

## AR-RUMMĀNĪ ON ELOQUENCE (*BALĀGA*)

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1 Recent historical and systematic researches attest the fact that the dogma of the inimitability of the Koran (*i'ğāz al-Qur'ān*) was firmly established in the early period of Islam (Grotzfeld 1969; Neuwirth 1983). The systematic analysis of "inimitability" was commenced only in the period of the development of rational theology (*kalām*), at the turn of the 8-9th centuries. Within this framework, the theory was developed that God had sent his significant prophets to perform miracles, and thus Muḥammad's miracle, i.e. the sign of his prophecy, had been the Koran just as Moses's miracle had been magic and that of Jesus healing. There are sources available from the mid-9th century, which regarded the grammatical and stylistic features of the Koran as the basis of its inimitability. It appears from these sources that their authors, while trying to explain the perceptible extraordinariness of the revelation (Neuwirth 1983:169-170), based their research on the outcome of literary and, especially, poetical research<sup>1</sup>. Works on the inimitability of the Koran in the 10th century (Ġurġānī, *Risāla*; Ḥaṭṭābī, *Bayān*; Rummānī, *Nukat*) summarized the theological and prophetic reasoning of the 8-9th centuries; they only concentrated on the elucidation of rhetorical and stylistic, i.e., literary aspects. The theological analysis of *i'ğāz* was preserved along with the linguistic, rhetorical, and stylistic lines of approach.

On the other hand, the turn of the 8-9th centuries and the 9th century brought the most significant change from the point of view of medieval Arabic literature. The poetry of the so-called "moderns" (*muḥ-*

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to point out that most references of the earlier period have been preserved only in fragments; and/or some statements appeared as parergons in works dealing with other questions.

*datūn*) resulted in a modification of traditional literary structures and creative methods; these poets introduced new literary structures, tools and methods. The poetic life of the 9th century was "officially" characterized by the confrontation of traditional and new (*badī'*) poetry. At the same time, there was a large-scale synthesizing-disclosing activity. The subtlety of the situation was manifested in the fact that the outstanding representatives of the new trend took the lead in collecting, systematizing and making the works of old Arabic literature available for the public (Abū Tammām, al-Buḥturī)<sup>2</sup>.

The literary examination of the language of the Koran, the critical reception of the *badī'* poetry and the disclosure of the traditional Arabic poetry occurred almost simultaneously in time<sup>3</sup>. Concrete historical circumstances, the question of being created or not being created, and the parallel theological (*mu'tazila*) and political debates (as to the introduction of the *mihna* 'inquisition') necessitated the linguistic examination of the inimitability of the Koran<sup>4</sup>. The age, called the formative period of Islamic culture because of the initiatives and the renewed attempts to study the phenomena of literature and the Koran, lasted some two hundred years (from the 9th to the 11th century). During this period distinguished scholars formulated the conceptual framework and the set of rhetorical methods, which had defined the aesthetic language of Arabic literature almost up to this date. In answer to identical or similar questions, a new structure of scholarship had evolved from the inter-

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to notice that the great syntheses of Arab scholarship were written during the second half of the 9th century and the beginning of the 10th century. The significant syntheses of the science of Tradition (the four big *badī'*-collections) and history (The Chronicle of at-Ṭabarī) were also composed during this time.

<sup>3</sup> Cf., the circumstances of birth and the origin and character of the stylistic, rhetorical material of Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Badī'*.

<sup>4</sup> It is of common knowledge that during the caliphate of al-Ma'mūn, examinations were carried out with the objective of making the system of Mu'tazilite theology universal, i.e., to create a centralized theological system in the Empire. Government officials were to support the theological lines accepted by the government. After 22 years the centralisation efforts failed around 847-9.

action between literary studies and the Koranic sciences: the Arabic rhetorical poetics known as the *'ilm al-balāġa*.

