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### Content Analysis of Abū ‘Ubayda Ma‘mar b. al-Muthannā’s Majāz al-Qur’ān in the Context of Its Relationship with Linguistics and Tafsīr\*

*Dil Bilimleri ve Tefsir ile İlişkisi Bağlamında Ebu Ubeyde Ma‘mer b. el-Müsennā’nın Mecāzu’l-Kur’ān Eserinin İçerik Analizi*


تحليل محتوى كتاب مجاز القرآن لأبي عبيدة مَعْمَر بن المُثَنَّى في سياق علاقته بعلم اللغة وعلم التفسير

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### Abstract

Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar ibn al-Muthannā (d. 209/824), one of the prominent scholars of the second century AH, authored *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, a significant work reflecting the interrelations among Islamic studies during the compilation period. Although the conceptual framework of the term “majāz” had not yet been fully defined at the time, its central placement in this early work on Qur'anic language and exegesis is noteworthy. The work lies at the intersection of various disciplines due to its diverse subject matter, making it a valuable resource for multiple fields of Islamic scholarship. This article primarily aims to conduct a content analysis of *Majāz al-Qur'ān* and to determine its relationship with and impact on the relevant scientific disciplines. To achieve these objectives, the study employs a content analysis method, examining the work's content and its connections with both linguistics and exegesis (tafsīr). This study analyzes Abū 'Ubayda's usage of the term *majāz* (figurative expression), demonstrating that he employed it in a broader sense than its later, more narrowly defined meaning in the science of rhetoric (*ilm al-balāgha*). Through this term, he sought to examine various linguistic forms and modes of expression in the Qur'ān that deviate from conventional usage. His analyses not only contributed to foundational studies in morphology (*ṣarf*) and syntax (*naḥw*), but also laid the groundwork for the later establishment of *balāgha* as an independent discipline. Furthermore, this study refutes certain scholars' claims that Abū 'Ubayda did not understand *majāz* within the *majāz-ḥaqīqa* (figurative-literal) dichotomy, providing counterexamples that substantiate the contrary. In addition to these, by focusing on the Qur'anic text, the work also became integral to exegesis (tafsīr). In a period when exegetical activities were predominantly based on narrations (riwāyah), Abū 'Ubayda's attempt to offer an alternative approach positioned him as one of the pioneers of the rational (dirāyah) school of exegesis, which relies on linguistic analysis. Despite criticism from some exegetes, it became an indispensable work in later periods. This study highlights that *Majāz al-Qur'ān* has been a source of reference for scholars from various schools and disciplines. Examining this work sheds light on the intellectual dynamism of the period in which it was written. *Majāz al-Qur'ān* is a landmark work that not only reflects the intellectual milieu of its time but also bridges early Islamic scholarship with the more systematized scholarly tradition of later periods. Its analysis provides valuable insights into the evolution of Islamic sciences and the interconnectedness of their various disciplines.

**Keywords:** Tafsīr, Abū 'Ubayda, Majāz, Majāz al-Qur'ān, Linguistics, Rhetoric.

### Öz

Hicrî ikinci asrın önemli ilim adamlarından Ebu Ubeyde Ma'mer b. el-Müsennâ'nın (öl. 209/824) *Mecâzu'l-Kur'ân*'ı tedvin döneminde İslami İlimlerin kendi aralarındaki ilişkileri ortaya koyma açısından temsil değeri yüksek bir eserdir. Bu eserde dönemi itibarıyla kavramsal çerçevesinin henüz sınırlandırılmamasıyla beraber “mecâz” teriminin, Kur'ân dili ve tefsirine dair yazılan ilk eserlerden birinin merkezine alınması dikkat çekici olup, eser içerdiği farklı konular itibarıyla farklı ilim dallarının kesişim noktasında yer almaktadır. Bu çalışma ile öncelikle *Mecâzu'l-Kur'ân* eserinin içerik analizinin yapılması ve muhtevası itibarıyla ilgili olduğu ilmî disiplinlerle irtibatı ve onlara etkisinin tespit edilmesi hedeflenmiştir. Böyle bir çalışma konusu ve bakış açısının gereği olarak içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılıp muhtevası tahlil edilmiş hem de eserin hem dil bilimleri de tefsir ile irtibatı incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmada Ebu Ubeyde'nin mecaz terimini kullanma biçimi tahlil edilmiş olup onun bu terimi belagat ilminde daha sonradan kazanacağı sınırları belli olan terim manasını da kapsayacak şekilde ama ondan daha geniş bir manada kullanmış olduğunu tespit etmiştir. Bu terimle o, Kur'ân-ı Kerim'deki normal kullanımın dışındaki çeşitli dilsel formları ve ifade biçimlerini incelemeyi hedeflemiştir. Bu incelemeleri sarf ve nahiv gibi alanlardaki çalışmalara destek olduğu gibi, diğer taraftan sonraki dönemlerde müstakil bir disiplin haline gelecek Belagat ilminin tesisine katkı sunmuştur. Zira bu çalışmada bazı araştırmacıların Ebu Ubeyde'nin “mecâz” terimini mecâz-hakikat ikilemi çerçevesinde anlamadığını iddiası cevaplandırılmış ve bu iddianın aksi örneklerle ortaya konmuştur. Bunlara ilaveten araştırma düzlemini Kur'ân metni üzerinden belirlemesi de bu eseri kaçınılmaz bir şekilde tefsir ilmi ile alakalı hale getirmiştir. Kendi dönemi itibarıyla rivayet ağırlıklı olarak devam eden tefsir faaliyetinde, alternatif bir yol sunma girişiminde bulunan Ebu Ubeyde, dil bilimsel ekolü takip eden dirayet tefsirinin öncülerinden addedilebilir. *Mecâzu'l-Kur'ân* eseri bazı müfessirler tarafından tenkide tabi tutulsa da sonraki dönemlerde müstağni olunamayacak bir eser haline gelmiştir. Birçok farklı ekolden ve disiplinden ilim adamının istifade ettiği bu eserin incelenmesi, telif edildiği dönemin ilmî hareketliliğine de ışık tutacaktır.

*Mecāzu'l-Kur'ān*, sadece döneminin entelektüel ortamını yansıtmakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda erken dönem İslami ilimler ile sonraki dönemlerin ilmî gelişmeleri arasında köprü kuran önemli bir eserdir. Eserin analizi, İslami ilimlerin gelişimine ve çeşitli disiplinlerin birbiriyle olan bağlantısına dair değerli bilgiler sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tefsir, Ebu Ubeyde, Mecâz, Mecâzu'l-Kur'ân, Dil bilimleri, Belagat.

### الخلاصة

أبو عبيدة معمر بن المثنى (ت. 824/209)، أحد أبرز علماء القرن الثاني الهجري، ألف كتاب *مجاز القرآن*، الذي يُعتبر عملاً ذا قيمة تمثيلية كبيرة لفهم العلاقات المتبادلة بين العلوم الإسلامية خلال فترة التدوين. يعكس محتوى هذا الكتاب الدراسات التفسيرية واللغوية المبكرة في عصره. وعلى الرغم من أن الإطار المفاهيمي لمصطلح "مجاز" لم يكن قد تبلور بالكامل خلال هذه الفترة، إلا أن وضعه المحوري في أحد أقدم الأعمال المتعلقة بلغة القرآن وتفسيره يعد أمراً جديراً بالملاحظة. يقع هذا العمل عند تقاطع تخصصات متعددة نظراً لتنوع موضوعاته، مما يجعله مصدراً قيماً للعديد من مجالات الدراسات الإسلامية. تهدف هذه الدراسة بشكل أساسي إلى إجراء تحليل محتوى لكتاب *مجاز القرآن* وتحديد علاقته وتأثيره على التخصصات العلمية ذات الصلة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تسعى الدراسة إلى توضيح العلاقات المتبادلة بين العلوم الإسلامية خلال فترة التدوين. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف، تستخدم الدراسة منهج تحليل المحتوى، حيث يتم فحص محتوى العمل وارتباطاته بكل من علم اللغة والتفسير. قامت الدراسة بتحليل استخدام أبي عبيدة لمصطلح "مجاز"، حيث تبين أنه استخدمه بمعنى أوسع من المفهوم المنضبط الذي تبلور لاحقاً في علم البلاغة. من خلال هذا المصطلح، سعى أبو عبيدة إلى دراسة الأشكال والتعبيرات اللغوية المختلفة في القرآن التي تخرج عن الاستخدام العادي. ولم تدعم هذه التحليلات الدراسات في الصرف والنحو فحسب، بل ساهمت أيضاً في تأسيس علم البلاغة كتخصص مستقل في الفترات اللاحقة. وفي هذه الدراسة تم الرد على زعم بعض الباحثين أن أبا عبيدة لم يفهم مصطلح "المجاز" في إطار ثنائية المجاز والحقيقة، وبيان بطلان هذا الزعم بالأمثلة. علاوة على ذلك، وبتركيزه على النص القرآني، أصبح العمل مرتبطاً ارتباطاً وثيقاً بعلم التفسير. وفي فترة كانت الأنشطة التفسيرية تعتمد بشكل رئيسي على الروايات (الرواية)، فإن محاولة أبي عبيدة تقديم منهج بديل جعلته أحد رواد مدرسة التفسير بالدراية، مع اعتماده على التحليل اللغوي. وعلى الرغم من أن *مجاز القرآن* تعرض لانتقادات من قبل بعض المفسرين، إلا أنه أصبح عملاً لا غنى عنه في الفترات اللاحقة. تؤكد هذه الدراسة على حقيقة أن *مجاز القرآن* كان مصدراً مرجعياً للعلماء من مختلف المدارس والتخصصات. إن دراسة هذا العمل تسلط الضوء على الديناميكية الفكرية للفترة التي كُتب فيها. تُبرز إسهامات أبي عبيدة، من خلال استخدامه المبتكر لمصطلح "مجاز" ومنهجه متعدد التخصصات، الأهمية الدائمة لعمله في مجالات اللغة والبلاغة والتفسير. يعد *مجاز القرآن* عملاً بارزاً لا يعكس فقط البيئة الفكرية لعصره، بل يربط أيضاً بين الدراسات الإسلامية المبكرة والتطورات المتقدمة في الفترات اللاحقة. يوفر تحليل هذا العمل رؤى قيمة حول تطور العلوم الإسلامية وترابط تخصصاتها المختلفة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التفسير، أبو عبيدة، مجاز، مجاز القرآن، علوم اللغة، البلاغة.

