



THE HARMONY OF FORM AND CONTENT: THE LITERARY ANALYSIS OF THE KHATAABA OF AKSAM BIN SAIFI

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ANNOTATION

This article is devoted to the most important and always relevant topic of literary criticism: the combination of form and content in the artistic work. The author says, that the study of Arabic literature of the Middle Ages means, in majority of cases, the study of Arabic poetry. Nevertheless, not enough attention is paid to the study of the issues of poetics of Arabic poetry. In the article, the author refers to famous scientists about this issue and expresses her own approach regarding the issue of poetics of mediaeval Arabic literature. The article deals with the same situation of Arabic khataaba and emphasizes, that the poetics of works of medieval Arabic prose, in particular, khataaba – oration, public speaking art, has not yet been studied almost. The article pays attention to the harmony of the form and content in the heritage of the Arab prose of pre-Islamic ages i.e. Jajiliyyah, on the example of the khataaba of Aksam bin Sayfi, a historical figure in the time of ignorance.

In the article, the author first gives a complete analysis of the content of the oration, then the literary devices used in it. By analyzing the short oration, the author proves that the form and content in the work are intertwined harmoniously.

Keywords: *literature, content, form, Arabic prose, khataaba, oration, sage, philosophy, literary device, harmony, poetics.*

Although the poetry of the Arabs during the period of ignorance was studied in the history of Arabic literature more deeply and thoroughly than the Arabic prose of the same period, according to the famous Russian professor A. K. Kudelin - "It is necessary, however, to note the uneven study of the style of medieval Arabic literature. Along with well-developed aspects in the theory of medieval Arabic style, there are still a significant number of issues

that were poorly studied or not studied at all." . Perhaps, " disregard for the views of medieval authorities, lack of familiarity with their assessments, sometimes lead modern scholars to fundamentally different, distinctive from the medieval ,interpretations of the most important issues of history and theory of Arabic literature.»¹

Although the views of this scholar, who studied the poetics of medieval Arabic literature, were mainly focused on classical Arabic poetry, we find it necessary to understand the same ideas about medieval Arabic prose, in particular, with regard to the Arabic khataaba: public speech, sermons – where poetics are almost not studied. Poetry has always been a leader in classical Arabic literature, and since its examples have survived largely than prose, the terms medieval Arabic poetics or the rules of poetics have often been used for poetry.

The Arabs in ancient times before Islam had a highly developed literary prose in the form of oratory-khataaba. "Typical Semites, the Arabians created or developed no great art of their own. Their artistic nature found expression through one medium only: speech. "The beauty of man ",declares an Arabic adage, "lies in the eloquence of his tongue". "Wisdom", in a late saying, "has alighted on three things: the brain of Franks, the hands of Chinese and the tongue of the Arabs". Eloquence, i.e. ability to express one's self forcefully and elegantly in both prose and poetry, together with archery and horsemanship were considered in the Jahiliyyah period the three basic attributes of "the perfect man"²(*al-kaamil*)

It is worth mentioning, "the texts of public speeches of the first (early) khatibs before the Islamic era have not reached us. Moreover, we do not know whether the khataaba was widely used in various celebrations among the Arabs during the period of ignorance as a poem, or whether it was superior to poetry"³.

However, according to al-Jahiz:" Abu Amr ben Alaa says, that the status of the orator was higher than the poet" and "sometimes both were equal"⁴. Of course, when we say the poetry of Jahiliyyah period, we mean literary works that are rich in style, high artistic images, heartbreaking and aesthetically pleasing. However, "we repeat about banality, about the

¹ Куделин А.Б. Арабская литература: поэтика, стилистика, типология, взаимосвязи. – М.: Языки славянской культуры, 2003 стр.142

² Philip, K. Xitti "History of the Arabs" The third edition .revised. Macmillan and Co., Limited.St. Martin's street, London 1946.Part 1, Pre Islamic age /p-90 Available at: www.thecsspoint.com

³ Ал васиит фи-л-адаби-л-арабийи ва таарихихи"Таълиф Аш Шайх Аҳмад ал Искандарий ва аш шайх Мустафо ЁАнаани .Ат табъатул увла ,1919, с-19.