The examination of rhetorical works within the framework of Muslim society requires, above all, the consideration of their literary (aesthetic) and non-literary (theological) aspects. This contradictory situation itself is remarkable. The medieval Muslim thinkers had the task of justifying the dogma (born outside literature but showing some literary characteristics) with the Koran and its text. It appears practical to examine the story of their activity, paying special attention to the "rhetorical"<sup>5</sup> system in which they interpreted their dogma; what role the central concepts of rhetoric thus developed were destined to play in securing the hegemony of theology; how these concepts were connected to one another and/or to the conceptual framework and set of terminology of the representatives of the literary tradition; and how they could be inserted into the triad of rhetoric sciences (*'ilm al-ma'ānī*, *'ilm al-bayān*, *'ilm al-badī'*) to be developed later on. The answers to these questions may get one closer to the solution of certain dilemmas of the Arabic literary tradition<sup>6</sup>.

Answers to the questions raised above will be supplied by analyzing the work of a distinguished author of *i'ğāz*; the role the dogma of the inimitability of the Koran played in the history of rhetoric will also be outlined.

2 Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Īsā ar-Rummānī (d. 384/994) became known as Mu'tazilite grammarian for the succeeding generations, who paid homage to his comprehensive knowledge in the field of philosophy in his grammatical works (Brockelmann 1937-1949 I, 113; S I, 175; Carter

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the medieval Arabic science of literature was not differentiated. However, it is unavoidable that by applying a set of concepts developed in later periods, such characteristics be attributed to earlier stages which had not existed then. Such differences will, as far as possible, be indicated. "Rhetoric", as it will be seen later, means "style" in this context.

<sup>6</sup> The literary justification of the inimitability of the Koran became general by the mid-11th century. In the same period the development of poetry and literary works stuck, the neoclassical trend of the 10th century became increasingly dominant.

1990:129). Beside his grammatical works, his tractate on the inimitability of the Koran, titled *an-Nukat fī i'ğāz al-Qur'ān* (Questions pertaining to the inimitability of the Koran) has also survived. The thoughts of ar-Rummānī have always been taken into account in the history of criticism and of the theory of literature<sup>7</sup>.

3 ar-Rummānī's short, thirty-eight and a half-page treatise can be divided into three major sections structurally. The short introduction lists the seven aspects (*ğiha, wağħ*), practically in one sentence, on the basis of which the inimitability of the Koran is referred to. Subsequently, the author embarks on the treatment of one distinguished aspect, eloquence (*balāğa*), covering more than thirty-four pages. After having elucidated on eloquence, which was his primary concern, he discusses the remaining six aspects on merely four pages.

4 In the introduction, ar-Rummānī summarizes the aspects on the basis of which the miraculous inimitability of the Koran is understood. The *i'ğāz* is manifested in: 1) the lack of a counter-Koran despite reasons and claims that might have necessitated it (*tark al-mu'arada*); 2) that no one (people and jinnees) has lived up to its challenge (*at-tahaddī li-l-kāffa*); 3) that God diverted people from the creation of a work of art which could be measured against the Koran (*as-şarfa*); 4) that eloquence prevails in the Koran (*al-balāğa*); 5) that the Koran provides true information about future events (*al-ahbār as-şādiqa 'an al-umūr al-mustaqbala*); 6) that the Koran breaks with the accepted (literary<sup>8</sup>) tradition (*naqd al-'āda*); 7) that it is comparable to all other inimitable miracles (*qiyāsubu bi-kull mu'ğiz*) (*Talāt rasā'il* 75).

These theological viewpoints are well known from the history of *i'ğāz*<sup>9</sup>. ar-Rummānī enumerates all possibilities of examination. It

<sup>7</sup> See the commentaries of ar-Rummānī's followers on his views on *balāğa* conveniently collected in *Talāt rasā'il* 164-196.

<sup>8</sup> *Talāt rasā'il* 111, where the Koran and the contemporary methods of literary composition are compared to one another.

