Characteristics of Rhetorical Style: The Sermon of Al-Hajjaj after the Battle of Dayr al-Jamajim as a Model

Caractéristiques du style rhétorique: Le Sermon d'Al–Hajjaj après la bataille de Dayr al–Jamajim comme modèle

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Abstract:

Rhetoric is a weapon of human society in both peace and war, as it was the means by which prophets delivered their messages to their nations. It serves as a tool for persuasion and appeal, as well as a skillful form of expression and a mode of communication aimed at delivering a message and convincing others.

The style of a speech is characterized by eloquence in words and meanings, as well as an abundance of arguments and evidence, with the goal of influencing listeners. This is evident in the sermon we have chosen as a model for analysis: the Sermon of Al-Hajjaj after the Battle of Dayr al-Jamajim.

Keywords: Style ; Speech;rhetoric; argument

Résumé:

La rhétorique est une arme de la société humaine à la fois dans la paix et dans la guerre, car c'était le moyen par lequel les prophètes transmettaient leurs messages à leurs nations. Il sert d'outil de persuasion et d'attrait, ainsi que de forme d'expression habile et de mode de communication visant à délivrer un message et à convaincre les autres.

Le style d'un discours se caractérise par l'éloquence des mots et des significations, ainsi que par une abondance d'arguments et de preuves, dans le but d'influencer les auditeurs. Cela est évident dans le sermon que nous avons choisi comme modèle d'analyse: le Sermon d'Al-Hajjaj après la bataille de Dayr al-Jamajim.

Mots-clés:Style;Discours;Rhétorique; argumentation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era were highly skilled in eloquence and rhetoric. Evidence of this lies in the poetic anthologies that researchers and scholars continue to study. Similarly, there is the artistic prose heritage exemplified in oratory, "which eloquent speakers used to showcase their linguistic skills and unique talents, as well as to offer advice and guidance to their communities. This is evident in the reputation of figures like QussIbnSa'ida al-Iyadi, whose oratory prominence in "Souk Ukaz" which gained wide recognition. The distinction he enjoyed among the people of pre-Islamic Arabia stemmed from the superiority of his religious sense over theirs. He anticipated the emergence of a prophet to correct the beliefs of the pre-Islamic era".(Khalif, n.d, p. 69)

When Islam emerged with comprehensive reform for all aspects of life, it upended the entire structure of Arab society and altered all systems. There was no better medium to address such a significant task than oratory, which found great support in religion and, in turn, served as a powerful aid to it. This was particularly evident in the sermons of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the most eloquent speaker of the Arabic language and the most adept at tailoring his words to the appropriate context.(Thuwaini, 2006, p. 630)

After Islam knocked on the doors of the Arabs, there was a significant shift in the realm of oratory. Previously confined to boasting and rivalries, oratory under Islam took on a more elevated purpose. Tha is to say, the contentious oratory of the pre-Islamic era became a means to instill piety, devoutness, and fear of God in people's hearts.(Hamdan, 1991, p. 117)

Moving to the Umayyad age, which is considered "a pivotal stage in Arab oratory," this period witnessed an unparalleled flourishing of rhetoric. It can be said that no other Arab era saw such a remarkable development in oratory as the Umayyad era did, and there were reasons and justifications for this. During this time, religious, political, and intellectual conflicts were abundant, inevitably leaving their mark on oratory. The parties and revolutions that rose up against the Umayyads did not rely solely on the sword but considered oratory their most potent weapon. How not, and the

orators of that era were an essential factor in igniting revolutions and tipping the scales in favor of one faction over another. In addition, they served another function which is advocating for peace(Hamdan, 1991, p. 119).

In brief, this is an overview about the stages of development in Arabic oratory. Before delving into the practical aspect, we will first address the definition of oratory.