⁴ Ал Жааҳиз "Ал байаан ват табйииин" таҳ.Абдус Салаам Ҳааруун, т-3, Мактаб ал Ҳилаал,Байрут,1968,с-170

formalism of the medieval poetry of love, but this is our assessment: what has reached us with a formula that says nothing to the imagination was once fresh and evoked the ranks of passionate associations" ⁵

The great Russian orientalist I. Y. Krachkovsky objected to the idea: "after all, Arabic poetry is still not recognized as a right to independent study, it is still considered an assistant to history or philology, but that's all."⁶ He admits that Welhausen was one of the first to deal with the Arabic poetry of the age of ignorance and gives an example from his words: "The interest we have in ancient Bedouin poetry is caused not by its poetic, but by its philological and historical merits". ⁷

This was the attitude to Arabic poetry more than 100 years ago of our time. However, the state of study of Arabic poetics, especially, the poetics of ancient Arabic khataaba, is still unsatisfactory.

If it is said that ancient Arabic poetry should be considered only as an assistant in the sciences of history and philology, perhaps this is what prompted those who say that "before Islam, the Arabs did not have prose at all, or it was not prose, but just ordinary everyday speech, this prose is not worth studying».

Nevertheless, today we decided to prove, by the example of a speech by a famous Arab speaker, that the Arabs had high literary prose even in the days of ignorance.

It should be noted that "In the seventh and eighth centuries rather than painting or sculpture or music, the peoples of Arabia assiduously cultivated the art of the spoken word—the eloquently, metaphorically, rhythmically, appositely spoken word. It is well known that a major genre of this oral tradition was poetry; it is less well known that the primary prose form of that art was the khutba⁸, or oration. The khutba was a crucial piece of the Arabic literary landscape, and a key component of political and spiritual leadership."⁹ In addition, we want to mention as well: "Moreover, the early khutba had enormous influence on subsequent artistic prose. Indeed, the Quran itself contains many of the stylistic features of the oration,

⁵ Куделин А.Б. Арабская литература: поэтика, стилистика, типология, взаимосвязи. – М.: Языки славянской культуры, 2003 стр.170 (Веселовский 1940:92)

⁶ Крачковский И.Ю. "Избранные сочинения" Том 2,15-стр. Издательство Академии Наук СССР Москва Ленинград 1956

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Khutba(pl:khutab)- is synonym to khataaba.

⁹ See: Ан Нассу, Ихсаан "Ал хитаабатул арабиййату фи асриха аз захабиййи" Ал Қахирату, Даарул маарифи, 1963, pp.7-46

such as parallelism, vivid imagery, direct address, rhyme, and assonance. For over a century, alongside the Quran—without its divine authority, certainly, but with a great deal of spiritual and temporal influence—the khutba reigned supreme as the preeminent prose genre of the Arabic literary corpus”¹⁰

The Arabs started using khataaba from the moment they needed the art of speech: “Although we received examples of poetry from Arabs in the pre-Islamic period, the prosaic speech was also at the level of art. The public speech of a smart, eloquent person in a meeting on an important occasion is called "khataaba". However, like poetry, it awakened conscience, affected the mind and emotions of a person. The need for a khataaba has grown exponentially in order to provide strong evidence. The main criteria to evaluate prominent khatib or orator (speaker) was his power of influence and mastery to explain issues in a very simple and easy way.”¹¹

Aksam bin Saifi al-Tamimi is an eloquent, great Arab orator, a historical figure known as the "ruler of the Arabs" or "wise man of the Arabs". Many of the wise sayings, proverbs, and sermons attributed to him are found in many ancient arabic sources. It is said, that he was one of the first who predicted the coming of the Prophet, called his people to Islam, and died on the way to the Messenger of Allah¹².

