

# ON A POETIC ŠĀHID OF SĪBWAYHI:

*muttariqun riša l-qawādimi*

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1 The *šāhid* and its possible interpretations

1.1 In Zuhayr b. Abī Salma's *Kāfiyya*<sup>1</sup> line 15 runs as follows<sup>2</sup>:

*ahwā lahā asfa'u l-ḥaddayni muttariq \**  
*riša l-qawādimi lam yunṣab lahu š-šabaku*<sup>3</sup>

The verse is cited as a poetic *šāhid*<sup>4</sup> in Sībawayhi's *Kitāb* (Būlāq ed. I, 100; ed. Derenbourg I, 82; ed. Hārūn I, 195.); aš-Šantamarī's *Šarḥ šawāhid Sībawayhi* (I, 100f.); as-Sirāfi's *Šarḥ*<sup>5</sup>; as-Suyūṭī's *Ašbāḥ* (VI, 46, without mentioning the poet's name). Sībawayhi uses this place as an example of how an adjective with indefinite ending (*šifa munawwana*) may behave similarly to an active participle formed from a transitive verb (*Bāb aš-šifa al-mušabbaha bi-l-fā'il fima 'amilat fihi*, Būlāq ed. I, 99-

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<sup>1</sup> The poem is in the metre *basīṭ*. For line 15 see Zuhayr, *Dīwān* 172; aš-Šantamarī, *Šarḥ Dīwān Zuhayr* 83-84. I should like to thank Alan Jones for drawing my attention to this problematic expression and showing me not only the aforementioned *šarḥ* of the *Kāfiyya*, but also the relevant part of his book in print.

<sup>2</sup> Jahn 1894-1900 I/1, 123 translates it as follows: "Es stieß auf sie nieder ein Schwarzbrauner der Wangen mit dichtem Gefieder der Vorderseite, welchem noch keine aufgestellt sind". Jones's (in print, 130) translation runs as follows: "On it swoops a [falcon] with cheek-feathers suffused with red, its fore-feathers lying tightly over one another, a bird for which traps never been set up".

<sup>3</sup> Zuhayr, *Dīwān* here mistakenly reads *aš-širku*.

<sup>4</sup> See Fischer-Bräunlich 1945:169a *aš-šabaku*; Hārūn 1972 I, 257; Ya'qūb 1992 II, 620.

<sup>5</sup> A relevant quotation from as-Sirāfi's *Šarḥ* can be found on the margin of the Būlāq edition of Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*: cf. as-Sirāfi, *Taqrīrāt* I, 100.

108; ed. Derenbourg I, 81-88; ed. Hārūn I, 194ff; cf. Jahn 1895-1900 I/1, 122-131, I/2 154-164).

1.2 Sībawayhi's above mentioned explanation, supported by terms like "made similar" (*mušabbab*) having no equivalent in our grammatical categories, has not been, as a rule, accepted or taken seriously by European scholars. The only possible alternative to the concept of similarity (*tašbīh*) seemed to be to consider the *naṣb* in *rīša* an unusual *tamyīz* ('specification')<sup>6</sup>. This interpretation leaves us, however, with at least two problems, a formal and a semantic one. First, it must be emphasised that most Arab grammarians did not allow *tamyīz* to be a definite nominal construction<sup>7</sup>. Secondly, a sentence containing a *tamyīz* should also be intelligible without the *tamyīz*<sup>8</sup>, since it only specifies the meaning within a given circle. Now, if we delete *rīša l-qawādimi*, the remaining sentence (*[ṣaqrūn] mutṭariq*) does not convey a good meaning, because it is not the 'eagle' that is 'spread'<sup>9</sup> or 'lying tightly (over one another)'<sup>10</sup> but its feathers (or wings)<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Jones in print, 130: "It would appear that *rīsha l-qawādimi* is thought of as being an expansion of *qawādima*, and is therefore a *tamyīz* accusative, which under normal circumstances must be an indefinite noun". He does not go into details concerning what is to be meant on 'normal circumstances' but it can be guessed as 'in prose text'. That would leave us with a special linguistic feature of poetry (or pre-classical poetry) or a so called *poetica licentia* (*darūra*). The relevant linguistic literature does not, however, mention this phenomena and, to my knowledge, no further similar data can be found either.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Ibn as-Sarrāġ I, 269: *wa-ṣlam anna l-asmā' allatī tunṣabu 'alā t-tamyīz lā takūnu illā nakirāt tadullu 'alā l-aġnās*; cf. Wright 1896-98 II, 122e (and Rem. D); Carter 1981:368. Some linguists (Arabs and Europeans as well), however, allowed definiteness with the *tamyīz*. See, e.g., Ibn al-Anbārī, *Inṣāf* 131ff; Howell 1883-1911 I, 278-295, esp. 283ff; Reckendorf 1895-98:115; *id.*, 1921:96.