<sup>9</sup> Cf., Grotzfeld 1969; Neuwirth 1983, and especially Ch. 64 (*Fī i'ğāz al-Qur'ān*) of Suyūtī, *Itqān* 147-160.

appears as if he was doing it in order to put aside everything which is not about the Koran perceived as a linguistic phenomenon. His aim is to interpret the accepted inimitability of the Koran, belonging to the sphere of language, from linguistic aspects – thus further widening the scope of interpretation of the dogma. He undertakes the challenge of approaching the text of the Koran (which cannot be regarded as a piece of literature) from the aspect of eloquence so that the extraordinary feelings and experience resulting from the reception of the Koran be explained by means of literature.

5 ar-Rummānī commences the examination of the questions referring to eloquence by its definition. In his attempt to define *balāga*, he alludes to three spheres of question which constitute the principles of his doctrine. As these spheres permeate through his whole work, they provide its most important foundation. These are the following: 1) the spheres of interpretation of *balāga*; 2) questions of content and form; 3) problems of reception.

5.1 In the first step ar-Rummānī lays down the different types of eloquence (*genera elocutionis*). He says: “*balāga* has three (stylistic) levels. It has an upper and a lower level, and it has a middle (stylistic) level between the upper and lower levels<sup>10</sup>. Everything that falls into the upper (stylistic) level is miraculously inimitable (*mu‘ġiz*). This is the *balāga* of the Koran. Everything that is below this level is the *balāga* of the eloquently speaking people” (Rummānī, *Nukat* 75).

By reading the work of the author, who relies on direct, practical observations, one can understand that the triad of stylistic levels appears virtually in all the works of Muslim authors during the Middle Ages<sup>11</sup>. It is not known in what circumstances it was first formulated in Arabic literature; it was not necessarily a Hellenistic borrowing. The appearance and application of division can be understood as an important

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<sup>10</sup> Similar wordings had been formulated by Greek and Roman authors, e.g., “There are three stylistic genders ...: the first is elevated, the second is medium, the third is simple”, Cornificius, *Rhetorica* 207.

<sup>11</sup> Cf., e.g., Ḥaṭṭābī, *Bayān* 26.

sign of realization within rhetorical examinations. Every human speech act can be characterized by these three levels; notwithstanding, where ar-Rummānī introduces the aforementioned levels, he cites examples taken only from the Koran and the eloquent speech of learned men, and ignores the third level. Therefore, it appears that the three stylistic levels, for some reason, veil a double division.

“As to beauty (*al-ḥusn*)”, he says later, “the highest level of *balāġa* is the eloquence of the Koran. The highest level of *balāġa* is the Koran specifically. The highest level of *balāġa* is inimitable (*mu‘ġiz*) by either the Arabs or the non-Arabs as poetry is inimitable (its level of eloquence cannot be reached) by people who (for whatever reason) are unable to speak. This (the poetry) is inimitable specifically by people unable to speak; that (the Koran) cannot be imitated by the whole mankind (*al-kāffa*)” (Rummānī, *Nukat* 76). The most important message of the dogma of *i‘ġāz* from a literary (aesthetic) point of view was formulated by the author: the spoken (Arabic) language has two spheres: 1) the divine with its own miraculous inimitability and uniqueness; 2) the human sphere, which lacks this miraculous characteristic. This dichotomy is one of the fundamental principles of Muslim (literary) aesthetics. It permeates the circumstances of its development, spreading, reception and subsequent evaluation. It also circumscribes the scope of literature that can be produced in Arabic. He virtually admits the restricted nature of human creative force because he initially rules out the possibility that literature can reach the highest stylistic level. The actual aesthetic evaluation is preceded by an approach of a theological nature, and at this point, ar-Rummānī’s system can be regarded as an adequate manifestation of Muslim faith. That is why the viewpoint attributed to the Mu‘tazilite an-Nazzām (d. 846) has a special significance. According to him, the essence of *i‘ġāz* is that Allah diverted the Arabs from creating the counter-Koran (*ṣarfa*); therefore, *i‘ġāz* could be created only by divine will (Boullata 1988:141-142). It is to an-Nazzām’s credit that, by considering the linguistic tools of the Koran and Arabic literature, he attempted to re-establish the powers of human creativity. ar-Rummānī, on conditions of a kind of prophetic adjustment, accepted the

