

*The Institute of Asian and African Studies  
The Max Schloessinger Memorial Foundation*

*Offprint from*

JERUSALEM STUDIES IN  
ARABIC AND ISLAM

32(2006)

Sebastian Günther

**Praise to the book! Al-Jāhiz and Ibn Qutayba on  
the excellence of the written word in medieval Islam**

## PRAISE TO THE BOOK! AL-JĀHĪZ AND IBN QUTAYBA ON THE EXCELLENCE OF THE WRITTEN WORD IN MEDIEVAL ISLAM\*

Sebastian Günther  
*University of Toronto*

*The desirable treasure of wisdom and science, which all men crave by an instinct of nature, infinitely surpasses all the riches of the world; in respect of which precious stones are worthless; in comparison with which silver is as clay and pure gold is as a little sand.... Where dost thou chiefly lie hidden, O most elect treasure! And where shall thirsting souls discover thee? Certes, thou hast placed thy tabernacle in books, where the Most High, the Light of Lights, the Book of Life, has established thee.... Therein the cherubim spread out their wings, that the intellect of the students may ascend.... Therein the mighty and incomprehensible God Himself is apprehensibly contained and worshipped; therein is revealed the nature of things celestial, terrestrial, and infernal.... In books I find the dead as if they were alive; in books I foresee things to come; ... from books come forth the laws of peace.... [What is] in the mind is wisdom that is hid. . . , but truth which shines forth in books . . . manifest[s] itself!<sup>1</sup>*

These words stand at the beginning of the *Philobiblon*, a magnificent medieval work in Latin that has come to be seen as one of the finest professions of a timeless love of books. The *Philobiblon* was written by Richard de Bury (1287–1345), a Norman nobleman, High Chancellor of England, Bishop of Durham and scholar.<sup>2</sup> The work was penned but a

---

\* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the German Oriental Society, 20th–24th of September, 2004, held at the Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg, Germany.

<sup>1</sup> De Bury, *The Love of Books*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>2</sup> Richard de Bury studied at Oxford. He was subsequently tutor to Prince Edward of Windsor, afterwards Edward III, and ambassador on two occasions to Pope John XXII at Avignon who, in 1333, appointed him Bishop of Durham; the King and Queen, the King of Scots, with a multitude of magnates and nobles were present at his consecration. De Bury also distinguished himself in diplomatic negotiations between England and France. On the 14th of April, 1345, he died at Auckland and was buried in Durham Cathedral. According to the concluding note, the *Philobiblon*

few decades before the introduction of printing using wooden typeset. It bears witness to the intellectual atmosphere in Europe on the threshold of the Renaissance (1350–1550), an age that gave rise to “giants of mind-power, passion, and character.”<sup>3</sup>

Astoundingly enough, five hundred years earlier, in ninth century Baṣra and Baghdad, we find Arabic scholars such as ‘Amr b. Bahṛ al-Jāhiz and his slightly younger contemporary ‘Abdallāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutayba, whose great passion for scholarship, books, and penmanship is precursory to the Englishman de Bury’s later sentiments. In fact, the era of the ‘Abbāsī dynasty, was also characterized by a dramatic cultural and intellectual florescence, which affected medieval Arabic-Islamic civilization, transforming it into a ‘learning society,’ with the written word being the basis of knowledge.<sup>4</sup> In Islamic history the ninth century is the time when the number of ‘real’ books grew rapidly.<sup>5</sup> Prior to this, ‘aural instruction’ was the predominant feature of Muslim learning; lectures and seminars were based on scripts, written collections of data, and notes used as memory aids.<sup>6</sup> As ‘the book’ emerged in Muslim society, it was soon recognized as a powerful medium of education and communication, eventually becoming a pillar of medieval Arabic-Islamic civilization. This dynamic development was complemented by the increasing use of various kinds of other writings, including the documents and registers produced in great numbers in chancelleries and other administrative institutions of the expanding Islamic empire.<sup>7</sup>

---

was completed on the bishop’s fifty-eighth birthday, the 24th of January, 1345. Cf. De Bury, *The Love of Books*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>3</sup>Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), quoted in de Bury, *Über die Liebe zu den Büchern*, p. 243.