<sup>8</sup> I.e., it should be *kalām tāmm* (cf., e.g., az-Zamaḥṣārī, *Mufaṣṣal*, 30-31).

<sup>9</sup> See Hawā 1951:431.

<sup>10</sup> See Alan Jones's translation in fn. 2.

1.3 There emerge, however, even more important issues when investigating how this and similar cases have been handled through ages by the followers of different (Arab or European) linguistic schools. While for many this means an individual case or at least the application of independent linguistic notions, which can therefore be expounded on isolated bases, for Sībawayhi this and similar problems appear as parts of the linguistic system as a whole and he endeavours to explain them as such. This effort is remarkable even if one could not accept all of his explanations and explanatory methods.

1.4 Sībawayhi's precise wording, as happened so many times with his methods and notions, has been corrupted or misinterpreted by later authors. In aš-Šantamarī's *Šarḥ Dīwān Zuhayr* (p. 84) we read: *našb ar-rīš 'alā t-tašbīh bi-l-maf'ūl bihi*, which is a clear misunderstanding, since the line is not cited simply to explain a nominal ending (that of *rīš*), but to find an explanation for the linguistic behaviour of the whole adjectival phrase *muttariq rīša l-qarwādimi*<sup>12</sup>. Others usually supplement Sībawayhi's term *al-fā'il* with the word *ism* (see, e.g., Ya'qūb 1992:620). This is meant to indicate, that it is not the agent but the active or passive participle which is similar to the verb, and then the adjective, in their turn, are similar to the participle. In Sībawayhi's linguistic thinking, however, there is no real difference between *al-fā'il* and *ism al-fā'il*, as is shown by his argumentation in chapter n° 40, so he, quite naturally, does not make efforts to differentiate between them.

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<sup>11</sup> Medieval Arab dictionaries are quite clear about the denotation of *ittaraqa*: *tā'ir fīhi taraqa ay līn fī rīšīhi wa-ṭ-taraq fī r-rīš an yakūna ba'duhā farqa ba'd ... taqūlu minhā ittaraqa ḡanāh at-tā'ir ... ay iltaffa wa yuqālu ittaraqat al-ard idā rakibat at-turāb ba'duhu ba'dan* (Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān* IV, 2663).

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly enough, the same author, when commenting on Sībawayhi, seems to understand somewhat better why this line was cited, since he writes: *aš-šāhid fīhi našb ar-rīš bi-muttariq tašbihan lahu fī l'amal bi-smi l-fā'il al-muta'addī li-annahu šifa miṭlahu* (aš-Šantamarī, *Šarḥ šawahid Sībawayhi* I, 100).

2 Chapters n° 37-41 (Sībawayhi, *Kitāb*, ed. Derenbourg, 70-88) deal with different types of similarity between linguistic categories:

2.1 In chapter n° 37 the active participle is investigated when it takes an object behaving like an imperfect verb (*uğriya mağrā l-fi'l al-muḍāri'*):

*hādā dāribun Zaydan ġadan*<sup>13</sup>

is similar in structure (and consequently in meaning) to

*hādā yadribu Zaydan ġadan*

The indefinite ending of the participle plays an important part in the construction since it is (i) more fundamental (*asl*) than the definite construction, and (ii) it is more similar to the verbal structure than the genitive construction formed between the participle and its object:

*hādā dāribu Zaydin ġadan*

as in the Qur'ānic verse (3, 185):

*kullu nafsin dā'iqatu l-marwti*

This type of construction is, in Sībawayhi's system, secondary: the result of the deletion of the indefinite endings (*tanwīn*) or the *nūn* of the dual and the sound masculine plural. At the same time, although the definite genitive construction has the same meaning as the indefinite construction, it stands closer to the nominal character of the participle and emphasises it<sup>14</sup>.

2.2 Chapter n° 38 deals with participial structures which virtually govern two objects – that is, they govern the first object only in form (*lafẓan*), not in meaning (*ma'nān*):

*yā sārīqa l-laylati ahla d-dāri*

in accordance with a special licence (*sa'at al-kalām*)<sup>15</sup>. The basic structure (*ḥadd al-kalām*) would, in this case, be:

*yā sārīqan al-laylata ahla d-dāri*<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> In a poetic *šāhid*: (*innī ...*) *wāsilun ḥablī* (Sībawayhi, *Kitāb* ed. Derenbourg, I, 70).