viewpoint of the *ṣarfa* (Boullata 1988:110) as one of the possible viewpoints. However, he failed to meditate upon its rhetorical consequences and to work out this concept<sup>12</sup>. He asserted that, from his point of view, the Koran was part of the signs of prophecy<sup>13</sup>. When he united the starting and central theses of the whole *i'ğāz*-complex (i.e., the separation of the divine and human spheres of the art of speech) and the principle of the three stylistic levels known from literature, he actually laid down their sphere of validity. It appears in the theological prejudice that permeates through his treatise: the perfect realization of the given stylistic tool can be found in the Koran.

5.2 ar-Rummānī continues the introduction to *balāġa* with the following remark: "Eloquence (*balāġa*) does not (simply) mean making the content (*ma'nā*) understood, because it can happen that out of two speakers, both of whom can communicate the content, one is eloquent, while the other is not. Nor does *balāġa* mean the mere correlation between expression and content (*taḥqīq al-lafz 'alā l-ma'nā*) because even if the content correlates with the expression, the latter can be weak, dull, strange and affected. On the contrary, *balāġa* can only be attained if the content gets to the heart in the nicest form of expression (*fī aḥsan ṣūra min al-lafz*)" (Rummānī, *Nukat* 75-76).

ar-Rummānī treats the definition of *balāġa* carefully. He avoids overemphasizing the factors serving for the communication of content or the factors of expression, i.e., the elements of content and form. He seems to apply a new phenomenon called *ṣūra* (form, shape), which is aimed at relieving the dichotomy between content and form. In connection with this, it is worth mentioning that 'Abdalqāhir al-Ġurġānī used the same word to describe the expressions denoting the artistic unity be-

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<sup>12</sup> Cf., Ibn Sinān al-Hafāġī's criticism on ar-Rummānī's explanation of harmony (Ibn Sinān, *Sirr* 181-185). Ibn Sinān raises objection to ar-Rummānī's distinguishing three levels with regard to harmony: harmonic, disharmonious and intermediate. As an-Nazzām's follower, he stresses the point that these kinds of division and separation deprive the Arabic language of artistic forms.

<sup>13</sup> Cf., *Talāt rasā'il* 110.

tween content and form one hundred years later<sup>14</sup>. Gustave E. von Grunebaum ignores the attempts in connection with the phenomenon of the *šūra* when he perceives the fixed and insoluble dichotomy of *ma'nā/lafz* as one of the most important limitations in Arabic literature<sup>15</sup>. According to von Grunebaum, the abovementioned limitation is manifested in the Arab authors' linking things (*ma'ānī, res*) and words (*lafz, verba*) as independent entities in their works (Grunebaum 1955:134-135). Tradition provides the inventory of poetical objects (*ma'ānī*) on one hand, and the unchanged system of language, mechanically separated and at the creators' disposal, on the other hand. The linguistic elements ideally preserve and maintain their identity (Grunebaum 1955:135). ar-Rummānī's careful separation of *ma'nā, lafz* and *šūra*, and also their use as rhetorical terms indicate that *šūra* is a new, separate category from *ma'nā* and *lafz*. This approach cannot be accentuated as it deserves. As it could be observed, it was continued, and probably had precedents in circles under Mu'tazilite influence.