<sup>4</sup>For the fact that Muslim civilization depended on writing for the preservation and augmentation of its intellectual heritage, and for the significant insight that “Arabic writing, even more so than the language, became a sacred symbol of Islam,” see Rosenthal, “Significant Uses,” especially pp. 53 and 60–61. In contrast, the scholars’ deliberate destruction of their written material as a *topos* of the science of *ḥadīth* and of mysticism is discussed in Rosenthal, “Of Making Many Books,” pp. 39–42. For book lovers in medieval Islam, see “Arabische Bibliophilen zu Cordoba.” In *Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes* 19 (1941): 116.

<sup>5</sup>These books — i.e., epistles, monographs, and compilations — display distinct characteristics such as being definitively edited and published by the author himself; they often include a preface and an epilogue, in which the author expressly addresses the “reader” (*qāri*); and they often rely on a sophisticated system of internal references and cross-references with the author’s other works (cf. Günther, “Assessing the Sources,” pp. 78–79; and id., “... nor have I learned it from any book of theirs,” pp. 140–141).

<sup>6</sup>W. Werkmeister, letter quoted in: *ZDMG* 136 (1986): 121. See also Schoeler, “Writing and Publishing,” pp. 423–435.

<sup>7</sup>Günther, “Education: Islamic Education,” especially p. 641. For information on other aspects of this topic, see G. Atiyeh (ed.), *The Book in the Islamic World*, and in the respective surveys by W. Grebe and G. Endress (see bibliography).

\*

Given the significance of the book and the written word in general, both as cultural artifacts and as indicators of a set of social, political, and economic relations, it behooves us to take a closer look at pertinent ideas presented by two prominent ninth century Arabic writers, al-Jāhiz and Ibn Qutayba. Thus, the first part of this article inquires into al-Jāhiz's views on books as archives of knowledge and tools of learning, using his "The Book of Animals" and "The Book of the Teachers" as sources of information. In the second part, our perspective changes. Here certain ideas on writing and penmanship, which Ibn Qutayba discusses in his "The Scribe's Manual of Proper Conduct," will be presented. This provides an additional, though uniquely different, perspective from that time. Moreover, while the first part deals with books as the results of writing, the second scrutinizes some more specific aspects of its mechanics. The conclusion, then, interprets this data in terms of its importance for our understanding of the intellectual world of medieval Muslim society and its literary aesthetics.

### Al-Jāhiz on books

Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr b. Baḥr al-Fuḥaymī al-Baṣrī, known as al-Jāhiz, is the author of numerous works of *belles-lettres*, Mu'tazilī theology and politico-religious polemics. Probably of Abyssinian origin and from a poor family, he was born in about 160/776 in Baṣra, the ethnically and intellectually diverse city that essentially shaped his mind and inspired him throughout his life and scholarly career. He died in Baṣra in Muḥarram 255/December 868–January 869.

Al-Jāhiz's works in general display a profound gratitude towards books. This apparently has to do with the fact that it was, above all, books that freed him from the poverty of his childhood; books provided him with the educational basis that stimulated his intellectual growth to become the great man of letters he was; and books eventually helped him to gain access to the palace of the caliph. It is a quirk of fate, therefore, that books are also said to have ended his life. As legend has it, at the age of over ninety years — when he was already seriously ill and partially paralyzed — a stack of books crashed down on him, killing him while he was reading.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Pellat, *The Life*, p. 9; al-Qazzāz, *al-Fikr al-tarbawī*, p. 26.

## Books as archives of knowledge and tools of learning

Al-Jāhiz's probably most prominent passage in praise of books is part of the introductory section of his monumental anthology "The Book of Animals" (*Kitāb al-ḥayawān*).<sup>9</sup> This praise of books seems to conclude certain thoughts on the various means of expression available to humans, which the author has already presented at the start of this section. He begins the *laudatio* by saying:

[The book,] what a treasure and helpful means it is! What a great companion and support! What a pleasant object of leisure and recreation, and what a wonderful source to keep oneself busy with, and with which to make one's profession! What an intimate friend in the hour of loneliness and what a source of knowledge in foreign countries! What an excellent comrade, close friend, adviser and house guest it is!