### Introduction

The second century AH witnessed the processes of compilation, classification, and establishment of many Islamic sciences, which were developed to preserve Islamic thought and lifestyle in accordance with Islamic values, transmit them correctly to future generations, and provide solutions to new problems in line with the prophetic legacy. During this period, scientific data in various fields was collected, organized, and systematized. Theories were developed in many areas, and foundational texts were written in different disciplines. Among the significant scholars of the second century AH was Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar ibn al-Muthannā (d. ca. 110–209 AH), whose work *Majāz al-Qur'ān* stands out as a remarkable text dating back to the compilation period, contributing to multiple fields through its content.

*Majāz al-Qur'ān* reflects the early linguistic studies and exegetical activities of its time. Although the conceptual framework of the term *majāz* (figurative language) had not yet been fully defined during this period, its central placement in one of the earliest works on Qur'anic language and exegesis is noteworthy. The work lies at the intersection of various disciplines due to its diverse subject matter. While Abū 'Ubayda places the term *majāz* at the center of his work, as will be explained in later sections, his use of the term is much broader than the later, more narrowly defined concept in the science of rhetoric (*balāghah*). In Abū 'Ubayda's usage, *majāz* emerges as a concept that requires independent examination.

Abū 'Ubayda's work explores the possibilities of language through various usages—such as polysemy, metonymy, and semantic range—while also incorporating analyses of other linguistic fields, including morphology and syntax. These analyses are particularly significant

because they were produced during the formative period of the Basran and Kufan schools of grammar, highlighting Abū 'Ubayda's contributions to the development of these schools and his stance in scholarly debates, thereby elevating his importance. In addition to his linguistic analyses, Abū 'Ubayda holds a notable position for his explanations of Qur'anic words that bears archaisms. Furthermore, his work *Majāz al-Qur'ān* is considered one of the texts that contributed to the emergence of rhetoric (balāghah) as an independent discipline.<sup>1</sup> Many of the rhetorical devices studied in later periods were already identified by Abū Ubaydah.<sup>2</sup>

After outlining his position in the field of Arabic linguistics, it is essential to note that the work under discussion is directly connected to the science of exegesis (tafsīr) due to its focus on the Qur'anic text. Written during the period when the earliest philological works that bear exegesis genre were being produced, this text is significant for both its methodological approach to explaining verses and its controversial views, making it an important contribution to the field of tafsīr.

When the scholarly literature on Abū 'Ubayda's *Majāz al-Qur'ān* is analysed critically, we see the following picture: First of all, Mehmet Fuad Sezgin (d. 2018) prepared a critical edition of the book on the basis of five extant manuscripts as his doctoral dissertation and published it with an extensive introduction and several indexes.<sup>3</sup> And his contribution to related literature goes beyond publishing *Majāz al-Qur'ān*.<sup>4</sup> In the following years some researchers have conducted studies by associating the work of *Majāz al-Qur'ān* with genres of philology such as syntax (naḥw), morphology (şarf) or rhetoric and taking into account Abū 'Ubayda's views or preferences in that field<sup>5</sup>, while some researchers have dealt with it in terms of its relevance with the tafsīr and qiraāt, and have conducted more limited studies on Abū 'Ubayda's contribution to tafsīr, his approach to the phenomenon of qiraāt, his criticized views, his method and so on<sup>6</sup>. In this article, along with the general nature of Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-

<sup>1</sup> Badawī Ṭabānah, *al-Bayān al-'Arabī: dirāsah tārikhiyyah fanniyyah fī uşūl al-balāghah al-'arabiyyah*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjilū al-Miṣriyyah, 2. Edition, 1958), 18-19; Hasan Taşdelen, "Belāgat İlmî ve Tarihi", *İslam Medeniyetinde Dil İlimleri : Tarih Ve Problemler*, ed. İsmail Güler (İstanbul : İSAM, 2015), 235-238.

<sup>2</sup> Shawqī Ḍayf, *al-Balāghah: Taṭawwur wa tārikh*, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā al-Taymī al-Başrī, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, ed. Mehmet Fuad Sezgin (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1381/1961).

<sup>4</sup> See Fuat Sezgin, *Buhari'nin Kaynakları Hakkında Araştırmalar* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1956), 153-155. In this book, Fuat Sezgin included a chapter titled "Ebu Ubeyde ve Ferrâ'nın Buhârî Üzerindeki Tesirleri" (The Influence of Abu Ubaydah and al-Farrâ' on Bukhari).

<sup>5</sup> Sabri Türkmen, *Ebu Ubeyde, Hayatı ve Eseri "Mecaz'ul-Kur'an'ın" Dil Özellikleri* (Konya: Selçuk University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2000); Ali Bulut, "Ebû Ubeyde'nin Mecâzü'l-Kur'ân'ına Yönelik Bazı Eleştiriler", *Nüsha: Şarkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4/15 (2004), 63-76; Ali Akay, "Ebû Ubeyde'nin Mecâzü'l-Kur'ân'ı ve Mecâzî Yorumları", *İslâmî İlimler Dergisi* 8/1 (2013), 183-206; Zeynep Nermin Aksakal, "Ebû Ubeyde Ma'mar b. el-Müsennâ, Mecâzü'l-Kur'ân'ı ve Mukaddimesi Üzerine Bir İnceleme", *Erzincan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 8/2 (2015), 83-104; Vahap Boylu, *Ferrâ'nın "Meânî'l-Kur'ân"ı ile Ebû Ubeyde'nin "Mecâzü'l-Kur'ân" İsimli Eserlerinde Kur'ân Müfredâtına Yaklaşımlar* (Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Institute of Social Sciences, MA Thesis, 2019); Nurten Kula, "Fuat Sezgin'in Tahkik ve Neşrettiği Mecâzü'l-Kur'ân'ın Mukaddimesinde Yer Alan Bazı Âyetlerin Filolojik Tahlilleri Üzerine Bir İnceleme", *Fuat Sezgin ve Temel İslam Bilimleri: Güncel Tartışmalar-Teorik Teklifler*, ed. İbrahim Özcoşar et al. (İstanbul: Divan Kitap, 2019), 251-272.

<sup>6</sup> Ahmed Fevzî el-Heyb, "Kitāb Majāz al-Qur'ān li-Abi 'Ubayda Ma'mar ibn al-Muthannā al-Başrī (110-209 H.) Awwal kitāb fī gharīb al-Qur'ān al-karīm wa ma'ānīh" *Majallat al-Kulliyya al-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyya: Jāmi'at al-Sultān Muḥammad al-Fātiḥ al-Waqfiyya*, 1 (2020), 20-46; Osman Karakurt, *Ebu Ubeyde Ma'mar İbnü'l-Müsennâ Hayatı, Eserleri ve Tefsir İlmindaki Yeri* (Selçuk University, Institute of Social Sciences, MA Thesis, 1989); Muhammed Pilgir, "Ebû 'Ubeyde'nin Mecâzü'l-Kur'ân'ında Kıraat Olgusu ve Söz Konusu Eserde İstifade Edilen Kıraat İhtilaflarının Tefsire Etkileri," *Artuklu Akademi: Mardin Artuklu Üniversitesi İlahiyat Bilimleri Fakültesi Dergisi* 10/1 (2023): 79-94; John Wansbrough, "Majāz al-Qur'ān: Periphrastic Exegesis," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 33/2 (1970), 247-266; John

Muthannā's *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, the relationship of this work with different disciplines in terms of its content will be emphasized. As required by the subject and perspective of such a study, a descriptive method and content analysis method will be followed and the connection of the work with both linguistics and tafsīr will be examined.

This study primarily aims to conduct a content analysis of *Majāz al-Qur'ān* and to determine its relationship with and impact on the relevant scientific disciplines. Additionally, it seeks to elucidate the interrelations among Islamic sciences during the compilation period. To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following fundamental questions: What was the position of Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar ibn al-Muthannā in the scholarly world of his time? What kind of methodology and school of thought did Abū 'Ubayda follow in *Majāz al-Qur'ān* from the perspective of linguistics? How did his work contribute to the broader process of establishing the science of rhetoric (balāghah), and specifically, how did it contribute to the study of bayān (eloquence) and majāz (figurative language) in line with Qur'anic rhetoric? What does the concept of majāz encompass in Abū 'Ubayda's usage? What is the relationship between this work and genre of exegesis (tafsīr), and where does it stand within the broader framework of exegetical schools?