5.3 According to the definition mentioned already, the message gets into the heart. A couple of pages further the author says the following: "According to the points of consideration mentioned, *i'ğāz* is manifested in a way that all (linguistic) phenomena are present in it; so that it becomes clear for the soul that the given speech belongs to the upper stylistic level, the *balāga*" (Rummānī, *Nukat* 78). The concepts in this excerpt can be understood as follows: It is well known that Muslim psychology in the Middle Ages differentiated between sense, soul and spirit. Sensible thinking (sense of judgement) did not play an important part because for man, "whose intelligence distinguishes him from animals", intellectual activity was important. This belongs to the intellectual part of the soul (*'aql*) – and the heart, according to the ancient traditions, is its centre. Where ar-Rummānī talked about the message getting into or out of the heart, he meant the receptive function of intelligence; but he

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<sup>14</sup> Cf., Heinrichs 1969:77.

<sup>15</sup> Cf., Grunebaum 1952.

did not mention the senses. Thus, he employed the terminology of tradition which separated sensual perception from thinking. Intellectual activity has a definite role in his system. According to him, the function of literature examined is to forward the message, which forms part of the intellectual activity, to the receiver<sup>16</sup>.

6 By summing up the important points of the introduction, the following can be deduced. According to ar-Rummānī, the divine and human spheres are clearly separate with regard to eloquence (*balāġa*). Eloquence is not manifested in the *lafz*, nor in the *ma'nā*, but in the *šūra*. The latter is a completely different entity comprising the previous two phenomena. Literature is the subject of the intellectual activity. These statements, as it was pointed out above, permeate ar-Rummānī's whole work; they prevail in every fragment thereof; they serve as the basis of the aesthetic manner of speech, which can be called medieval Muslim aesthetic.

7 It is widely known that ar-Rummānī was a distinguished linguist well versed in Greek logic. Therefore, it is not surprising that in introducing *balāġa*, he defined it with a logical order of division. After having elaborated on the conception of the *balāġa*, he embarked on division. According to him, *balāġa* consisted of ten levels. It seems practical to introduce them according to the grouping suggested by A. Neuwirth. She created three groups: 1) the actual *badī'* elements (*tašbīh*, simile; *isti'āra*, metaphor; *taġānus*, paronomasia; *mubālaġa*, hyperbole); 2) elements which can be regarded as linguistic characteristics (*iġāz*, condensation; *bayān*, clarity, elocution; *talā'um*, harmony); 3) and those three *balāġa* elements which were newly introduced by ar-Rummānī: *tasrif al-ma'ānī* (systematic change in the subject), *tadmīn* (inclusion, or reference, by means of the stem but the content is not manifested by linguistic means), *fawāšil*

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<sup>16</sup> Arabic literature also saw the function of poetry and literature in teaching and pleasing; *bayān* (clear communication) and *sihr* (enchantment) were the two key-words. They were attributed to the Prophet and were legitimized by revelation. Cf., Grunebaum 1955.

(rhyme or the rhythmical units of the Koran)<sup>17</sup>. The division exemplifies clearly that the classes or elements of *balāġa* are identical with the linguistic tools (*figurae elocutionis*) developed during the study of literary works of art. In the course of his analyses, ar-Rummānī makes important remarks, e.g., the separation of simile and metaphor with regard to the interpretation of the types of metaphor. His popularity and fame can be observed in the history of defining and treatment of stylistic elements. ar-Rummānī's thoughts and ideas can be traced in the works of subsequent authors: Ibn Rašīq, Ibn Sinān al-Ḥafāġī, ʿAbdalqāhir al-Gurġānī and others<sup>18</sup>.