The book is a receptacle filled with knowledge, a container crammed with good sense, and a vessel full of lightheartedness and earnestness. If you wish ... you can laugh about the anecdotes it tells you and be astonished by the marvellous things it teaches you. The witty ideas it offers may entertain you and the sermons it provides may move you. Where else can you find such an amusing counsellor and praising rebuker, a murderous ascetic (*nāsik fātik*), a silent talker, or a hot coldness.... Where will you find a companion [like a book]?<sup>10</sup>

As these lines show beautifully, for al-Jāhiz books are great companions in life and loyal friends. Moreover, they are also very useful tools to prevent information from being altered with time. Al-Jāhiz highlights

<sup>9</sup>The sixty-six pages of Arabic text in print include numerous digressions; cf. his *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 1, pp. 38–102. Passages of this laudation are included in Pellat, *The Life*, pp. 130–134; and id., *Arabischer Geisteswelt*, pp. 211–14. The *Risāla fī madḥ al-kutub wa-l-ḥathth 'alā* [the edited text has, incorrectly, *ilā*] *jam'ihā*, "Treatise on the Praise of Books and the Imperative of Collecting Them," as contained in an Istanbul manuscript, is, apart from minor variants, identical with the passage in *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 1, pp. 38–55. For the Istanbul text, see Rufai, *Über die Bibliophilie*, pp. 43–46 (Arabic text).

<sup>10</sup>All translations in this article are my own, unless otherwise indicated. Pellat's *The Life* and *Arabische Geisteswelt*, along with Rufai's German translation of the *Risāla*, were consulted insofar as they contained the passages discussed in this article. For the passage rendered here, see al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 1, pp. 38–39; and cf. Pellat, *The Life*, pp. 130–131, and id., *Arabische Geisteswelt*, p. 211.

this point when he quotes Dhū l-Rumma, a famous Arab poet of the early eighth century,<sup>11</sup> who requested:

Write down my poetry. I value writing more than memorization. [This is] because it may happen that a Bedouin forgets a word after [the poet himself] has spent the whole night searching for it. Then, the Bedouin puts in its place a word that is similar to it in meter (*'alā waznīhā*) and recites [the poetry] to the people [with this word]. A piece of writing, however, does not forget; nor does it substitute one word for another.<sup>12</sup>

Al-Jāhīz continues this line of thought by saying:

I know of no . . . comrade more loyal, or teacher more modest, or any companion more adequate . . . than a book.<sup>13</sup>

Al-Jāhīz's *Kitāb al-mu'allimīn*, "The Book of the Teachers," a treatise that champions the teaching profession, also deals with the importance of the written word in its very first paragraph. He states here that without the record provided by writing (*al-kitāb*), humankind would have lost much of its historical information and, as a result, would have been cut off from its past: "While the tongue bears witness to the present, the pen documents the past."<sup>14</sup> In a passage in *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* paralleling this view, al-Jāhīz again develops this idea of the book being an archive of knowledge. He says:

[I know of no other means that would] bring together for you so much excellent advice and rare knowledge, . . . and so much wise experience and information on the past centuries, distant lands, common sayings, and vanished civilizations, than a book.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Later in his life, Dhū l-Rumma was regarded as an authority on poetry in Baṣra, but is said not to have divulged the fact that he knew how to read and write. He died in 117/735-36. Cf. *EI*<sup>2</sup> vol. 2, p. 245.

<sup>12</sup> *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, p. 41. It might be significant that Dhū l-Rumma is said to have requested this of the Baṣran grammarian 'Īsā b. 'Umar al-Thaqafī al-Baṣrī, who is known to have applied the principles of logical reasoning in his grammatical studies and not to have followed 'blindly' the language of the Bedouins. 'Īsā b. 'Umar's two books on Arabic grammar have not been preserved. He died in 149/766. Cf. *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. (J.W. Fück).

<sup>13</sup> *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 1, pp. 41-42.

<sup>14</sup> *Kitāb al-mu'allimīn*, ed. I. Geries, p. 60. See also al-Qazzāz, *al-Fikr al-tarbawī*, pp. 228 and 258. I adopt Geries' suggestion that al-Jāhīz wrote the *Kitāb al-mu'allimīn* after he had completed the *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, *Kitāb al-bayān wa-l-tabyīn* and *Kitāb al-bukhalā'*; cf. al-Jāhīz, *Kitāb al-mu'allimīn*, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 1, p. 42. See also Pellat, *The Life*, p. 131.