Based on these questions, the study is shaped on three main topics. In the first chapter, a general introduction will be made about Abū 'Ubayda and his work. In the second section, the relationship of *Majāz al-Qur'ān* with linguistics; in the third and final chapter, *Majāz al-Qur'ān* will be discussed in terms of the tafsīr.

### 1. Abū 'Ubayda and *Majāz al-Qur'ān*

Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā al-Taymī al-Basrī was born in the year 110 AH (728 AD) according to historical sources, and his date of death is controversial, with different opinions indicating that he died in 207, 209, 210 or 213 AH.<sup>7</sup> Abū 'Ubayda took lessons from the leading figures of his time in the field of language and literature. He got training held by Ahfesh al-Akbar (d. 177/793), Yunus b. Habib (d. 182/798), Isa b. 'Umar al-Saqafi (d. 149/766), who were important representatives of the Basran school of language; another name that should be especially mentioned among his teachers is Abū 'Amr b. 'Ala' (d. 154/771), who was both a linguist and one of the imams of Qirā'āt al-Asharah.<sup>8</sup> Abū 'Ubayda received training in grammar, poetry and syntax from him. In *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, Abū 'Amr b. 'Ala' is mentioned in more than thirty places. Therefore, it is fair to say that he bears a remarkable influence on Abū 'Ubayda. In addition, there are many poets from whom he learned and transmitted poetry. Abū 'Ubayda was well-educated in various classical genres that could be studied in his time, such as vocabulāry, syntax, idiomatic expressions and parables, literature, tafsīr, hadith, nasab and

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Wansbrough, "Mecāzu'l-Kur'ān: Dolaylı Anlatım" trans. Orhan Atalay, *Atatürk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi İlahiyat Tetkikleri Dergisi (İLTED)* 21 (2004): 261–302; Adem Yerinde, "Mecazul Kuran Bağlamında Ebu Ubeyde'nin Tefsirciliği" *Sakarya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 19 (2009), 151–189; Halil Büyüksaka, *Ebu Ubeyde'nin Mecāzü'l-Kur'ān'ının Hicrî III-V. Asır Tefsirlerine Etkisi* (İstanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences, MA Thesis, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Abū al-'Abbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1994), 5/235; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muzhir fī 'ulūm al-lughah wa-anwā'ihā*, ed. Fu'ād 'Alī Maṣṣūr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998), 2/392.

<sup>8</sup> Abū Bakr al-Zubaydī, *Ṭabaqāt al-naḥwiyyīn wa al-lughawīyyīn*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 175; Abū Sa'īd al-Sīrāfī, *Akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn al-baṣriyyīn*, ed. Ṭāhā Muḥammad al-Zīnī and Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mun'im Khafājī (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1373/1966), 53–54; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, 5/230.

ahbar.<sup>9</sup> His more than one hundred works are the greatest evidence of this. Abū ‘Ubayda is considered to be one of the first scholars of linguistics.

As for the date and reason for the writing of the work, first of all, there are narrations that this work was written on the author's return to Basran from his journey to Baghdad in 188 AH. These narrations<sup>10</sup>, which shed light on the date of the writing of the work, on the one hand give us information about the reason for the composition of the work, and on the other hand, they provide clues about the relationship between the scholarly and political circles of the period. Fadl b. Rabī’ (d. 208/823), one of the viziers of the time, summoned Abū ‘Ubayda to Baghdad and asked him to recite poetry. Afterwards, Ibrahim b. Ismail, one of the vizier's scribes, asked him about the simile in a Quranic verses describing the tree of Zaqqum, which will be presented as a punishment for the people of Hell (طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُءُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ) “The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of *Shayatin* (devils)”.<sup>11</sup> He asked for an explanation of the analogy of the heads of the devils in these verses, which are not known to the people, while in Vaad and Va'id it is necessary to give an analogy with what is known. Abū ‘Ubayda replied to him: “Allah Ta'ala has addressed the Arabs according to their own language” and added: “Have you not heard this poem of Imri al-Qays?”

أَيَقْتُلُنِي وَالْمَشْرِفِيُّ مُصَاجِعِي      وَمَسْنُونَةُ زُرْقٍ كَأَنْيَابِ أَغْوَالِ

Will he kill me when my bed is the sword of Mashrafi?

Sharp Sharpened (sword) like a ghoul's canine tooth

In the couplet, the sharp sword is likened to the fangs of a creature/monster called *ghûl*, an imaginary evil character by the Arabs. Although the Arabs had never seen the imaginary character called *ghûl*, the poet used it as an element of fear by referring to its fangs. This coincides with the likening of the buds of the oleander tree to the heads of devils in the verse. Interlocutors were pleased with this answer, and Abū ‘Ubayda decided to write his work in which he would collect the excerpts in the Qur’ān that needed to be explained, and when he returned to Basra, he began to compose it.<sup>12</sup> These and similar narrations show that Abū ‘Ubayda was one of the authoritative figures of his time in terms of language and proficiency of the Qur’ānic content and was respected by the rulers.

To provide a general overview of *Majāz al-Qur’ān*, we can say the following: In his work, Abū ‘Ubayda followed the order of the Quranic text but did not address each one of the verses. Instead, he focused on explaining specific words or phrases in verses where he deemed it necessary. The majority of his work is dedicated to elucidating *gharīb* (rare or difficult) words found in the Qur’an.

In doing so, Abū ‘Ubayda employed linguistic analyses where required. For some sentences, he provided grammatical parsing (i‘rāb), and for certain words, he delved into morphology (ṣarf) and etymology (ishtiqaq). Additionally, in cases where certain phrases deviated from

<sup>9</sup> al-Zubaydī, *Ṭabaqāt al-naḥwiyyīn*, 175; al-Sīrāfī, *Akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn*, 53-54; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yān*, 5/230.

<sup>10</sup> See Kamāl al-Dīn al-Anbārī, *Nuzhat al-alibbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-udabā’*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Sāmīrī (Zarqa: Maktabat al-Manār, 1405/1985), 86-88.

<sup>11</sup> *The Noble Qur’an*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan - Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali (Madinah: King Fahd Glorious Qur’an Printing Complex, 1404/1988), al-Sāffāt 37/65.

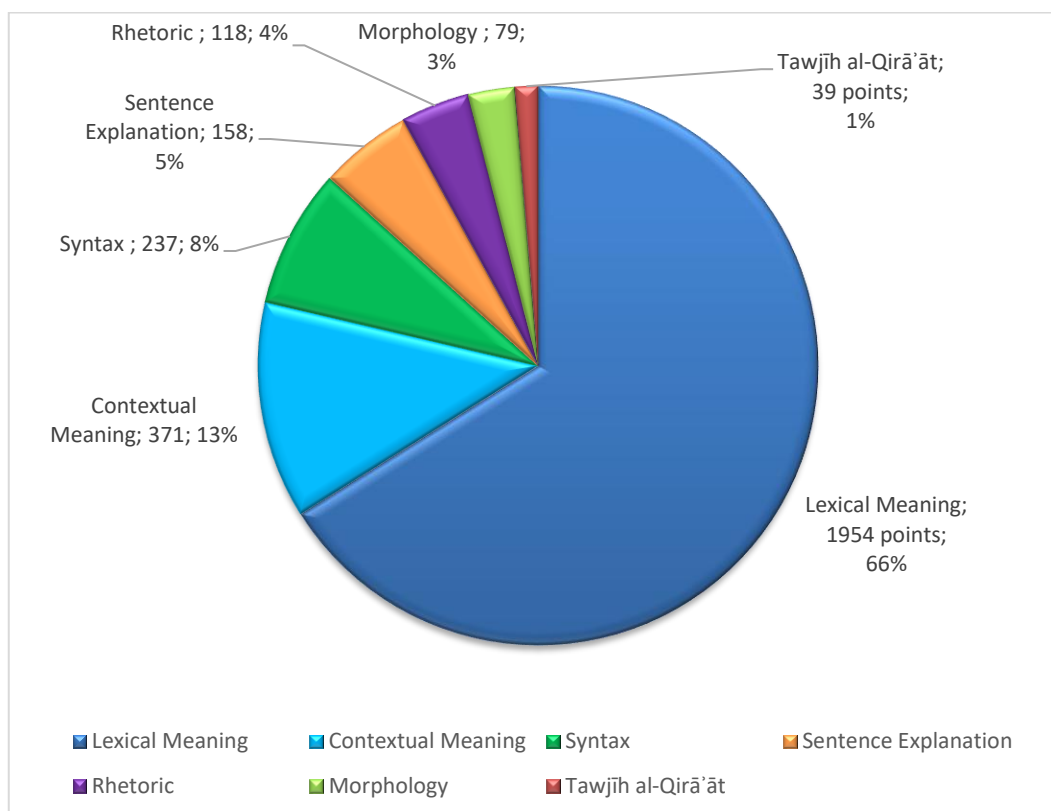
<sup>12</sup> al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, ed. Dr. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma’rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1422/2002), 15/338; Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Yūsuf al-Qiftī, *Inbāh al-ruwāt ‘alā anbāh al-nuḥāt*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī and Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, 1406/1986), 3/278.

ordinary usage, he referenced the linguistic practices of the Arabs to explain the subtleties of meaning in those contexts.