Oratory is the art of addressing an audience face-to-face, convincing them, and winning their favor. It must involve direct speech; otherwise, it would be writing or recorded poetry. There must also be an audience to listen; otherwise, the speech would be a mere conversation or counsel. Persuasion is essential, as the orator must present their views to the audience, supporting them with evidence to make the audience believe as they do.

Additionally, grooming is crucial, meaning that the orator must stir or calm the emotions of the listeners, taking control of their feelings and directing them as they wish whether toward joy or sorrow, laughter or tears, calls for revolution, or appeals for peace.

Thus, the fundamentals of oratory are: face-to-face communication, an audience, persuasion, and grooming.(Al-Houfi, 2003, p. 05)

Aristotle divided the structure of a sermon into four parts: the introduction, the presentation, the argumentation, and the conclusion. Some added refutation as a separate part, while others reduced it to three parts: the introduction, the presentation (which includes evidence and refutation), and the conclusion(Al-Houfi, 2003, p. 117). Thus, we will follow this latter division.

Here, we aim to analyze one of Al-Hajjaj's sermon, as oratory was one of the methods he relied on to maintain control over his subjects, strengthen his authority, and assert his dominance.

2.The Sermon of Al-Hajjaj after Dayr al-Jamajim:

Al-Hajjaj addressed the people of Iraq after the Battle of Dayr al-Jamajim, saying:

"O people of Iraq, Satan has deeply infiltrated you, mixing with your flesh and blood, nerves and senses, limbs and organs, and hearts. Then he reached your minds and thoughts. He then ascended, nesting and laying eggs, and hatching offspring within you, filling you with hypocrisy and discord, embedding disagreement in your nature. You have taken him as your leader to obey, and your counselor to consult. How, then, can experience benefit you, a calamity admonish you, Islam restrain you, or clarity avail you. Were you not my companions at Ahwaz, where you sought treachery, pursued deceit, united in disbelief, and thought that Allah would abandon His religion and caliphate. While I observed you with my own eyes, you stealthily retreated and fled swiftly. Then there was the Day of Az-Zawiya—what a day that was! It exposed your failure, disputes, cowardice, and God's disavowal of you, as well as your leader's abandonment of you. You turned away like camels fleeing back to their pastures, drawn to their watering holes. No one asked about his brother, nor did the elder turn back for his sons, until weapons bit into you and spears crushed you. Then came the Day of Dayr al-Jamajim—what a day of battles and epic clashes! With strikes that severed heads from their places and left close companions forgetting one another amidst the chaos."

"O people of Iraq, betrayals after sins, treacheries after deceptions, and rebellions after uprisings! If I send you to your borders, you betray and deceive. If you are secure, you spread rumors. If you are frightened, you show hypocrisy. You neither acknowledge a good deed nor show gratitude for a blessing. Is there any renegade who has seduced you, any misleader who has misguided you, any rebel who has provoked you, any oppressor who has sought your aid, or any defector who has relied on you without you following him, supporting him, aiding him, and glorifying him?"

"O people of Iraq, has any agitator stirred, any croaker cried out, or any scoffer sighed without you being his followers and supporters? O people of Iraq, have admonitions not deterred you? Have past events not restrained you?" Then he turned to the people of Sham and said: "O people of Sham, I am to you like an ostrich defending its chicks, driving away

clods of earth, keeping stones at a distance, sheltering them from rain, protecting them from fog, and guarding them from wolves. O people of Sham, you are the shield and the cloak, you are the preparation and the footwear."(Al-Jahidh, pp. 90-91)

Al-Hajjaj began this sermon by presenting his topic, explaining and simplifying its components to persuade his audience of his intentions and goals. He relied on stirring their emotions to convince them of his purpose.

The sermon contained meanings and ideas that served as advice and guidance, aiming to evoke the audience's feelings and persuade them. Al-Hajjaj started by presenting the subject of his sermon directly, without introducing it with a prelude to win the audience's favor or encourage them to listen. Instead, he went straight to his point, opening the sermon with a harsh address that did not express any bond with the people of Iraq. He did not say, for instance, "O my people," as we find in the speeches of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Rather, he addressed them as "O people of Iraq," intending to draw the listeners' attention and urge them to listen and reflect, ensuring the message reached their minds and remained there.