Since Aksam bin Saifi was one of the most respected and influential people of the Arabs, he went to the palace of king Amr bin Hind and expressed his condolences when his brother died.

"إن أهل هذه الدار سفر لا يحولون عقد الرحال إلا في غيرها، و قد أتاك ما ليس بمردود عنك، و ارتحل عنك ما ليس براجع إليك، و أقام معك من سيظعن عنك و يدعك، و اعلم أن الدنيا ثلاثة أيام، فأمس عظة و شاهد عدل، فجعك بنفسه، و أبقى لك و عليك حكمته، و اليوم غنيمة، و صديق أتاك و لم تأته، طالت عليك غيبته، و ستسرع عنك رحلته، و غد لا تدري من أهله، سيأتيك إن وجدك، فما أحسن الشكر للمنعم، و التسليم للقادر، و قد مضت لنا أصول نحن فروعها، فما بقاء الفروع بعد أصولها، و اعلم أن أظم من المصيبة سوء الخلف منها، و خير من الخير معطيه، و شر من الشر فاعله"

“Inna ahla haazihi-d-daari safrun laa yahluuna ‘aqda-r-rihaali ilaa fii ghayriha,va qad ataaka maa laysaa bi marduudin ‘anka,va-r-tahala ‘anka ma laysa bi raaji’in ilayka,va aqaama

¹⁰ Gibb, H.A.R.,(1963)“Arabic literature: an introduction”.2nd ed. Oxford: OUP

¹¹ Ал вазиит фи-л-адаби-л-арабиййи ва таарихиҳи”Таълиф Аш Шайх Аҳмад ал Искандарий ва аш шайх Мустафо ЁАнаани .Ат табъатул увла ,1919, с-19.

¹² Available at: <http://ar.m.wikipedia.org>.

ma'aka man sa yaz'anu 'anka va yada'uka.Va-'lim anna ad-dunyaa salaasatu ayyamin,fa amsi 'izzatun va shaahidu 'adlin,faja'aka bi nafsihi ,va abqaa laka va 'alayka hikmatuhu.Va al-yavma ghaniimatun ,va sadiiqun ataaka va lam ta'tihi,taalat 'alayka ghyibatuhu,va sa tasra'u 'anka rihlatuhu.Va ghadun laa tadrii man ahluhu,sa ya'tiika in vajadaka, fa maa ahsanu as-shukru li Al-Mun'imi ,va at-tasliimu li Al Qadiri.Va qad madat lanaa 'usuulun nahnu furuu'uha,fa maa baqaa'u-l-furuu'i ba'da 'usuulihaa,Va-'lim 'anna 'a'zamu min al-musiibati suu'u-xalafi minhaa,va xayrun min al-xayri mu'tii'uhu va sharrun min as-sharri faa'iluhu"¹³

"It is true that the inhabitants of this house are people who have come to a foreign land, and they cannot make a contract of departure as they want; but he came to you without asking, and took from you something that will not come back to you. And with you will remain those who will abandon and will soon leave you. The world (life) is three days. Yesterday is (full of) difficulties, a witness to the truth, he caused you great suffering. He left his wisdom for you. Today it is a prey, he is as a friend who came to you, and his gossip lingered for you. And he is in a hurry to leave you. Tomorrow: you do not know who his people will be. He will only come to you if he finds you. It is best to thank the Giver of blessings and surrender to the Supreme. How many ancestors have passed, we are their successors, and after them we are the ancestors, descendants of those who come for us. Know, that the greatest calamity is evil after it. The noblest good is to give it, and the most sinister evil is to make it."

This short treatment was inspired by the great geniuses and always had the same response to loss; death is inevitable... Expressing his condolences to the king who lost his brother Aksam bin Saifi, said that this world is passing, even kings are helpless in the face of death, a person can do anything he wants, except death. With a deep philosophical observation, he hints that even those who stay with the king at the same time and live with him, will definitely, leave in the future. The sage describes the brevity of life with such concrete, obvious and profound thoughts that we admire his genius.