A notable feature of his explanations is his frequent use of poetry as evidence (*istiṣhād bi-l-shi'r*). By citing examples from Arabic poetry, he demonstrated how certain words or phrases were used in classical Arabic, thereby supporting his interpretations of Quranic vocabulary. This approach not only reinforced his arguments but also highlighted the interconnect- edness of the Quranic text with the broader Arabic literary tradition.

The Qur'ān was not examined in every verse from beginning to end in *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, but Abū 'Ubayda provided explanations for the verses he deemed necessary. To give numerical values: In his work *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, he made explanations at 2956 points. 1954 of them consist of lexicological data regarding the subject vocable available in the Qur'ān. Here he acts like a lexicographer. In addition, he also gave the contextual meaning of the words in the Qur'ān, which was realized in 371 words or phrases. In addition to the words or phrases, he explained the whole sentence in 158 points. As for his linguistic studies, 237 of his explanations are about syntax and 79 are about morphology. 118 of them are stylistic analyzes, and related to rhetoric. At 39 points, he has also made a interpretation on variant readings of the Qur'an (Qirā'āt). These numerical data presented in the chart below were manually quantified by the author through systematic enumeration, and their correlations with various disciplinary fields represent the author's analytical observations.

**Figure 1: Content Analysis of the book *Majāz al-Qur'ān***



As shown in the figure 1, approximately 20% of the book is directly related to the tafsīr by giving the meaning in the siyaqa, explaining the sentences and interpreting the Qirā'āt. 15%

of the book is a direct source of linguistics by providing information in the fields of morphology (şarf), syntax (naḥw) and rhetoric. The majority of the work, 66%, is related to the tafsīr, since it gives the dictionary meanings of the words, and it is connected to the tafsīr, and it is a work that contributes to the lexicography and therefore to the linguistics, since it explains the words without depending on the context.

## 2. *Majāz al-Qur'ān* and Linguistics

### 2.1. *Majāz al-Qur'ān* and Lexicography

Quantitative analysis reveals that approximately 66% of the work's content is fundamentally exegetical in nature, primarily due to its extensive lexicographical component. This substantial focus on lexical meaning, both independent of and within contextual frameworks, positions the work as a significant contribution to both Quranic exegesis and lexicographical studies. Indeed, *Majāz al-Qur'ān* is historically significant as the inaugural work in the Gharīb al-Qur'ān (unusual Quranic vocabulary) genre, catalyzing the eventual evolution of this field into more comprehensive discipline of Lughāt al-Qur'ān (Quranic lexicography) studies.<sup>13</sup> With these qualities, Abū 'Ubayda's work, particularly his *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, became a significant reference for later scholars and their works, such as Ibn Qutaybah al-Dīnawarī's (d. 276/889) *Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, Al-Naḥḥās's *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 502/1108) *Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, Al-Sāmīn al-Ḥalabī's (d. 756/1355) *Umdat al-Ḥuffāz*, Al-Fīrūzābādī's (d. 817/1415) *Baṣā'ir Dhawī al-Tamyīz*.<sup>14</sup>

Abū 'Ubayda's influence was not limited to Qur'anic lexicons; his work also served as a source for early Arabic dictionaries. Although his focus was primarily on the Qur'an, his expertise in explaining the meanings of words established him as an authority in lexicography. Some of the most notable dictionaries that directly reference his works include: Ibn Durayd al-Azdī's (d. 321/933) *Jamharat al-Lughah*, Al-Azharī's (d. 370/980) *Tahdhīb al-Lughah*, Ibn Fāris's (d. 395/1004) *Maqāyīs al-Lughah*.<sup>15</sup> These references are drawn both from *Majāz al-Qur'ān* and from Abū 'Ubayda's other works, underscoring his broad impact on Arabic linguistic studies.

The work we have discussed in this article, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, is considered a pioneering contribution to the Gharīb al-Qur'ān literature. Beyond this, Abū 'Ubayda's linguistic expertise led him to author other significant works. For instance, his *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* addresses words in Hadith texts whose meanings are not widely known, and he is recognized as the first to write

<sup>13</sup> Bayram Aktaş, "Garību'l-Kur'ān İlmi ve Lugatu'l-Kur'ān'la İlişkisi", *Tefsir Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4/2 (2021), 222.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Qutaybah al-Dīnawarī, *Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Şaqr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-İlmiyyah, 1398/1978), 33, 48, 70; Abū Ja'far al-Naḥḥās, *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Şabūnī (Makkah: Umm al-Qurā University, 1409/1988), 1/60, 388; al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qur'ān*, ed. Şafwān 'Adnān al-Dāwūdī (Damascus-Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, al-Dār al-Shāmiyyah, 1412/1996), 89, 831; al-Sāmīn al-Ḥalabī, *Umdat al-Ḥuffāz fī tafsīr ashraf al-alfāz*, ed. Muḥammad Bāsil 'Uyūn al-Sūd, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-İlmiyyah, 1417/1996), 1/104; 2/222, 272; al-Fīrūzābādī, *Baṣā'ir dhawī al-tamyīz fī laṭā'if al-kitāb al-'azīz*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār (Cairo: al-Majlis al-A'lā li'l-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah, 1416/1996), 2/258, 3/91.

<sup>15</sup> Abū Bakr Ibn Durayd, *Jamharat al-lughah*, ed. Ramzī Munīr Ba'labakkī (Beirut: Dār al-İlm lil-Malāyīn, 1987), 2/826; Abū Manşūr Ibn al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb al-lughah*, ed. Muḥammad 'Awaḍ Mar'ab (Beirut: Dār İhyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2001), 1/304; Abū al-Ḥusayn Ibn Fāris, *Maqāyīs al-lughah*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1399/1979), 3/94.

(Note: Although this footnote and the previous one refer to a few points from these sources, they explicitly mention Abū 'Ubayda by name and cite him numerous times.)



a dedicated work in this field.<sup>16</sup> Later important works in *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* frequently cite him, including those by: Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 224/838), Ibn Qutaybah al-Dīnawarī (d. 276/889), Al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998).<sup>17</sup> This influence is so profound that Abū 'Ubayda became one of the principal sources for the transmission of *gharīb al-ḥadīth* knowledge in several hadith compilations. The most striking example of this occurs in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, where Abū 'Ubayda is systematically cited as one of the primary Arabic linguistic authorities in passages documenting *gharīb al-ḥadīth* explanations.<sup>18</sup>

In *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, Abū 'Ubayda primarily relies on Arabic poetry and proverbs as evidence (*istiṣḥād*) to explain the meanings of words. When clarifying a word, he provides its singular or plural form if it is a noun, and its past tense, present tense, and verbal noun if it is a verb, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of the word's meaning. He explains both the semantic and morphological aspects of the word. Additionally, he discusses dialectical variations, explaining how words may have different meanings among different Arab tribes. Abū 'Ubayda places such importance on lexical knowledge that, in explaining a word, he often also clarifies other words available in the poetic evidence he cites.<sup>19</sup>

While Abū 'Ubayda often functions as a lexicographer in much of his work, he also provides significant explanations regarding the contextual meanings (*siyāq*) that words acquire in specific Quranic passages. This aspect of his work distinguishes *Majāz al-Qur'ān* from a mere dictionary and elevates it to the status of a work within the *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. In later sections, we will explore in detail the relevance between *Majāz al-Qur'ān* and Quranic exegesis (*tafsīr*). For now, it is important to note that Abū 'Ubayda's attention to the contextual meanings of words is a key feature that sets his work apart and solidifies its place in the broader Islamic scholarly tradition.

## 2.2. *Majāz al-Qur'ān* and Syntax (علم النحو) and Morphology (علم الصرف)

Abū 'Ubayda's work, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, contains valuable insights and analyses from the perspectives of morphology (*ṣarf*) and syntax (*naḥw*). In matters related to these fields, he frequently cites leading figures of the Basran school, such as Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb, Abū 'Amr ibn al-'Alā', and 'Isā ibn 'Umar<sup>20</sup>, and Abū 'Ubayda is generally considered to belong to the Basran school of grammar.<sup>21</sup>

However, despite this affiliation, he does not always follow the Basran school's views. In some cases, he cites the opinions of the Kufan school without objection. For example, in explaining the phrase {لَيْسُوا سَوَاءً مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ} <sup>22</sup>, where the word (أُمَّةٌ) appears after (لَيْسُوا) despite the presence of a pronoun (*damīr*) that could serve as the subject (*ism*) of (لَيْسُوا), Abū 'Ubayda explains: "The Arabs considered this permissible in their language, as evidenced

<sup>16</sup> Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazarī, *al-Nihāyah fī gharīb al-ḥadīth wa al-athar*, ed. Ṭāhir Aḥmad al-Zāwī and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah, 1399/1979), 1/5.

<sup>17</sup> Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām, *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, ed. Dr. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'īd Khān (Hyderabad-Deccan: Maṭba'at Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1384/1964), 1/3, 116, 135; Ibn Qutaybah al-Dīnawarī, *Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, ed. Dr. 'Abd Allāh al-Jabbūrī (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-'Ānī, 1397/1976), 1/304; Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī al-Bustī, *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, ed. 'Abd al-Karīm Ibrāhīm al-Gharbāwī (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1402/1982), 1/727.