The act of calling out serves as an alert and "a form of direction because it motivates the recipient to respond to the sender."(Al-Shahri, 2004, p. 360)

After the alert and direction, we notice that the orator begins his sermon by emphasizing his words with the particle of emphasis "indeed" (*inna*) coupled with the particle of assertion "certainly" (*qad*), to further reinforce and amplify the judgment. He said, "Indeed, Satan has deeply infiltrated you."

If we closely examine this statement, we find that it contains more than one means of emphasis: *inna* (indeed), the nominal structure of the sentence, *qad* (certainly), and the repetition of attribution in the verb *istabtana* (infiltrated). The subject of the verb is an implicit pronoun (*huwa*), referring to Satan—may God protect us from him.

Thus, "emphasis is the act of firmly establishing an idea in the mind and strengthening it to eliminate doubts and remove any ambiguities regarding what you aim to communicate."(Al-Miraghi, 2004, p. 45)

Returning to the previous statement and examining it closely, we find that it includes the verb form "*istaf'ala*" in "*istabtankum*" (has deeply infiltrated you). This verb form is repeated several times in this sermon, as in the phrases: "*istajma'tumlil-kufr*" (you united in disbelief), "*istansarkumẓālim*" (an oppressor sought your aid), and "*ista'ḍadakumkhāli'*" (a defector relied on you).

This verb form often indicates "seeking or transformation,"(Academy, 1934-1935, pp. 231-232) such as in the examples: "*istaghfartuAllāh*" (I sought forgiveness from Allah), "*istaktabtu*" (I sought to have something written), and "*istahjara al-ṭīn*" (the clay turned into stone). The Arabic Language Academy in Cairo has deemed this usage standardized for these two meanings.(Al-Fakhri, n.d,, p. 216)

When we follow Al-Hajjaj's words in his statement: *"Indeed, Satan has deeply infiltrated you, mixing with your flesh, blood, nerves, senses, limbs, organs, and hearts, then reached your minds and thoughts, then ascended and nested, then laid eggs and hatched them,"* we find that he connects these phrases with the coordinating conjunction *"then"* (*thumma*), which indicates sequential order. He likened Satan's control over the people of Iraq to food entering the stomach and spreading throughout the body's organs. Moreover, he stated that Satan *"ascended and nested, then laid eggs and hatched them."*

Afterward, he said: *"He filled you with hypocrisy and discord, made you feel division, and you took him as a guide to follow."*

Observe the precision and eloquence in his choice of the word *"filled"* (*faḥshākum*) instead of, for example, *"filled" (malā')*. Similarly, note his selection of the term *"guide"* (*dalīlan*), which implies that they took Satan as a proof and a path to follow, obeying him as a subordinate obeys their leader.

Following this, we find that Al-Hajjaj rebukes the people of Iraq with his words: *"How can experience benefit you, or an event admonish you, or*

Islam restrain you, or clarity avail you?" This interrogative, initiated by the performative indicator *"how"* (*kayfa*), is intended as reproach and denial.

We also find the interrogative style immediately after this in his statement: *"Were you not my companions at Al-Ahwaz, where you plotted deceit, sought treachery, united in disbelief, and thought that Allah would abandon His religion and caliphate?"* This too is intended as reproach and denial.

The interrogative style appears again in the sermon with the phrases: *"Have admonitions not deterred you?"*

"Have past events not restrained you?"

The purpose of these rhetorical questions is reproach and amazement.

In this sermon, we also find a quotation from the Qur'an when Al-Hajjaj described the way the people of Iraq sneaked away from the Battle of Dayr al-Jamajim, saying: *"And you are sneaking away stealthily."* He borrowed this phrase from the verse: *"Already Allah knows those of you who slip away, concealed by others."* (An-Nur /63).