8 If a comparison is made between the structure of the rhetorical works known from European tradition and the structure of ar-Rummānī's work on *balāġa*, the two approaches are clearly distinct. According to Aristotle, rhetoric constitutes an organic system. In his synthesis he regards rhetoric as an independent branch of science. He determines its peculiar reasons, the types of rhetoric, psychological and logical evidence, relation to ethic and politics, stylistic requirements and the parts of rhetorical speech (Aristotle, *Opera* 1403b6-1420b4). If we look at the structure of his *Rhetoric*, it becomes clear that the *balāġa* elements analyzed by ar-Rummānī resemble the contents only of Book Three. Book Three of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* discusses the following: 1) General questions as to the manner of presentation and style (the style is excellent if it is of appropriate clarity; it is poor if it is rigid); similes, metaphors, grammatical correctness, the majesty of style, appropriateness, prosaic rhythm, periodic style, witty, expressive, lively, styles characteristic of certain types of speeches. 2) Parts of the rhetoric speech: introduction, refutation of accusation, narrative, evidence, question as means of refutation, conclusion (*ibid.*). However, ar-Rummānī's work shows some resemblance, pertaining to stylistic elements, only with the first part of Book Three. Further comparisons of con-

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<sup>17</sup> Cf., Neuwirth 1983:77.

<sup>18</sup> The individual stylistic elements will be studied in another paper.

tents<sup>19</sup> proves that ar-Rummānī's apologetic *balāga*, after all, deals with the execution of rhetorical elocution, eloquence and style; and can only be regarded as rhetoric in a restricted sense<sup>20</sup>.

If the concept of *balāga* is compared with 'ilm al-*balāga*, later to become universal, the following can be deduced. 'ilm al-*balāga* with its treble system incorporates all knowledge of the science of speech accumulated until the 12-13th centuries. The executors, or more likely systematizers, were Fahraddīn ar-Rāzī (d. 1209) and as-Sakkākī (d. 1229), who relied upon well-known traditions and, above all, 'Abdalqāhīr al-Ġurġānī (d. 1078), who presented an analysis with regard to *nazm* (linking, forming)<sup>21</sup>. The synthesis provided by as-Sakkākī titled *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm* (Key to the Sciences), whose third part under the subtitle title "The Sciences of *Maʿānī* and *Bayān*", discusses the following: 1) Arabic syntax (introduction and clarification of the main points of *maʿānī*); 2) Stylistic tools (the science of *bayān*); 3) The science of *badīʿ*. ar-Rummānī's elements of the concept of *balāga* can be found in all three parts; however, all elements of his concept in all three parts cannot be traced<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g., the subject of Book Four of Cornificius, *Rhetorica*: 1) Stylistic genders are elevated, medium and simple; 2) Stylistic requirements are elegance, being well-wrought and majesty. Further, see the subject of Quintilianus, *Institutio*, 419-478 (Book VIII): on style in general; virtues of style are clarity, possessing the features of the Latin language, eloquence, sententiousness, metaphors (tropes).

<sup>20</sup> Pseudo-Longinus's work titled *On the Sublime* examines the factors of majestic effects from the point of view of the creative artist and the receptor. These can be nature's gifts and can be acquired through the process of learning. Ideas and emotions make up the first group. The second group is made up of thoughts, speech formations, word order, rhythm and fine sound. It cannot be accidental that modern Arabic literary criticism discovered the thoughts of Pseudo-Longinus with regard to the inimitability of the Koran. Cf., 'Abbās 1978:339.

<sup>21</sup> Ġurġānī, *Asrār*; Ġurġānī, *Dalā'il*. al-Ġurġānī argued that 1) certain words are not more distinguished than others; 2) thoughts, as it were, do not exist alone without words; therefore, they cannot be evaluated alone. According to his principle, the distinguished style can be attained by way of combining, *nazm*; locution results in different meanings.