<sup>18</sup> M. Fuad Sezgin, *Buhārī'nin Kaynakları Hakkında Araştırmalar* (Ankara: Otto Pub., 2019), 151-153.

<sup>19</sup> See Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/29, 80-81.

<sup>20</sup> Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/122-123, 143.

<sup>21</sup> al-Zubaydī, *Ṭabaqāt al-naḥwiyyīn*, 175; al-Sīrāfī, *Akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn*, 53-54.

<sup>22</sup> Āl 'Imrān 3/113.

by expressions like “أكلوني البراغيث” (The fleas ate me).<sup>23</sup> While the Basran school regarded such usage as contrary to grammatical rules and offered alternative explanations (e.g., al-Zajjāj proposed implied ellipsis [*taqdīr*])<sup>24</sup>, the Kufan school accepted this construction as valid. In this instance, we see Abū ‘Ubayda favoring the Kufan school's reliance on actual usage (*samā’*) and employment (*istimāl*) over the Basran school's emphasis on analogy (*qiyās*).

Additionally, due to the historical context of his time - specifically, the formative stage of linguistic studies during this period-, the Basran and Kufan schools often used different terminologies for the same concepts. Abū ‘Ubayda sometimes employs Basran terminology and at other times Kufan terminology. For example, while the Basrans used the term “ḍamīr” (pronoun), the Kufans used “kināyah” (metonymy). In explaining the phrase {إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ}<sup>25</sup>, where the object pronoun precedes the verb, Abū ‘Ubayda uses the Kufan term “kināyat al-maf‘ūl” (metonymy of the object) instead of the Basran term “ḍamīr al-maf‘ūl” (object pronoun).<sup>26</sup>

In another example, Abū ‘Ubayda combines terminologies from both schools. While the Basrans used the term “badal” (substitution) to describe a word that replaces or explains a preceding word, the Kufans used “takrīr” (repetition). In explaining the phrase {وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ} {دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ}<sup>27</sup>, where {دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ} (counted dirhams) explains {ثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ} (a paltry price), Abū ‘Ubayda states: {بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ جَرَرْتَهُ عَلَى التَّكْرِيرِ وَالْبَدْلِ} (“I construed it as both *takrīr* and *badal*”).<sup>28</sup> Here, he uses both terms together, reflecting his flexibility in terminology.

Abū ‘Ubayda's refusal to confine himself to one school indicates that, during the second century AH, the process of school formation and development was still in its early stages. Moreover, his occasional opposition to contemporary grammarians or his independent preferences in linguistic matters suggests that his deep familiarity with the Arabic language allowed him to adopt a more liberated approach, transcending the boundaries and rules set by his contemporaries.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, we can also see his mastery of the Arabic language when he explains certain forms of expression by referring to common usage in Arab custom with phrases like (Arabs say such) (Arabs do this often) (because Arabs make such).

In summary, Abū ‘Ubayda's *Majāz al-Qur’ān* demonstrates his mastery of Arabic linguistics and his ability to draw from both the Basran and Kufan schools. His work reflects a transitional period in the development of grammatical schools and highlights his independent and nuanced approach to linguistic and exegetical issues. This flexibility and depth of understanding make his contributions to Arabic linguistics and Qur'anic exegesis both unique and enduring.

### 2.3. *Majāz al-Qur’ān* and Rhetoric

Considering the development process, although the studies on rhetoric started in the first centuries, it was not until the 5th century of Hijri that it became an independent discipline. In

<sup>23</sup> Abū ‘Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur’ān*, 1/101.

<sup>24</sup> Abū Ishāq al-Zajjāj, *Ma’ānī al-Qur’ān wa i’rābuhu*, ed. ‘Abd al-Jalīl ‘Abduh Shalabī (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1408/1988), 1/458.

<sup>25</sup> al-Fātiḥa 1/5.

<sup>26</sup> Abū ‘Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur’ān*, 1/24.

<sup>27</sup> Yūsuf 12/20.

<sup>28</sup> Abū ‘Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur’ān*, 1/304.

<sup>29</sup> M. Fuat Sezgin, “Introduction”, *Majāz al-Qur’ān*, auth. Abū ‘Ubayda (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1381/1961), 1/15.

the early periods, studies on rhetoric were primarily dealt with in the works on I'jāz al-Qur'ān, as well as in the literature on linguistics (sarf - nahw), literature and literary criticism.

Although it is not correct to evaluate Abū 'Ubayda's *Majāz al-Qur'ān* only in terms of rhetoric, we would like to emphasize that it is a work that has made a modest contribution to the development of rhetoric as an independent discipline. Although his analyses on rhetoric are few in number, the points identified in this work have shed light for subsequent researchers. This contribution is primarily Abū 'Ubayda's awareness of many different usages that would later be analyzed in rhetoric. Thanks to this awareness, he provided explanations to the verses that contain elements such as simile (التشبيه), representation (التمثيل), metaphor (الاستعارة), free metaphor (المجاز المرسل), intellectual metaphor (المجاز العقلي), omission (الحذف), and emphasis (التأكيد), bringing forward-delaying (التقديم والتأخير), shifting in discourse (الالتفات) etc. which were discussed in different branches of the rhetoric in the following period. He has employed the concept of "majāz" as an umbrella term to elucidate a wide variety of expressive forms; and he did not consider it to be limited to (figurative language). At this point, it is necessary to examine what the concept of metaphor corresponds to in Abū 'Ubayda.

Before moving on to what the concept of "majāz" corresponds to in Abū 'Ubayda, we need to explain the understanding accepted in the later works of rhetoric to make a comparison. Following the maturation process of rhetoric, if the types of figurative language in its systematized structure are comprehended, it may be more possible to compare with the metaphor in the understanding of Abū 'Ubayda, who is an early representative of this field. In addition, in the following lines, where we will explain what Abū 'Ubayda calls "majāz", this comparison is also necessary to discern which of these correspond to which types in the systematized rhetoric.

After the systematization of the rhetoric with the works of 'Abd al-Kāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078-79), al-Sakkāqī (d. 626/1229) and al-Qazwīnī, figurative language is realized by using the word outside of the meaning of the word or attributing it to someone other than the perpetrator of the word with a presumption that shows the impossibility of the true meaning and a connection (connection in meaning). Based on this definition, there are three types of figurative language: These are al-istiāra (metaphor), al-majāz al-mursal (free metaphor), al-majāz al-'aqlī (logical metaphor).<sup>30</sup>

Returning to Abū 'Ubayda, some researchers claim that he did not understand the term "majāz" within the framework of the figurative-literal (majāz-haqīqah) dichotomy.<sup>31</sup> The question arises: Did Abū Ubayda truly use this term without grasping the opposition between figurative language (majāz) and literal meaning (haqīqah), or is there a different context at play? This issue requires careful explanation. In other words, it is necessary to clarify whether Abū Ubayda's use of the term "majāz" reflects a lack of awareness of the conceptual contrast between figurative language and literal meaning, or whether his understanding and application of

<sup>30</sup> Abū Bakr 'Abd al-Qāhir b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāghah*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Madanī, and Jeddah: Dār al-Madanī, n.d.), 366; Yūsuf b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Khwārazmī al-Ḥanafī Abū Ya'qūb al-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ al-'ulūm*, ed. Nu'aym Zarzūr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1407/1987), 356-369; Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Umar Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī, *al-Talkhīṣ fī 'ulūm al-balāghah*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2009), 72-83.

<sup>31</sup> John Wansbrough, "Majāz al-Qur'ān: Periphrastic Exegesis," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 33/2 (1970), 254. He says: "Abū 'Ubayda's exposition of majaz would appear to support at least one observation, namely, that he did not understand that term in the sense of the antithetical relation majaz-hakika. Indeed, none of the categories described nor the examples adduced to illustrate them suggests a consciousness of figurative language."

the term were situated within a different interpretive or rhetorical framework. This distinction is crucial for accurately assessing his contributions to Arabic linguistic and rhetorical thought.

Abū 'Ubayda's conceptualization of majāz can be broadly characterized as a framework through which he identified various linguistic forms and expressions in the Qur'ān that diverge from conventional or literal usage.<sup>32</sup> According to another perspective, majāz, in Abū 'Ubayda's view, functions as a methodological tool and an interpretive bridge facilitating the comprehension of Quranic meanings that extend beyond ordinary linguistic conventions. In this context, majāz encompasses a wide range of exegetical strategies aimed at ensuring an accurate understanding of the Quranic text. These strategies may include elucidating the lexical meaning of a term, identifying its synonyms, or interpreting its meaning within specific contextual frameworks. Additionally, this concept incorporates various rhetorical devices and grammatical constructions that fall within its purview. Within this interpretive framework, Abū 'Ubayda employed the term majāz in its etymological sense, signifying a "passage" or "pathway" through which the intended meanings of the Qur'ān are accessed and understood.<sup>33</sup>

It is noteworthy that, despite the conceptual framework of the term majāz (figurative speech) not yet being fully delineated during his time, Abū 'Ubayda placed this term at the center of one of the earliest works written on the language and exegesis of the Qur'ān. When we examine the work as a whole, we can say that Abū 'Ubayda used the term in a much broader sense than its later, more technical definition in the rhetoric (balagha). But this does not mean that he never used the term majāz in the context of the distinction between figurative-literal (majāz-haqiqah) language.