<sup>14</sup> Though nouns are more fundamental than verbs, definiteness is only secondary as compared to indefiniteness (see Sībawayhi, *Kitāb*, ed. Derenbourg, I, 6).

<sup>15</sup> On the notion of *ittisā'* see Versteegh 1990.

<sup>16</sup> Sībawayhi, *Kitāb*, ed. Derenbourg, 75.

with the temporal adverb in the accusative. Nevertheless, the conditional particle *in* in Sībawayhi's sentence implies that though this structure may occur its use seems more unusual than the genitive construction.

2.3 Chapter n° 39 treats the case when the participle (*fā'il*) is used in place of the verbal expression<sup>17</sup> *alladī fa'ala* both in form (*mā ya'malu fīhi*) and meaning:

*hādā d-dāribu Zaydan* (= *alladī daraba Zaydan*)

The resemblance of the participial construction to the relative clause is underlied by its definiteness, which, on the one hand, is a reflex of *alladī*<sup>18</sup>, while on the other hand it prevents its being annexed to its object in a genitive construction thus making it similar also to the (more basic) indefinite construction:

*dāribun Zaydan*<sup>19</sup>

2.4 Chapter n° 40 is about the infinitives (*al-mašādir*) which both in form and in meaning are made similar to the imperfect verb:

*‘ağibtu min darbin Zaydan*

(= *annahu yadribu Zaydan*)

*‘ağibtu min darbin Zaydun ‘Amran*

(= *annahu yadribu Zaydun ‘Amran*)

Then Sībawayhi gives a comparison between these infinitival constructions and the similar participial ones (expounded in the previous chapter), stating the difference in that while the participle incorporates the

<sup>17</sup> Sībawayhi, *Kitāb*, ed. Derenbourg I, 77: *šāra l-fā'il fīhi bi-manzilat alladī fa'ala* 'the participle receives the status of *alladī* plus the perfect verb'.

<sup>18</sup> Both as its counterpart before nouns and as its *de facto* equivalent in dialectal Arabic – a linguistic fact which is perhaps the real cause of the existence of such otherwise anomalous expressions as *hādā d-dāribu r-rağuli*. It is cited by Sībawayhi on account of its similarity to the construction *al-ḥasanu l-wağhi*. Interestingly enough, this kind of expressions are only acceptable for him if the object is supplied with the definite article, otherwise they are rejected, also on the basis of similarity: there is no *al-ḥasanu wağhin* as there is no *ad-dāribu rağulin* (Sībawayhi, *Kitāb*, ed. Derenbourg I, 77).

<sup>19</sup> Sībawayhi, *Kitāb*, ed. Derenbourg I, 77.

verbal agent (*idā qulta hādā d-dāribu fa-qad ġi'ta bi-l-fā'il wa-dakartahu*)<sup>20</sup>, the infinitive in itself cannot relate to the verbal agent (*fa-idā qulta 'aġibtu min darbin fa-innaka lam tadkur al-fā'ila fa-l-mašdar laysa bi-l-fā'il*). Similarly, this basic indefinite construction can be replaced by a definite one (deleting the *tanwīn*). In that case the infinitive will form a genitive construction with either the agent or the object (*wa-yaš'ir al-maġrūr badalan min at-tanwīn*), since it is a noun (as well as it could be considered a quasi-verb in the previous construction) (Sibawayhi, *Kitāb*, ed. Derenbourg I, 79-81).

2.5 Finally, it is chapter n° 41 (*Bāb aš-šifa al-mušabbaha bi-l-fā'il fīmā 'amilat fihi*, Sibawayhi, *Kitāb*, ed. Derenbourg I, 81-88) which speaks about the linguistic question dealt with in this paper. It is this chapter that contains Zuhayr's above mentioned line as a poetic *locus probans*:

*muttariq riša l-qawādimi*

Other similar examples are:

*daḥmun šu'una r-rāsi*

and:

*aġabba z-zahra*<sup>21</sup>

The adjectival construction (*šifa*) in this case consists of two parts: *al-musabbab* ('that which is caused'), which is an adjective, and its *sabab* ('cause')<sup>22</sup>, which can be put in the accusative and on which it practises its quasi-verbal force (*'amal*), by way of making it similar to the *fā'il* of a transitive verb<sup>23</sup>.