<sup>22</sup> ar-Rummānī's interpretation of *taṣrif* was not acknowledged in later literature. According to Aḥmad Maṭlūb's summary, only al-Bāqillānī followed in his footsteps. Cf.,

The later development of *‘ilm al-balāga* resulted in al-Qazwīnī's (d. 1338) *Talḥīṣ al-miftāḥ* (The Extract of the Key - with reference to as-Sakkākī's work)<sup>23</sup>. It is divided into 1) *‘ilm al-ma‘ānī*, a branch of science belonging to the syntactic part of grammar and formal logic with regard to its contents; 2) *‘ilm al-bayān* (the same thought can be expressed at different levels of clarity; its elements are the simile *‘tašbīḥ*, metaphor *‘isti‘āra* and metonymy *‘kināya*); 3) *‘ilm al-badī‘*, the science of stylistic tools<sup>24</sup>. The continuation of ar-Rummānī's elements of *balāga* can only be accepted in this complete system with certain restrictions. Out of the classes of *balāga* set up by ar-Rummānī, *taṣrīf* and *taḍmīn* developed on the basis of a considerably formal grammatical synthesis, but they cannot be found in as-Sakkākī's works; *fawāṣil* were also seldom used later. However, it is also clear that ar-Rummānī primarily expressed his views with regard to these questions in the sphere of *‘ilm al-bayān*. In the introduction it was asserted that the studies of the inimitability of the Koran led to its examination as a linguistic phenomenon, during which the experts employed the given elements, conceptual framework, and methodical tools of literary tradition. As a result of medieval efforts, the new aesthetic manner of speech, which can be summarized in the *‘ilm al-balāga*, evolved. In the previous comparison we intended to show that certain categories set up by ar-Rummānī had been further developed by later authors, while others fell out of use. In some respect ar-Rummānī's idea of the *balāga* was more restricted than, for example, al-Qazwīnī's; however, sometimes it can be understood in a wider sense. The reason for this is that ar-Rummānī did not undertake to analyze the speeches of art stylistically (aesthetically), but explained his views in connection with the inimitability of the Koran. Essentially, he analyzed the parts of the art of verbal expression, the stylistic levels (*genera elocutionis*), and the stylistic elements (*fī-*

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Maṭlūb 1986:II, 251.

<sup>23</sup> Published in: Mehren 1853.

<sup>24</sup> Cf., Mehren 1853:19, 20, 97. He rendered *‘ilm al-ma‘ānī* by "Begriffslehre", *‘ilm al-bayān* by "Darstellungslehre", and *‘ilm al-badī‘* by "Tropenlehre".

*gurae elocutionis*). That is how he formulated the concept of *balāġa*, which, taking into consideration the sacred characteristic of the text, was related to the concept of elocution in rhetoric. This rhetoric, i.e., *‘ilm al-balāġa*, however, was more restricted than the Aristotelian rhetoric.

9 Finally, one more remark should be made. In the introduction it was asserted that the study aimed at the inimitability of the Koran lead to its examination as a linguistic phenomenon. During the examinations the experts utilized the given elements, the conceptual framework, and the set of methods found in the literary tradition. Medieval Muslim scholars drew up a peculiar rhetorical system within the framework outlined above. Their primary intention was to justify the linguistic inimitability of the Koran; that is, that the Koran is rhetoric itself. As a result of this, there is a considerable difference between the rhetorical works of Greeks and Romans and the Middle Ages in Western Europe, and the rhetorical works of the Muslim world. The development and the continuous study of the rhetorical works in the Antiquity were aimed at the exposition and analysis of the factors of rhetoric, thus providing reference books for would-be rhetors. Thus the ancient rhetorical works were prescriptive and normative in nature. Even a superficial comparison provides ample proof as to the difference between the traditional rhetoric of the Antiquity and the rhetoric developed in the Muslim world. In the latter, the authors intended to describe, list, and justify theological reasons, as opposed to their literary reasons. Therefore, the outcome of their examinations fell within the sphere of theology. Their works were descriptive and, with regard to their task, apologetic. In this context, Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī’s and others’ opinions appear acceptable, who regarded the function of *balāġa* (rhetoric) as the understanding, and the promotion of the acquisition of the Koran<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf., ‘Askarī, *Šinā‘atayn* 7, and Ibn Haldūn, *Muqaddima* III, 338.

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