Abū 'Ubayda often employed this term to mean "the meaning of a word" or "the pathway to its meaning". However, his primary aim in using this term was to identify and describe various linguistic forms in the Qur'ān that deviate from conventional usage. When we look at forms of expression presented by Abū 'Ubayda, some of them<sup>34</sup> correspond to terms that were later formalized in the rhetoric as al-isti'āra, al-majāz al-mursal, al-majāz al-'aqlī and al-majāz bi-l-ḥadhf. Some of them are related to other rhetorical arts and correspond to genres that are analyzed in the context of 'ilm al-ma'ānī and 'ilm al-badī'.<sup>35</sup>

It would be appropriate to explain this matter with examples. We can start with the first type of figurative language in Arabic rhetoric, which is metaphor (or metaphorical borrowing known as isti'arah). Abū 'Ubayda employs expressions such as (التشبيه) (simile) and (التمثيل) (analogy) while providing explanations on certain points. Some of these expressions directly conform to the art of simile. However, what is significant for us here are the instances where the use of terms like (التشبيه) and (التمثيل) indicates a departure from the literal meaning of the word through the method of resemblance, i.e. isti'arah. In other words, isti'arah is the use of the word outside of the meaning in which it is put with the relation of resemblance and a presumption.<sup>36</sup> And the important point is that Abū 'Ubayda can use words like (مجاز التمثيل) and (مجاز مجاز) (المثل والتشبيه) to refer to this phenomenon.

<sup>32</sup> 'Ashrā Muḥammad al-Ghūl, *al-Majāz fī al-turāth al-'arabī: al-muṣṭalaḥ wa taṭawwur al-mafhūm* (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 2016), 67-68.

<sup>33</sup> Ṭabānah, *al-Bayān al-'Arabī*, 18-19; Taşdelen, "Belâgat İlmi ve Tarihi", 235.

<sup>34</sup> See Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/67, 91, 186, 269, 375.

<sup>35</sup> See Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/35, 100, 183-184, 252, 2/15, 118, 152.

<sup>36</sup> For more details, See al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāghah*, 30; al-Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ al-'ulūm*, 369; al-Qazwīnī, *al-Talkhīṣ*, 74.

As a case in point, in verse 109 of surah At-Tawbah, the phrase "who laid the foundation of his building on piety to Allah (*taqwa*) and His Good Pleasure (*ridwan*)" is mentioned.<sup>37</sup> Here, the concepts of *taqwa* and *ridwan* are metaphorically expressed through the use of *isti'arah* (metaphorical borrowing), likened to the solid foundation and pillars of a building. Abū 'Ubayda referred to this usage as *majāz al-tamthil*, or metaphorical representation.<sup>38</sup> By identifying this usage, which would later be recognized as a type of metaphor, and by establishing it through the relationship of resemblance, referring to it as *tamthil* (representation), Abū 'Ubayda demonstrates his profound understanding of the concept of metaphor. This insight not only reflects his grasp of the phenomenon but also indicates his influence on subsequent scholarly discourse. Indeed, later exegetical authorities have made explanations that affirm and corroborate this identification, thereby acknowledging the validity and significance of Abū 'Ubayda's analysis.<sup>39</sup>

A similar situation applies to Abū 'Ubayda's explanation of verse 29 in surah Al-Isra. Concerning the statements in this verse, {وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ} ("And do not make your hand chained to your neck"), he concluded that this expression constitutes (وهو مثل وتشبيه). In this verse, the words denote beyond their literal meaning for the purpose of analogy, indicating that this is an instance of *isti'arah* (metaphorical borrowing). This interpretation has been explicitly affirmed by later authorities of linguistic exegesis, such as Ibn Atiyyah (d. 541/1147) and Abū Hayyan (d. 745/1344), who are considered among the pinnacle figures of linguistic exegesis in later periods.<sup>40</sup> Their acknowledgment further validates Abū 'Ubayda's analysis and underscores the metaphorical nature of the expression in this context.

Regarding the issue of *al-majāz al-mursal*, one of the expressions that Abū 'Ubayda mentioned and was later considered within the scope of this type of *majāz* is as follows: In Surah Al-Imran verse 39, {إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِخَيْرٍ مُّصَدِّقًا لِّكَلِمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ} {that Allah gives you good tidings of Yahya (John), confirming the word from Allah}<sup>41</sup>, he says that the intended meaning of (word) is "Book," and Arabs say to a person "read me such and such word" but they mean "such and such poem".<sup>42</sup> The linguistic phenomenon in this example is *al-majāz al-mursal* in terms of using a part to refer to the whole, relating to the relationship between universality and particularity.

Another example of *al-majāz al-mursal* can be found in Abū 'Ubayda's interpretation of the phrase {وَأَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِزْرَارًا} {and we poured out on them (rain from) the sky in Abundance}<sup>43</sup>, where he explains that the term {السَّمَاءُ} (*al-samā'*, "the sky") is intended to signify "rain".<sup>44</sup> As later exegetical scholars have also noted, the interpretation of this term as

<sup>37</sup> al-Tawba 9/109.

<sup>38</sup> Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/269.

<sup>39</sup> See Abū al-Fadl Shihab al-Dīn al-Sayyid Mahmud al-Ālūsī al-Baghdādī, *Rūh al-ma'ānī fī tafsīr al-quran al-azīm wa al-sab' al-mathanī* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1415/1994), 6/21-23; Muhammad al-Tahir ibn Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-tanwīr [tahrīr al-ma'na al-sadīd wa tanwīr al-aql al-jadīd min tafsīr al-kitāb al-majīd]* (Tunis: Al-Dar al-Tunisiyyah lil-Nashr, 1984), 11/34.

<sup>40</sup> Abū Muhammad Abd al-Haqq ibn Ghalib ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn Tamam ibn Atiyyah al-Andalusī al-Muharrirī, *Al-Muharrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-kitāb al-azīz*, ed. Abd al-Salam Abd al-Shafi Muhammad (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1st ed., 1422/2002), 3/450; Abū Hayyān al-Andalusī, *Al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ (fī al-tafsīr)*, ed. Ṣidqī Muḥammad Jamīl al-ʿAṭṭār (Vols. 1 & 10), Zuhayr Jayyid (Vols. 2–7), and ʿIrfān al-ʿAshā Ḥassūnah (Vols. 8–10) (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1420/2000), 7/42.

<sup>41</sup> Āl ʿImrān 3/39.

<sup>42</sup> Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/91.

<sup>43</sup> al-Anʿām, 6/6.

<sup>44</sup> Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/186.

"rain" is based on the principle of al-‘alāqah al-maḥalliyyah (the locational relationship), wherein the location (i.e., the sky) is mentioned, but what is contained within that location (i.e., rain) is intended.<sup>45</sup> This rhetorical device, where the container is referenced while the contained is meant, is identified as an instance of al-majāz al-mursal.

As for the third type of figurative language: al-Majāz al-‘Aqlī (logical metaphor) refers to a rhetorical device in which the meaning of an expression is understood figuratively not due to linguistic conventions but rather due to a logical or intellectual connection. This type of figurative language involves attributing an action to something that does not literally perform that action, based on a logical relationship. It often entails assigning human qualities to inanimate objects or abstract concepts, as well as attributing an action or event to an entity other than its actual agent.<sup>46</sup>

This mode of expression was recognized by early scholars, and allusions to it were made, but it was not until ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī that the concept was clearly defined and its boundaries established.<sup>47</sup> In this context, Abū ‘Ubayda's understanding of the phenomenon of al-majāz al-‘aqlī and his references to it are of significant value. One of the most notable examples of this is found in the Quranic phrase {والنهار مبصرا} ("and the day as something that makes visible"), which appears in multiple instances.<sup>48</sup> This phrase was interpreted by Abū ‘Ubayda as an illustration of al-majāz al-‘aqlī. Here, the "day" is metaphorically described as an entity that enables visibility, even though it is not literally capable of such action. This interpretation highlights the intellectual and logical underpinnings of the metaphor, rather than relying solely on linguistic conventions. Here, the "day" is metaphorically described as an entity that enables visibility, even though it is not literally capable of such an action. This interpretation emphasizes the intellectual and logical foundations of the metaphor, rather than relying solely on linguistic conventions. According to Abū ‘Ubayda, the Arabs sometimes mention what should grammatically be the object (maf‘ūl) as the subject (fā‘il). In this usage, the "day" is not the one who sees or shows, but rather the act of seeing occurs within its context. He argues that the substitution of the subject (ism fā‘il) in place of the object (ism maf‘ūl) is a linguistic phenomenon observed in Arabic.<sup>49</sup>

In explaining this phenomenon, Abū ‘Ubayda did not neglect supporting evidence through cross-references to other Quranic verses and Arabic poetry. To illustrate, a similar case is found in the Quranic phrase {في عيشة راضية} ("in a contented life"), where the adjective rāḍiya (contented) is used to describe the life (‘īsha), even though it is the individual experiencing the life who is truly content, not the life itself. This usage reflects the same rhetorical device.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, a parallel example is found in Arabic poetry, such as the line:

(فنام ليلى وتجلّى همى) (So Layla slept, and my sorrow was dispelled). Here, the verb tajallā (was dispelled) is attributed to the sorrow (hammī), even though it is the poet who experiences

<sup>45</sup> al-Ālūsī, *Rūh al-ma‘ānī*, 4/90; Muhyi al-Din ibn Ahmad Mustafa Darwish, *I‘rab al-Quran wa bayānuh* (Homs: Dar al-Irshad lil-Shu‘un al-Jamī‘iyyah; Damascus and Beirut: Dar al-Yamamah and Dar Ibn Kathir, 4th ed., 1415/1994), 10/229.