"Yesterday, he (full of) difficulties, a witness to the truth, he caused you great suffering. He left his wisdom for you." Yesterday is the past, that is, what happened in it is true. The truth

¹³Ахмад Закий Сафуут."Жамҳарату хутаб ал-араб фи асурил арабиййати аз-заахирати.Ал-аср ал-жааҳилийи ва садрил ислами" Ал мактабатул илмиййату, Байрут, Лубнан -1933.Ал жузъ-1, саҳифа 37

is that it was a tragedy for you, you lost a dear person. The past, that is, "yesterday", has left wisdom for you...

"Today it is a prey, he himself came to you as a friend, and his gossip-evil lingered for you. And he is in a hurry to leave you."

Today, the real prize, the wealth you can achieve it only with him, and he has come to you as a friend. But you think that his evil lasts for a long time, and "today" - "friend" will leave you ...

"Tomorrow: you don't know who his people will be. He will only come to you if he finds you." Tomorrow has not yet come, in what form it will come and with whom - you cannot understand it. It is not known: whether it will happen to you at all: whether you can live until tomorrow. (although departure and arrival are not in your hands, even if you are the king.) or "tomorrow" reaches you or not it is not accurate..

This is the law of the world, and there is no greater comfort than to surrender to the will of fate when your heart is broken by sorrow. The best way out of this painful situation is to "thank the Giver of all the world's goods and surrender to the Almighty." These are the words of a wise thinker who was able to think according to the laws of Islam before the advent of Islam. He recognized the law of the world: the will of the Almighty, Mun'im, before us is the same, and after us will be the same.

The sage Aksam bin Saifi might have stopped expressing his sympathy for the king, but he also revealed to the king the secret of eternal life in such a mortal world: "Know, that the greatest calamity is evil after it. The noblest good is to give it, and the most sinister evil is to make it."

That is, we are one link in such an unbroken chain of ancestors and generations, we have become a generation for those before us, we will become an ancestor for those after us, and the greatest calamity in the world is to leave evil behind in human life. And even worse, to be the perpetrator of this evil. But the great speaker also hints very subtly, how to remain eternal in the world. The only way of such immortality is to grant, to do the best deeds.

Now we analyze the poetic or artistic aspects of this sermon, here we rely on the opinion of one of the most famous literary critics: "Every literary work is created in the context of the impact of reality on it, due to this reality – the author's personality, biographical and historical

circumstances, the literature of his time and literary development”¹⁴. It is also important for us that "all this reality – in the broad sense of the word-affects both the form and the content of the work at the same time»¹⁵

It is worth noting that, as the Russian scientist said, if we evaluate the work of the great author on the basis of the social reality in which he lived, and on the basis of the audience who heard such a deep speech of Aksam bin Saifi , we can assume that, they understood the meaning of the words ,he chose to express his thoughts. The literary art that Aksam bin Saifi chose in his speech was traditional for people of that time, the words were pleasant to the ear, quick to memory.

Al-Iskandari writes: "during the period of ignorance, the Arabs used the word in its original meaning. Later they transferred the meaning of the word, and it became a new expression - a metaphor. However, there must be a strong connection between the metaphor and the original meaning. Before the Islam Arabs often used synonyms."¹⁶

The harmony of content and form has long been the main theme of literary criticism because "the form and content of literature are fundamental literary concepts that generalize ideas about the external and internal sides of a literary work and are based on the philosophical categories of form (F) and content (C)"¹⁷

It should also be noted, that "Despite significant differences in the interpretation of the problem of form and content in medieval Arabic literary theory, most modern scholars agree that form played a more significant role in Arabic classical poetry than, for example, in

¹⁴ Лихачев Д.С. Избранные работы в 3-х томах (том 1. О себе. Развитие русской литературы 10 – 17 веков. Поэтика древнерусской литературы. Монографии) (Л., «Художественная литература» Ленинградское отделение, 1987 – 656 с.). С.30

¹⁵ Ibid, p.180

¹⁶ “Ал васиит фи-л-адаби-л-арабиййи ва таарихихи” Таълиф Аш Шайх Ахмад ал Искандарий ва аш шайх Мустафо ЁАнаани .Ат таъбатул увла ,1919, с-19.

