



BAYĀN

BAYĀN, a noun common to Arabic and Persian meaning “statement,” “exposition,” “explanation.” From an early date onward, it also encompassed the various arts of expression in speech and writing. As a critical term, *bayān* refers especially to clarity of expression (*ḥosn-e bayān*); this quality was reckoned among the essential characteristics of eloquence. In time, *bayān* became more or less synonymous with *balāḡa* and *faṣāḥa*. Often *‘elm-e bayān* merely denotes rhetoric as a whole.

Although these general notions always remained with *bayān*, the term acquired a more technical definition in the 7th/13th century, when the rhetorical disciplines concerned with Arabic literature were redefined. The new system developed from ideas about the functioning of syntax and figurative speech in literature, which more than a century earlier had been expounded, without much coherence, in the *Dalā’el e’jāz al-Qor’ān* and the *Asrār al-balāḡa* by ‘Abd-al-Qāher Jorjānī (d. ca. 471/1078). The literary disciplines were arranged into a scholastic system by Sakkākī (555-626/1160-1228) in his work on the classification of sciences, *Meftāḥ al-’olūm*, and then popularized through digests from Sakkākī’s work made by Jalāl-al-Dīn Moḥammad Qazvīnī, known also as Kaṭīb Demašq (d. 739/1338), Sa’d-al-Dīn Taftazānī (d. 792/1390), and others. In the terminology which henceforth dominated Arabic literary theory, *‘elm al-balāḡa*, the science of rhetoric, consisted of three branches: (1) *‘elm al-ma’ānī*, the semantics of Arabic syntax; (2) *‘elm al-bayān*, the theory of figurative speech proper; and (3) *‘elm al-badī’*, the remaining forms of rhetorical embellishment.



ʿElm al-bayān is usually defined as a theory of the different ways to express a given thought with greater or lesser clarity (cf., e.g., Sakkākī, *Meftāḥ*, Cairo, 1317/1899, p. 167). It is based on the various modes by which a concept could be indicated. Indication by means of the conventional or literal meanings of words (*dalāla waẓʿīya*) falls outside the definition just mentioned, because it does not allow any variation in the clarity of the expression. The true object of *bayān* is therefore figurative speech, which again can be divided into two types: signification by implication (*taẓammon*) and signification on the basis of an association (*eltezām*), i.e., by means of a notion which is not inherent in the concept itself but is somehow related to it. The main items discussed under this heading are simile (*tašbīḥ*), trope (*majāz*), and metonymy (*kenāya*). The treatment of simile includes the analysis of the aspect (*wajh*) of the comparison and its purpose (*ḡaraḏ*). Among tropes, a further distinction is made between metaphor (*esteʾāra*), which involves a comparison, and “free trope” (*majāz-e morsal*), constructed on the basis of an abstract relationship such as that between the part and the whole, the cause and its effect, or the position (*maḥall*) and the thing which occupies it (*ḥall*). The treatment of these subjects in *ʿelm-e bayān* differed significantly from that applied to them in older textbooks following the tradition inaugurated by the *Ketāb at-badīʿ* of Ebn al-Moʿtazz in the 3rd/9th century, where they were not distinguished from other figures of speech. One of *ʿelm-e bayān*’s advantages over the earlier tradition was that its methods led to a more explicit treatment of literary citations used in evidence.

The Persian study of rhetoric originated in the older Arabic tradition, for which the model had been set by Ebn al-Moʿtazz’s *Ketāb al-badīʿ*. The most influential Persian works, the *Ḥadāʾeq al-seḥr* by Rašīd-e Vaṭvāṭ and the *Moʿjam* by Šams-e Qays-e Rāzī, were both written before the system of Sakkākī and his followers was introduced. This explains why *ʿelm-e bayān* as an independent and systematic theory of figurative speech was not widely accepted in Persian literary scholarship. Most later textbooks were still designed as mere lists of figures of speech, which, at most, drew a distinction between figures based on meaning and those based on sound. This does not mean, however, that Persian literati remained ignorant of the scholastic system. Among the scholars who took a leading role in its early development were many Iranians. In Persian-speaking countries, the system became an integral part of higher education through the teaching of Arabic and its literature. The influence of the scholastic approach also did not leave the study of Persian literature itself untouched. In 880/1475 Maḥmūd Gāwān, an Iranian



vizier at the Bahmanid court of the Deccan, dealt with *‘elm-e bayān* separately in the introduction to a work on Persian epistolography, *Manāẓer al-enšā*, (cf. the description in G. Flügel, *Die arabischen, persischen und türkischen Handschriften der K.-K. Hofbibliothek zu Wien*, Vienna, 1865, I, pp. 237-40). Another early example of the application of *‘elm-e bayān* is the *Resāla dar este‘āra wa ḥaqīqat wa majāz* by ‘Eṣām-al-Dīn Ebrāhīm Esferā’eni (died at Samarqand in 944/1537), a monograph on tropes which in the 18th century was translated at least twice into Arabic (cf. C. Brockelmann, *GAL*, S. II, p. 571). The following works seem to have been written on the same principles: *Bayān-e badī‘* by Mīrzā Abū Ṭāleb (about 1670); *Anwār al-balāḡa* by Āqā Moḥammad Hādī Motarjem (d. 1120/1708-09); *Mawhebat-e ‘oẓmā* and *‘Aṭīa-ye kobrā* by Serāj-al-Dīn Akbarābādī Ārzū (1101-69/1689-1755); *Toḥfat al-safar le-nūr al-baṣar* by ‘Alī-Akbar Nawāb Šīrāzī Besmel (1187-1263/1773-1846); and *Nokbat al-bayān* by Mollā Mahdī Narāqī (d. 1209/1794-95) (Monzawī, *Noskḥā* III, pp. 2125-51, *passim*), none of which achieved popularity. A more successful specimen of the Persian *‘elm al-bayān* treatise was included in the textbook of rhetoric and prosody called *Ḥadā’eq al-balāḡa* by Mīr Šams-al-Dīn Faqīr-e Dehlavī (1141-83/1728-69). It was printed several times on the Indian subcontinent (for the first time in 1814 at Calcutta), but it is best known in the French adaptation by Joseph Garcin de Tassy (*Rhétorique et prosodie des langues de l’Orient musulman*, Paris, 1873, repr. Amsterdam, 1970, pp. 1-77). Faqīr closely followed the pattern of the Arabic textbooks, but his book is of intrinsic interest to the Persianist because nearly all of its quotations are from Persian poetry.

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*El*² s.vv. Bayān, al-Ma‘ānī wa’l-Bayān, Madjāz. ‘A. Zarrīnkūb, *Še‘r-e bīdorūḡ, še‘r-e bīneqāb*, 3rd ed., Tehran, 2536 = 1356 Š./1977, pp. 53-63.

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