<sup>46</sup> See al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāghah*, 366-373; Sakkākī, *Miftāḥ al-‘ulūm*, 393-399; Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Umar Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī, *al-Īdāh fī ‘ulūm al-balāghah*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Khafājī (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, n.d.), 1/90-92.

<sup>47</sup> al-Ghūl, *al-Majāz fī al-Turāth al-‘Arabī*, 150; Maḥdī Ṣāliḥ al-Sāmīrā‘ī, *al-Majāz fī al-balāghah al-‘arabiyyah* (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2015), 99-101.

<sup>48</sup> Yūnus 10/67; al-Naml 27/86; al-Mu‘min 40/61.

<sup>49</sup> Abū ‘Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur‘ān*, 1/279. See also: Abū ‘Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur‘ān*, 2/96.

<sup>50</sup> See Abū ‘Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur‘ān*, 2/268.

the relief, not the sorrow itself.<sup>51</sup> This demonstrates the same figurative construction, where the action is attributed to an entity other than its actual agent, highlighting the intellectual and metaphorical nature of such expressions.

In summary, Abū 'Ubayda's analysis highlights the sophisticated ways in which Arabic rhetoric employs al-majāz al-'aqlī to convey meaning through logical and intellectual connections. Abū 'Ubayda's observations and interpretations align with, and likely even laid the groundwork for, the views of later scholars in the fields of rhetoric (balāgha) and Quranic exegesis (tafsīr). For example, later scholars such as 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī further developed the concept of al-majāz al-'aqlī, refining its theoretical framework and expanding its application in the analysis of Arabic texts. Al-Jurjānī's works, particularly his discussions on naẓm (the structural coherence of language) and metaphor, echo Abū 'Ubayda's earlier insights, indicating a continuity of thought.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, exegetes such as Ibn 'Aṭīyya, Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854), and Ibn 'Āshūr (d. 1393/1973) interpreted similar verses in their commentaries with metaphorical interpretations based on the principles of al-majāz al-'aqlī.<sup>53</sup>

In some of the treatise on Arabic rhetoric, types of majāz beyond the classical tripartite classification are also mentioned. One of these is the concept of "المجاز بالحذف" (al-majāz bil-hadhf), which refers to a specific type of metaphorical expression achieved through omission. Abū 'Ubayda also made significant identifications regarding this concept. Al-majāz bil-hadhf in Arabic rhetoric denotes a metaphorical expression achieved by intentionally omitting a word or phrase that is grammatically or logically necessary for the structure of the sentence. Despite this omission, the meaning is still implicitly understood by the listener or reader.

This rhetorical device shares common features with the other types of majāz mentioned earlier. However, we specifically highlight this type here as Abū 'Ubayda points to this usage in dozens of instances.<sup>54</sup> One of the most famous examples of this is the Quranic expression {وَسْئَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ} ("Ask the town")<sup>55</sup> Abū 'Ubayda frequently cited this verse as evidence in his discussions, using it to illustrate this concept.

To describe this type, Abū 'Ubayda used expressions such as "مجازه مجاز المختصر" (majāzuhu majāz al-mukhtaṣar) and "مجازه مجاز المختصر المضمّر فيه" (majāzuhu majāz al-mukhtaṣar al-muḍmar fīhi), among others. These phrases indicate a form of majāz characterized by brevity and implied meaning. The phenomenon he explained with such expressions can be found in some rhetoric books under an independent classification, reflecting its significance in the study of Arabic rhetoric.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/279.

<sup>52</sup> Abū Bakr 'Abd al-Qāhir b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Dalā'il al-i'jāz fī ilm al-ma'ānī*, ed. Mahmud Muhammad Shakir Abū Fahr (Cairo: Matba'at al-Madani; Jeddah: Dar al-Madani, 1413/1992), 1/463-464. See also: Muhammad Muhammad Abū Musa, *Khasā'is al-tarākīb: Dirāsa tahlīliyyah li-masā'il ilm al-ma'ānī* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, n.d.), 152.

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Atīyyah, *Al-Muharrar al-wajīz*, 3/130; al-Ālūsī, *Rūh al-ma'ānī*, 6/146; Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-tanwīr*, 11/227.

<sup>54</sup> Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/47, 126, 247, 297; 2/98, 113, 116-117, 142, 168, 226.

<sup>55</sup> Yūsuf 12/82.

<sup>56</sup> Ibn Abī al-Iṣba' al-'Adwānī, *Tahrīr al-taḥbīr fī ṣinā'at al-shi'r wa al-nathr wa bayān i'jāz al-Qur'ān*, ed. Dr. Ḥifnī Muḥammad Sharaf (Cairo: The Arab Republic of Egypt - Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs - Committee for the Revival of Islamic Heritage, n.d.), 613; Aḥmad b. Muṣṭafā, al-Marāghī, *Ulūm al-balāghah: al-Bayān, al-ma'ānī, al-badī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1993), 290; 'Abd al-Mutā'al, al-Ṣa'idī, *Bughyat al-īdāh li-talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ fī 'ulūm al-balāghah* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1426/2005), 3/534.

In conclusion; when all the analyses discussed above are taken into account, the claim that Abū 'Ubayda did not use the term *majāz* (figurative language) within the framework of a *ḥaqīqa-majāz* (literal-figurative) dichotomy, or that he did not understand *majāz* as the opposite of *ḥaqīqa*, loses its validity.

Abū 'Ubayda's understanding of rhetorical elements and his contributions to the discipline of rhetoric extend far beyond the confines of figurative language and its types. On the contrary, he identified topics that would later be addressed in various branches of rhetoric and employed the umbrella concept of *majāz* to explain them as well.

One of the most striking examples of this is his treatment of (خروج الاستفهام عما وضع له) the rhetorical purposes of interrogative expressions beyond their literal meaning. In other words, "deviation of an interrogative expression from its primary, literal purpose." Abū 'Ubayda observed that interrogative particles are often used without the intent of asking a question, and he explained the intended meanings within their contextual usage. For instance, he analyzed cases where interrogative expressions, such as those using "hal" (هل) or "mā" (ما) or "a-laysa" (أليس) serve rhetorical purposes like affirmation, negation, astonishment, or emphasis, rather than posing literal questions.<sup>57</sup>

The issue we have explained above is generally analyzed in one of the main branches of Arabic rhetoric: 'ilm al-ma'ānī. Like the previous topic, the concept of "bringing forward and delaying" (التقديم والتأخير), which is studied within the scope of al-Ma'ānī, is another stylistic device addressed by Abū 'Ubayda, as he says (مجازه مجاز المقدم والمؤخر).<sup>58</sup> Abū 'Ubayda's analysis of this phenomenon demonstrates his keen awareness of how syntactic structures can influence meaning and impact in Arabic rhetoric.

The last noteworthy topic is Abū 'Ubayda's identification of "shifting in discourse" (الالتفات), which falls under the scope of al-Badī' (the branch of rhetoric dealing with embellishments and stylistic innovations). This phenomenon refers to a shift in the mode of address or perspective within a sentence or context, such as transitioning from the second person to the third person or from singular to plural. Abū 'Ubayda recognized this rhetorical device and its role in creating dynamic and engaging discourse.<sup>59</sup> His observations on this topic highlight his ability to identify subtle yet powerful rhetorical techniques that enrich the texture of language. There are many other examples, but given the limitations of this study, these are limited to these.

Another matter to be mentioned regarding the relationship of *Majāz al-Qur'ān* with literature and rhetoric is citation of poetry. Abū 'Ubayda's most frequently used method in explaining unusual words, linguistic analyses (related to morphology and syntax), and the forms of expression we mentioned above, and in verifying their accuracy, is citation of poetry.

Abū 'Ubayda's extensive transmission of poetry demonstrates his mastery of Arabic literature and his utilization of the literary accumulation of his time.

Some of the poems he cites as evidence are from pre-Islamic poets who authored *mu'allaqat* such as Labid bin Rabi'a (d. 40/660), Tarafa bin Abd (d. 564 AD), Nabigha al-Dhubyani (d. 604 AD), and A'sha Maymun bin Qays (d. 7/629), while others are from poet companions like Abbas bin Mirdas and Hassan bin Thabit (d. 60/680), and some are from Umayyad period poets like Farazdaq (d. 114/732) and Ahtal (d. 92/710).

<sup>57</sup> Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/35, 183-184.

<sup>58</sup> Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 2/15.

<sup>59</sup> Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/23, 252.