¹⁷ 1 Литературная энциклопедия терминов и понятий (Главный редактор и составитель А.Н. Николюкин). – М.: НПК «Интелвак», 2001 [электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: http://biblio.imli.ru/images/abook/teoriya/Literaturnaya_entsiklopediya_terminov_i_ponyatij._2_001.pdf (Дата обращения: 18.03.18)

modern European poetry, and that medieval scholars contributed to the rise of the role of form and, consequently, the decline of the role of content".¹⁸.

If we say that such views of some scholars are relevant to all Arabic literature, especially to the analyzed public speech of the sage Aksam bin Saifi, we feel that there is an error in the opinions of modern, mentioned scientists. Because this speech is evidence of a high harmony of form and content. Therefore, we maintain that in Arabic oratory before the Islamic period, form and content were equally important, and their mixing creates a great literary work.

In this address, Aksam bin Saifi uses hyperbole¹⁹, even more specifically hyperbole of reduction (*tafriit*), saying that the world is "house" - "daar", and all mankind - "ahlu haazihi daar" - are cohabitants of this house. In accordance with the situation under consideration, Aksam bin Saifi chooses this type of expression, rather than exaggerating (*ifraat*) the infinity of the world and its diversity of inhabitants. Because it is more comforting to imagine that everyone is a member of the same family who lives under the same roof - in the same house. Such a condolence gives the best effect and perhaps quickly comforts a person who has lost a loved one.

In the phrase "aqd ar rihal" - "leaving agreement", the author uses a remarkable metaphor. Here we recall the definition of a metaphor. "Metaphor (Greek metaphor - transfer) is one of the most common types of semantic transferal, a type of transfer based on similarities between things, but, in fact, it is a hidden analogy in which the analogy (i.e. the word that expresses it) expresses its meaning without mentioning what is being compared."²⁰

"Aqd" in Arabic means consent, that is, a person who unknowingly enters this world by entering into an agreement with the Creator. Therefore, Aksam does not use the word "death" for "the person to whom the speech should have been addressed" - this is not an ordinary person, but the king of his country, and one who can reach any agreement in his territory. The

¹⁸. Куделин А.Б. «О понятии эстетического канона в средневековой литературе» в сб.: Языковая норма и эстетический канон/ Под ред. В.Я.Порхоминовского и Н.Н.Семенюк. – М.:Языки славянских культур, 2006, ст.125

¹⁹ Д.Курунов, З.Мамаджонов, М.Шералиева "Адабиётшунослик луғати" 186-б, Тошкент «Академнашр» 2010. See also: Available at: www.literarydevices.com > hyperbole

²⁰ Д.Курунов, З.Мамаджонов, М.Шералиева "Адабиётшунослик луғати" 169-б, Тошкент «Академнашр» 2010

sage wants to emphasize once again that the "covenant of departure" is the same for kings, and he uses this metaphor to prepare him to hear his next thoughts. Now the philosopher uses an even stronger phrase (*tafriit*) "ad-dunya as-salaasatu ayyaamin" - "the world is three days". That is, the purpose of this phrase is to emphasize that life passes very quickly. In the following sentences, Aksam bin Saifi uses the art of personification²¹ beyond the definition of "yesterday": "Shaahidu adlin, faja'aka bi nafsihi, and abqaa laka wa 'alayka hikmatahu" - "He is a witness, who sees the truth, although he has caused you great misfortune. He left his wisdom for you." Such descriptions are inherent to a person and are suitable even for the most intelligent and thoughtful people.