There are, however, two types of adjectival structures which are made similar to the *fā'il*. The first (and principally more basic) type of structure is the above mentioned indefinite construction. This possibil-

<sup>20</sup> The special relation between the two is underlined in the Arabic grammatical terminology by their having quasi-identical names: *al-fā'il* and *ism al-fā'il*, a fact referred to in 1.3.

<sup>21</sup> Sibawayhi, *Kitāb*, ed. Derenbourg I, 82; aš-Šantamarī, *Šarḥ* I, 100f. Jahn (1895-1900 I/1, 123) translates these two respectively as: "Stark, von grossen Verbindungen der Schädelnähte", and "von verstümmeltem Rücken".

<sup>22</sup> For this term cf. Carter 1985.

<sup>23</sup> This important additional information is left out from later works.

ity, although placed in the centre of attention in this chapter, could not be regarded as a generally accepted and widespread way of constructing adjectival phrases, "since the adjective is not a verb, and not even a noun which can assume the (structural) meaning of a verb", says Sībawayhi (*Kitāb*, ed. Derenbourg I, 82).

The other type forms a genitive construction with its *sabab*, and "this is better and more frequent (than the other one, i.e., the indefinite structure with the *sabab* in the accusative) since it is not of the type which acts in the same way as the verb (i.e., in its government) and it does not share the meaning of the verb either. The other structure (i.e., with an indefinite adjective in it) where the adjective maintains its indefinite meaning in spite of the definite construction (*tark at-tanwīn lā yuḡāwaz bihi ma'nā at-tanwīn*) means also good Arabic" (Sībawayhi, *Kitāb*, ed. Derenbourg I, 82).

Thus he states that it is better to supply it with definiteness by way of attaching the *musabbab* (i.e., the adjective) to its *sabab* in a genitive structure. In this case we get:

*hādā ḥasanu l-waḡhi*

and:

*hādīhi ḥasanatu l-waḡhi*

which are similar to the participial structures:

*hādā dāribu r-raḡuli*

and:

*hādīhi dāribatu r-raḡuli*

There is but one very important difference: the *fā'il* (participle) refers back to the nominal subject (*al-mubtada'*), while the *ṣifa* (adjective) belongs to its 'cause':

*hādā dāribun*

but:

*al-waḡhu ḥasanun*

3 *tašbīh* and *muḡāwara*

How should we then understand *tašbīh* ('constructing an expression similarly to another one')? In the previous chapters (n° 37-40) one type

of a grammatical entity followed the same rules or acted in the same way (*ğarā mağrāhu* or *šāra bi-manzilatihī*), as another more principal or primary entity. In that case the secondary phrase will not only be analogous to the original phrase in its form (or in its government of the *i'rāb*) but will also replace it in its meaning (the participial construction the relative sentence, etc.). When, however, an adjective is made to behave similarly to a participle (i.e., we have a case of *tašbīh*), it takes only its form ('imitates' it) without obtaining the relevant meaning. That makes *tašbīh* comparable to the *'alā l-ğiwār*<sup>24</sup> constructions, which may have been much more widespread at an early time than it is usually thought of nowadays. It should be enough to mention only one very famous example, a variant reading of the Qur'ān (9, 3):

*anna llāha barī'un min al-mušrikīna wa-rasūlihī*

There is but one essential difference between *'alā l-ğiwār* and *tašbīh*: the first means similarity on the basis of horizontal (or linear) vicinity, while the other means similarity on the basis of vertical vicinity. What connects them is the fact that their desinential (*i'rāb*) endings are not the result of real (verbal or quasi-verbal) government but of surface similarities.

#### 4 *tašbīh*: explanation or reality?

The first linguists of the 2nd century of the *hiğra* (8th/9th century A.D.) had felt their task had been to collect material for the usage of the *i'rāb* endings (separating them from other types of endings) and to interpret the causes of their occurrences. Their data were, by and large, supplied by the *rāwīs*. What they really could do was to arrange and explain, widen (by way of analogy) or narrow (inventing such notions as *šadd* or *darūra* or using others, like *lahn* and *luğa*, in a new sense<sup>25</sup>) the collected corpus. Constructions in general usage (like *hasan al-wağb*) or rarely used but widely accepted poetic examples (like *muttariqun riša*

<sup>24</sup> For this linguistic phenomenon see Dévényi 1988 and Haddād 1992.

<sup>25</sup> For these notions see Iványi 1988, 1991 and in print.

*l-qawādimi*) had to be explained anyway (keeping in line, however, with the general descriptive principle of this early Arab grammatical thinking), even if these explanations (the *tašbīh*, for example) seem mere formalities at first sight. But was the usage of these constructions really not based on formal similarities?

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