### 3. *Majāz al-Qur'ān* and the Tafsīr

Abū 'Ubayda's *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, is one of the early significant representatives of linguistic exegesis (lugavī tafsīr) that approaches the Qur'ān from the perspective of linguistic sciences. As explained in previous sections, this work makes notable contributions to the understanding of Qur'anic vocabulary and the grammatical analysis of its words and sentences. Abū 'Ubayda does not limit himself to the lexical meanings of words; in a considerable portion of his analyses, he also addresses the contextual meanings (siyāq) that words acquire based on their usage in specific Qur'anic passages.<sup>60</sup> This demonstrates that *Majāz al-Qur'ān* engages deeply with the practice of exegesis (tafsīr). His contributions to contextual meaning are directly related to the concept of ta'wīl, which is a fundamental element of the discipline of tafsīr in determining the intended meaning of the text.

In addition to his linguistic approaches, one of the most notable methods Abū 'Ubayda employs in his exegesis is the interpretation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an itself (tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi-l-Qur'ān). This approach positions his work as a dirāyah tafsīr (rational exegesis) that considers the Qur'an's internal coherence. There are numerous clear examples where he explains one verse by referencing another, both in terms of word usage and in matters directly related to creed and belief.<sup>61</sup> Although his exegetical views have been subject to criticism by later commentators<sup>62</sup> he remains one of the early exegetes whose opinions are frequently referenced and considered in the field of Qur'anic exegesis.

While his focus on lexical explanations is initially striking, there are also many instances where he explains the intended meaning of entire sentences or discusses the legal and theological implications derived from them. In these cases, he occasionally touches on jurisprudential (fiqhī) and theological ('aqīdah) issues.<sup>63</sup>

Another valuable aspect of his work, which is also connected to linguistics, is his attention to Qur'anic recitations (qirā'āt). He provides explanations (tawjīh) for different recitation styles, including even irregular (shādh) recitations, and analyzes them grammatically.<sup>64</sup>

One of the most prominent features of *Majāz al-Qur'ān* is Abū 'Ubayda's use of Arabic poetry and proverbs as evidence (istiṣhād). His application of 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān (Qur'anic studies) and his mention of principles that can be considered part of tafsīr methodology are also noteworthy. Additionally, his inclusion of historical information about the pre-Islamic (Jāhiliyyah) period to aid in understanding certain verses is highly valuable.

A striking aspect of his use of historical knowledge is that he does not provide chains of transmission (isnād) for the information he cites. Relatedly, it is worth noting that he rarely transmits Prophetic traditions (ḥadīth) or the opinions of the Companions (Ṣaḥābah).

Regarding his approach to narrations, it is important to highlight the following: In the introduction to his work, he emphasizes that the Qur'an was revealed in clear Arabic and contains no non-Arabic words or expressions. At first glance, this might seem like a minor detail or a response to contemporary debates about the language register of the Qur'an. However, in

<sup>60</sup> Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/129, 215, 246, 334, 2/63, 113.

<sup>61</sup> Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/146, 2/134, 149, 194.

<sup>62</sup> See Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Dār Hajar lil-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī' wa al-I'lān, 1422/2001), 7/279.

<sup>63</sup> See Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/68; 2/132.

<sup>64</sup> Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, 1/155, 174, 204; 2/137, 234.

our view, this emphasis signals the methodological approach he adopts in his exegesis. Abū ‘Ubayda concludes this discussion by asserting that the Qur’an, like the speech of the Arabs, has various grammatical structures (i’rāb), rare expressions (gharīb lafẓ), and different levels of meaning, and that understanding the Qur’an requires mastery of the Arabic language. This emphasis on the Arabic language also tacitly implies that there is no need for a narrative background. Indeed, in his work, he avoids using marfū‘ narrations (attributed to the Prophet), the opinions of the Companions and Successors, or reports about the occasions of revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl). The narrations he does use are exceptional and are cited only as evidence to explain specific words in the verses, rather than as a primary exegetical tool.<sup>65</sup> This has been one of the points of criticism against him. For this reason, Abū ‘Ubayda’s *Majāz al-Qur’ān* can be described as an attempt to “a narration-Free exegesis”.

In an era when Islamic sciences were predominantly based on narrations (riwāyah), Abū ‘Ubayda’s so-called “narration-free exegesis” can indeed be seen as a significant challenge. At a time when exegetical activities were heavily reliant on transmitted reports, Abū ‘Ubayda’s attempt to offer an alternative approach positioned him as one of the pioneers of the dirāyah (rational) school of exegesis.

However, this bold challenge also made him the target of criticism, particularly for engaging in what was perceived as “interpretation based on personal opinion” (tafsīr bil-ra’y). He faced considerable critique from various quarters. Among his critics were also leading figures of the narrative (Riwayah) exegesis school—such as al-Ṭabarī<sup>66</sup> (d. 310/923)—who composed his tafsir primarily based on transmitted reports (riwayah) but with elements of reasoned analysis (dirayah). Additionally, leading scholars in the field of linguistic sciences, such as al-Fārābī (d. 207/822), al-Naḥḥās (d. 338/950) and al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923), also criticized his methods.<sup>67</sup>

## Conclusion

Abū ‘Ubayda Ma‘mar ibn al-Muthannā’s work, *Majāz al-Qur’ān*, holds significant representative value for understanding the interrelations among Islamic sciences during the compilation period. Despite all criticisms, *Majāz al-Qur’ān*, thanks to its rich linguistic contributions, remains an indispensable work in the fields of Arabic language, rhetoric (balāghah), and Qur’anic studies in later periods.

The structure and content of *Majāz al-Qur’ān* reflect the state of exegetical and linguistic studies in the second century AH. Although terminological advancements were limited during this period, Abū ‘Ubayda’s profound understanding of Arabic grammar and the diversity of rhetorical styles and usages in balāghah provided valuable insights that illuminated the path for later scholars. Indeed, subsequent scholars refined and classified the diversity he identified under the umbrella term “majāz”, thereby advancing linguistic research, rhetoric, and other related disciplines.

Abū ‘Ubayda’s contributions—ranging from the analysis of isti‘ārah (metaphor) and majāz mursal (non-literal usage) to the identification of al-iltifāt (shifting in discourse)—are among the foundational principles that shaped the science of Arabic rhetoric later on. His work

<sup>65</sup> Abū ‘Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur’ān*, 1/57, 77.

<sup>66</sup> See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, 1/184, 7/278-279.

<sup>67</sup> Abū Zakariyyā al-Farrā’, *Ma‘ānī al-Qur’ān*, ed. Aḥmad Yūsuf al-Najjātī, Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Najjār et al. (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya lil-Ta’līf wa al-Tarjama, n.d.), 1/8, 89; Abū Ja’far al-Naḥḥās, *I’rāb al-Qur’ān*, ed. ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Khalīl Ibrāhīm (Beirut: Muḥammad ‘Alī Baydūn Publications, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1421/2000), 1/42; al-Zajjāj, *Ma‘ānī al-Qur’ān wa i’rābuhu*, 1/67, 298.

not only laid the groundwork for later scholars but also demonstrated the depth and sophistication of his understanding of rhetorical devices. His studies represent a critical link in the evolution of Arabic linguistic and exegetical thought, bridging early conceptualizations with the sophisticated theoretical developments of later periods.

This article analyzed Abū 'Ubayda's usage of the term *majāz* (figurative expression), demonstrating that he employed it in a broader sense than its later, more narrowly defined meaning in the science of rhetoric (*'ilm al-balāgha*). Through this term, he sought to examine various linguistic forms and modes of expression in the Qur'ān that deviate from conventional usage. His analyses not only contributed to foundational studies in morphology (*ṣarf*) and syntax (*naḥw*), but also laid the groundwork for the later establishment of *balāgha* as an independent discipline. Furthermore, this article refuted certain scholars' claims that Abū 'Ubayda did not understand *majāz* within the *majāz-ḥaqīqa* (figurative-literal) dichotomy, providing counterexamples that substantiate the contrary.

Abū 'Ubayda's contributions to the field of Qur'anic exegesis, as exemplified in his work *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, can be delineated through several key methodological and interpretive features. Firstly, he adheres to the *dirāyah* (rational) approach to exegesis, grounding his interpretations in Arabic linguistic data and frequently citing Arabic poetry as evidentiary support. A distinctive aspect of his methodology is his reliance on the principle of interpreting the Qur'an by the Qur'an itself (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi-l-Qur'ān*), which underscores a cohesive and intra-textual understanding of the scripture.

Furthermore, Abū 'Ubayda extends his analysis beyond the lexical meanings of words to elucidate their contextual significations (*siyāq*), thereby offering a more nuanced interpretation that accounts for the semantic and rhetorical dimensions of the text. He also engages in comprehensive sentence-level analysis, explicating not only the intended meanings of Qur'anic verses but also the legal and theological rulings (*aḥkām*) derived from them. His exegetical framework is further enriched by the incorporation of principles from 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān (Qur'anic sciences), reflecting a multidisciplinary approach to interpretation.

Additionally, Abū 'Ubayda's treatment of variant Qur'anic recitations (*qirā'āt*) demonstrates a sophisticated integration of exegetical and linguistic sciences, highlighting the interplay between textual analysis and philological inquiry. One of the striking conclusions of this article is this: Abū 'Ubayda's deliberate omission of narrations (*riwāyāt*) positions his work as an innovative attempt to develop a "narration-free exegesis", distinguishing it from traditional exegetical methods that heavily rely on transmitted reports. Collectively, these features underscore Abū 'Ubayda's distinctive approach to Qur'anic exegesis and his substantial contributions to the intersecting domains of linguistic and exegetical scholarship.

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