Describing "today", the speaker embodies it in a warmer form than the description of "yesterday": "sadiiqun ataaka and lam ta'tihi, taalat 'alayka ghyibatuhu va tasra'u 'anka rihlatuhu" - that is, "your friend "today" will come to you, not you will go to him. But you abuse it with his arrival and feel that it has lasted for a long time. This description is really a very deep philosophy of "today".. As if humanity did not appreciate today, when he became a friend, the friend's heart aches, and he is in a hurry to leave ...

The definition of "tomorrow" is a bit suggestive scares and "ghadun laa tadrii man ahluhu, va sa ya'tiika in vajadaka", emphasizes the fact that tomorrow may not come for a man, and if he reaches you and you do not know in what form and with whom he can reach you is abstract. This awakening sounds like a warning to the inevitable concern of humanity and the need to be prepared for tomorrow today, and prevent such fears.

Parallelism²² is also effectively used in khataaba, i.e. "fa maa ahsanu ash-shukru li Al-Mun'im" - "it is best to thank Mun'im", "va at-tasliim li Al-Qaadir", "submit to the Almighty, his fate". "Qad Madat lanaa 'usuulun nahnu furu'uhaa va maa baqaa'ul-furuu'i ba'da 'usuulihaa" - "how many ancestors have passed, we are their successors, and after them we are the descendants and ancestors of those who will come after us", "Khayrun min al-khayri

²¹ As a **literary device**, **personification** is the projection of characteristics that normally belong only to humans onto inanimate objects, animals, deities, or forces of nature. ... **Personification** is also sometimes referred to as anthropomorphism when it is used to give human feelings and actions to animals.

www.literarydevices.com/personification

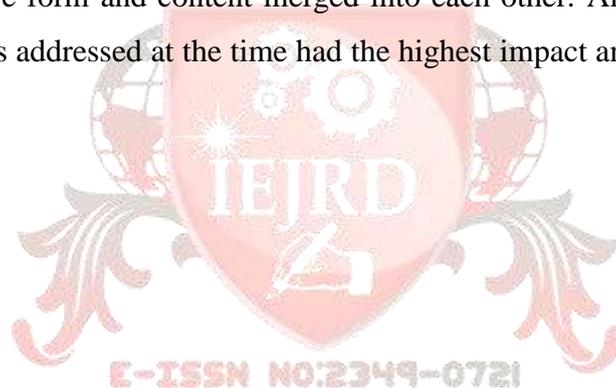
See also: Д. Куронов, З. Мамаджонов, М. Шералиева "Адабиётшунослик луғати" 103-б, Тошкент «Академнашр» 2010.

²² See: www.literarydevices.com/parallelism

mu'tiiuhu" " The noblest good is to give it" and "sharrun min ash-sharri faa'iluhu"- "the most sinister evil is to make it."

Similarly, the Arab speaker uses the art tanosub (art. - involvement, connection) - the art of poetry in classical literature, the expression of thought in words that are interconnected, semantically close and in harmony with each other.²³ Ahla haazihi-d-daari – cohabitants of this family, safrun-stranger, 'aqda-r-rihaali-departure agreement, qad ataaka -, appeared before you, and-rtahala' anka maa laysa bi raaji'in ilayka - he (agreement) irrevocably took from you; 'and aqaama ma'aka man sa yaz'anu 'anka va yada'uka '- those who will leave you in the near future, tasrau 'anka-hurry to leave you - all these sentences and words convey to the listener's consciousness that the world is a journey, and departure is inevitable.

In conclusion, we can say that this speech of the Arab orator of the period of ignorance, which we have analyzed from the point of view of meaning and form, is a sample of a great literary heritage, where form and content merged into each other. And we are sure, that the speech to whom it was addressed at the time had the highest impact and brought the author to the goal..



²³ Д.Куронов, З.Мамаджонов, М.Шералиева "Адабиётшунослик луғати" 311-б, Тошкент «Академнашр» 2010