Another quotation appears when Al-Hajjaj sought to highlight the dire situation of the people of Iraq, saying: *"A person does not ask about his brother, nor does the old man look back at his sons."* This is a reference to the verse: *"On the Day a man will flee from his brother, and his mother, and his father, and his wife, and his children"* (Abasa /34-36).

We also notice another quotation in his sermon: *"The intimate friend will be bewildered by his friend."* This echoes the verse: *"On the Day you see it every nursing mother will be distracted from that [child]"* (Al-Hajj/2).

At this point, we can also refer to a linguistic phenomenon that does not appear frequently in this sermon: the use of *prolepsis* (emphasis through inversion), which "aims to create a new syntactic structure that undoubtedly carries a specific meaning and seeks to achieve a particular purpose."(Al-Ashrawi, 2012, p. 59)

This linguistic technique has been discussed by ancient grammarians, rhetoricians, and critics, with Sibawayh being among the first to explore the reason behind this style(Hamad, 2013, p. 69). He said: *"It is as if they*

present first the part of the sentence that is most important to them, even though both parts of the sentence are of concern."(Sibawayh, n.d, pp. 1-34)

For the importance of *prolepsis* (the syntactic technique of inversion), Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani says: *"It is a door of many benefits, full of excellences, vast in application, and far-reaching in purpose. It always reveals something beautiful to you, and leads to something subtle. You will always find poetry that pleases your ear and delights you, and when you look closer, you realize that what pleased you and seemed delicate was because something was placed first or words were shifted from one position to another."*(Al-Jurjani, 2001, p. 85)

This is clearly demonstrated in the sermon through the use of *prolepsis* in presenting the adjuncts of the verb, specifically by presenting the prepositional phrase before the verb, which occurs twice in the sermon. Al-Hajjaj says: *"It was through it that your failure, discord, and cowardice occurred, and it was through it that Allah disassociated Himself from you."* He also says: *"It was through it that the battles and confrontations took place."*

The prepositional phrase *("through it")* is in the nominative case, functioning as a fronted predicate. The purpose of placing the prepositional phrase before the verb is to convey exclusivity.

Accordingly, the fronting of the prepositional phrase in the first sentence signifies the exclusivity of *"the Day of Al-Zawiya"* as the day marked by their failure, discord, cowardice, and God's disavowal of them, distinguishing it from all other days.

Similarly, the fronting of the prepositional phrase in the second sentence emphasizes the exclusivity of "*the Day of Dayr Al-Jamajim"* as the day of battles and epic confrontations, setting it apart from any other day.

This type of inversion *"stimulates the listener to focus on restricting the judgment or action to what is mentioned first."*(Al-Ashrawi, 2012, p. 61)

Additionally, in the sermon, we notice the musical rhythm created by synonymous words to help the listeners understand, as in the phrase: *"treacheries after betrayals,"* where *"khatr"* (betrayal) and *"ghadr"* (treachery) are synonyms.

He also says: *"When I sent you to your frontiers, you betrayed and were treacherous,"* where *"ghallaltum"* (betrayed) carries the meaning of treachery.

Following this parallelism, we see the repeated linguistic structures that form two balanced and harmonious images, as in the phrase: *"Did a traitor deceive you, or a misleader lead you astray, or a sinner provoke you, or a wrongdoer call you to arms, or a depost lead you to act, except that you followed him, sheltered him, supported him, and glorified him?"*

He also says: *"Did a troublemaker trouble, or a crow caw, or a howler howl, except that you were his followers and supporters?"* Through these expressions, al-Hajjaj aims to reproach and belittle the people of Iraq, highlighting their gullibility and their tendency to follow any deceiver.

