

# Chapter 11: The Precedence Of The Shi'ah In Semantics, Rhetoric And Eloquence

## Section One: The Pioneers in Semantics, Rhetoric and Eloquence

Below are the pioneers in this field:

Imam Abu Abdillah Muhammad ibn Imran al-Marzabani of al-Khurasani al-Baghdadi. He wrote *Al-Mufassa fi Ilm al-Bayan wa al-Fasahah*. Ibn al-Nadim writes in *Al-Fihrist*, that it consists of about three hundred sheets. Al-Hafiz al-Suyuti says that the first to write about rhetoric was Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, as you know, but al-Marzabani died in 378 while al-Jurjani passed away in 444 A.H. Al-Yafi'i's account on the biography of al-Marzabani, as presented in *Tarikh*, we learn that the latter studied the different branches of literature from Ibn Duraid and Ibn al-Anbari. Al-Yafi'i adds: "He (al-Marzabani) wrote a large number of books, some of which are very famous, collections of uncommon themes and Riwayat al-Adab. His poetry was little but good. Al-Marzabani was a reliable transmitter of hadith and followed the Shi'ah school." Al-Yafi'i also quotes some of his verses.

Ibn Khillikan gives a similar account to that of al-Marzabani and also attests to his being Shi'ite and refers to him in *Kashf al-Zunun*, in the section on *Akhbar al-Mutakallimin*, and describes him as a great scholar. In the unabridged edition of this book, I have presented a detailed biography of this scholar along with an index of all his works and mentioned that he was born in the month of Jumada al-Akhirah, 297 A.H. and died on Friday the 2nd of Shawwal, 378 A.H. (others say 384 A.H.). He was buried in the eastern side of Baghdad. Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Khwarizmi performed funeral prayer for him. May Allah be pleased with both.

Another Shi'ah scholar who preceded Sheikh Abd al-Qahir in this field is Abu Sa'id Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-'Amidi, the vizier. He died in 423 A.H. As reported in *Kashf al-Zunun*, he compiled a book on rhetoric titled *Tanqih al-Balaghah*. Muntajab al-Din ibn Babawayh has also talked about him in his

*Fihrist* of Shi'ah authors. Yaqut describes him as a grammarian, lexicologist, master of literature and writer. He resided in Egypt and headed the bureau of letters but was later dismissed. Then, he took charge of the bureau of letters a second time. He wrote *Tanqih al-Balaghah*, *Kitab al-Arud wa al-Qawafi* (Book of prosody and metre), among others. He died on Friday the 5th of Jumada al-Akhirah, 433 A.H. The date of his death which we already stated (i.e. 423 A.H.) is more precise.

## **Section Two: Some of the Books on Rhetoric Written by the Shi'ah**

*Kitab Tajrid al-Balaghah* was written by Maytham ibn Ali ibn Maytham al-Bahraini a scholar who was contemporary with al-Sakkaki, the author of *Al-Miftah*, whom we already mentioned in the section on Shi'ah theologians.

The commentary on *Tajrid al-Balaghah* by al-Fadil al-Miqdad ibn Abdullah al-Sayyuri, one of the most distinguished Shi'ah scholars. He gave it the title *Tajdid al-Bara'ah fi Sharh Tajrid al-Balaghah*.

The commentary on *Al-Miftah* by Sheikh Husamuddin al-Ma'azini. He completed this work in the year 742 A.H. at Jarjaniyah in Khwarizm. The author of *Kashf al-Zunun* has mentioned him without indicating to the era in which he lived because no sign of his biography is found in the books other than those of our companions.

The commentary on *Al-Miftah* by Sheikh Imaduddin Yahya ibn Ahmad al-Kashi. The author of *Riyad al-Ulama* states that he was among the Sheikhs of our companions who was master of all fields of knowledge. A student of Sheikh Ali al-Karaki mentioned him in a book *Al-Ma'mulah fi Dhikr Sami Mashayikh al-Shi'ah*. I do not know when he was born or died." The author of *Tadhkirah al-Mujtahidin min al-Imamiyyah* has also ascribed to al-Kashshi the said commentary but did not mention any date. The author of *Kashf al-Zunun* did the same.

The commentary on *Al-Miftah* by the king of researchers and the pivot of the community and religion, al-Allamah Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Razi al-Buwaihi al-Qummi, as reported in *Riyad al-Ulama*. The author of *Amal al-Amil* has stated that he has a commentary on *Al-Miftah*. There is a full discussion on his biography in the original version of this book. Al-Razi died in 766 A.H.

## **Section Three: Writers on Good Style (al-badi')**

The person who initiated this branch of knowledge is Ibn Haram Ibrahim ibn Ali ibn Salmah ibn Harmah, a poet of the Ahl al-Bayt, whose biography we presented in the unabridged version. Two scholars who were contemporaries, Qudamah ibn Jafar al-Katib and Abdullah ibn al-Mu'tazz were the first to write on *al-badi'*.

It is not known which of them preceded the other. In the beginning of his commentary on his *Badi'iyyah*,

Safiyuddin al-Hilli had this to say: "Ibn al-Mutaz presented seventeen styles of *al-badi'* while his contemporary Qudamah ibn Ja'far identified twenty, seven of which were identical to seven of Ibn al-Mutaz's styles. Therefore Qudamah alone had thirteen to his credit and between them thirty styles have been identified. Thereafter people took after these two." Qudamah ibn Ja'far has another work, *Naqd al-Shi'r*, which is known as *Naqd Qudamah*.

We could not ascertain anything with respect to Ibn al-Mu'taz except his precedence in naming this discipline *al-badi'*. We sought a clarification as to the truth of his assertion that is found in the opening section of his book that "No one compiled or wrote about the techniques of literature before me", in compliance with the command of Allah the Glorious concerning people like Ibn al-Ma'taz. However, we have found that his claim could not hold water. [Here the author alludes to the Qur'an, Chapter 49 verse 6 and he said this with respect to Ibn al-Mu'taz because the man led an immoral life].

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