhetoric and Poetics in Al-Ğāḥiz's Works* as the subject matter of my doctor's thesis, provided me with precious advice, fully appreciated by me after years of my work. He drew my attention to the need of making a detailed research of all his works and treaties. In 1991, while giving a speech on Al-Ğāḥiz in Scotland, I could hear the same opinion from Professor Wadī'a Naǧīm, being a renowned authority in Al-Ğāḥiz's work research.

I can remember how enthusiastic I was when, unexpectedly, I discovered very essential parts of Al-Čahrzistheoryichtweaterithat compete topberdesting with different subject contents. And more important that, when put together, they made an unusually logical and coherent theory. [26]

The researcher distinguished himself by clarity of mind and preciseness of lecture, as well as broadness of horizons as creator, due to which his ideas are found to be so fresh nowadays.

In this book in the article *Al-Ğāḥiz's Theory of Social Communication*, I present Al-Ğāḥiz's theory of 'communication and perception', which I compare with Mikhail Bakhtin's, second half of the 20th century, known theory of 'discourse'. Al-Ğāḥiz's theory deals with all kinds of works of his contemporary authors: poets, speech-makers, writers, any people speaking or writing, and analyses their contents.

He devotes special attention to eloquence, its virtues and vices. He is the first one, preceding even famous Ibn al-Mu'tazz (died 908), to discuss rhetoric figures. Al-Ğāḥiz's works are a source of valuable knowledge about the 'golden age' of Arabic culture. At the same time, he is an excellent stylist who writes with imagination, uses original metaphors and comparisons. He is also skilful at selecting poetic quotations and entertaining anecdotes.

In several places I compare Al-Ğāḥiz's opinions with opinions of other known *adab* authors of literary works, for example with Ibn Qutayba (828–889), his rival. As regards Al-Mubarrad, let me use the following quotation from Janusz Danecki's, author's of a monograph on the Arab author, which reads:

Another famous work of Al-Mubarrad was Al- $K\bar{a}mil\ f\bar{\imath}\ al$ -adab [Supreme Book on adab] – a kind of literary selection of stories, anecdotes and poems, with author's philological comments and digressions.

Later on, he says:

In contrast to Al-Ğāḥiz [...], in Al-Mubarrad's work there are no theoretical or literary issues or author's considerations. Al-Ğāḥiz speaks in his own name. Al-Mubarrad prefers to quote others. [27]

Focusing on the subject matter of my study, I put aside other fields of knowledge being important in Al-Šāḥiz's work (e.g. zoology, political science, ethnography, etc.).

Zapraszamy do zakupu pełnej wersji książki

Przypisy

Introduction

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- [23] Cf. *Mu'tazila*, [in] EI, vol. 3, p. 783.
- [24] Ca. 40 treaties have been preserved.
- [25] See: Wadī'a Naǧīm, Manqūlāt Al-Šāḥiz 'an Aristū fī 'Kitāb al-ḥayawān', Kuwayt 1985.
- [26] The reader will notice easily that Al-Ğāhiz's opinions and deliberations which I quote in my book are coherent and logical in their entirety, even though expressed in different works, volumes and pages or even treaties. Despite intermissions and digressions, the author perfectly controls the principal idea of the given work. It was his Arab commentators who got lost, not rarely thanks to copyists' errors.
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- Contemporary Asia and Africa
- Journeys Countries Peoples
- Literature of transformation

- Orientalia Polona
- Arabic texts
- Theatre
- Art
- To be a woman
- Everyday life in...
- Life in Japanese style
- Topic of the day

Prowadzimy sprzedaż wysyłkową