Just as al-Hajjaj began his sermon with a call to the people of Iraq, he also ends it with a call, but this time he addresses the people of Sham. The call to the people of Iraq is repeated several times in his sermon, always using the vocative "O," as in *"O people of Iraq."* The intended meaning behind this repeated calling is to point out the negligence and lack of attention of the people of Iraq.

Similarly, at the end of the sermon, al-Hajjaj addresses the people of Sham twice, also using the vocative "O," as in *"O people of Sham."* The purpose of this call is to highlight the high status of the Syrians and to honor them, as they were the most loving and supportive of al-Hajjaj, mourning his death after he passed away. Al-Hajjaj had a deep affection for them as well.

This is evident from his statement: *"O people of Sham, I am to you like the ostrich protecting its chicks."* Al-Hajjaj compares himself to the ostrich *(Al-Zhalim)* (the male of the bird), which defends and protects its chicks, because the ostrich is known for its sharp vision and keen senses. This makes it a valuable early warning system for grazing animals in its vicinity, as it can detect approaching danger and alert other animals.

The purpose of this analogy is to "bring the meaning closer to the audience by using elements and components from their own environment, making the speech clearer and more impactful."(Al-Ashrawi, 2012, p. 154)

3. CONCLUSION

The simile is a powerful form of description aimed at creating a comparative image to another, bringing the described entity (the subject of the simile) closer to the mind of the listener or reader to persuade them of the idea the speaker seeks to convey.

The key features of Al-Hajjaj's style in his speech can be summarized as follows

1. The speech was characterized by the frequent use of **rhymed prose (saj‘)**, which created an impactful rhythmic and musical tone. This is evident in the similarity of the sounds at the endings of many words, such as: *"nifaqan, washiqaqan"* (hypocrisy and discord), *"rumtum, wasa‘aytum"* (you sought and you strove), and *"al-kafarat, wa al-fujarat"* (the blasphemers and the wicked), among other words that displayed this quality in the text of the speech.

2. The orator showed a tendency toward repetition, particularly through rhymed prose, beginning the speech with rhyming words such as *"al-lahm, wa al-dam"* (the flesh and the blood), and *"al-amkhakh, wa al-asmaakh"* (the brains and the skulls). Similarly, the speech concluded with rhyming terms like *"al-dabab, wa al-dhi’ab"* (the fog and the wolves), and *"al-rida’, wa al-hidha’"* (the cloak and the shoe). This created two mirrored images at the beginning and the end of the speech, as well as within its middle section.

3. Simplicity, precision, and clarity of style: The language used was clear and accessible. However, some terms might appear strange or somewhat difficult to understand due to their distance from modern usage.

4. The sermon also reveals the equal number of letters in some words with similar sounding endings, which contributed to creating impactful musical tones that resonated with the audience. Examples include: *"shaaghib, wanaa‘ib"* (the rebel and the cawer), *"tadhkuroon, watashkuroon"* (you remember and give thanks), and *"al-madar, wa al-hajar, wa al-matar"* (the clay, the stone, and the rain).

5. The orator employed partial paronomasia (jināsnāqiṣ) to organize rhythm and arrange cadence, enhancing the aesthetic of the meaning. Examples include:

- *"al-amkhākh, al-aṣmākh"* (brains, skulls).
- *"awṭānhā, aʿṭānhā"* (its homes, its pastures).
- *"tadhkuroon, tashkuroon"* (you remember, you give thanks).

6. The speech exhibits derivational repetition, which deepens and reinforces meaning in the listener's mind. For instance, Al-Hajjaj said: *"shaghabshāghib"* (a tumultuous rebel), *"naʿabnāʿib"* (a cawing cawer), and *"zafarzāfir"* (a sighing sigher).

7. The orator also tended toward repeating certain patterns, such as the active participle derived from triliteral verbs, like: *nākith* (renegade), *ghāwi* (deviant), *khāliʿ* (traitor), *ẓālim* (oppressor), *shāghib* (rebel), and *nāʿib* (cawer).

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