Other arguments that al-Jāḥiẓ presents in this context are similarly appealing, even to today's readers. He suggests, for instance, that books can instantly provide you with the wisdom of various cultures, mentioning in particular the Arabian, Byzantine, Indian, Persian and Greek, the ancient and the modern. Books also preserve knowledge better and are clearer than other, predominantly oral, sources of information. This is because writing is capable of preventing knowledge from being distorted by everyday matters and the miseries of life.<sup>16</sup>

Further praiseworthy qualities of books include their long-lasting life as stores of knowledge; their almost unlimited ability to facilitate the preservation of huge amounts of information; the easy and nearly unrestricted access they grant to the information they contain; and their manageable weight and size.<sup>17</sup> If you are aware of these useful characteristics, al-Jāḥiẓ says, books can help "increase your property, sharpen your mind, beautify your language, increase your eloquence, empower your words, strengthen your heart, and give you as a gift the respect of people and the friendship of kings."<sup>18</sup> More importantly, perhaps, books can also save you valuable time when studying. They are very effective and affordable tools of learning, especially when compared with the fees one needs to pay for classes at school, or sessions of higher learning with a particular scholar.<sup>19</sup> Books, it is said, are teachers who always treat you with respect. They are loyal advisers, no matter what changes or hardships, politically or socially, you might be experiencing at a certain stage in your life.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, reading books safeguards you from wrong-doing, including the temptation to interfere in other people's lives and business, useless chatting and gallivanting. Al-Jāḥiẓ maintains that books also give you leeway to stay away from people with whom, for social or other reasons, you might not wish to mingle when attending a class. Likewise, reading helps you to avoid sluggishness and laziness at home. These are reasons enough, as al-Jāḥiẓ suggests, to seek the company of books, let alone the entertainment, pleasure, and inspiration that books offer to the passionate reader.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 1, pp. 39, 40.

<sup>17</sup> *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 1, pp. 41, 42, 50.

<sup>18</sup> *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 1, p. 51.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 1, pp. 41–42, 50, and especially p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 1, p. 51.

## Books, independent learning, and the Mu'tazila

For the scholar and book-lover al-Jāhiz, it is only natural to propose that a person is knowledgeable only after he has attended many lectures. However, he is not truly knowledgeable until he collects books, and what he has learned from them exceeds what he has heard in lectures. In fact, he does not even collect books until purchasing them gives him greater pleasure than spending the money of his enemy.<sup>22</sup>

Proving himself a gifted man of letters, capable of effectively blending education with entertainment in his writing, he continues by saying:

He whose spending on books does not equal the amounts of money that seekers of love (*'ushshāq*) spend on singing girls, and those crazy about construction spend on buildings, will not gain a sufficient amount of knowledge.<sup>23</sup>

In this context, it is noteworthy that al-Jāhiz's preference for books and reading stands in stark contrast to his strict opposition to any kind of mechanical memorization. This position of his is best understood against the background of his affiliation with the Mu'tazila, the oldest school of speculative thought in Islam, which in ninth century Baṣra and Baghdad was at its peak. Al-Jāhiz's stance in this regard is evident from his general preference for rational reflection, logical argument, and independent thinking.<sup>24</sup> It is made explicit, for instance, in a passage in his *Kitāb al-mu'allimīn*, where he states that "the leading sages, masters of the art of deductive reasoning and independent thinking (*al-ḥukamā' al-ru'asā'*, *aṣḥāb al-istinbāṭ wa-l-tafkīr*)" were averse to excellence in memorization. He maintains that this was so because memorization often results in nothing but imitation of what was already achieved by former generations. Deductive reasoning, in contrast, encourages individual creativity and the generation of knowledge, and is accompanied by an increase in one's self-confidence.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, al-Jāhiz also acknowledges that studying cannot be successful without the proper involvement of these two components of learning: i.e., rational reflection and memorization, for only then will ideas be understood and remain in the mind.<sup>26</sup>

As for independent learning leading to creativity, questions related to reading and writing play a key role. Al-Jāhiz is well aware of these issues

<sup>22</sup> *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 1, p. 55.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Al-Qazzāz, *al-Fikr al-tarbawī*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>25</sup> *Kitāb al-mu'allimīn*, pp. 62–63; the passage is translated in Günther, "Advice," pp. 120–122.

<sup>26</sup> *Kitāb al-mu'allimīn*, pp. 62–63; see also Günther, "Advice," pp. 114–115.



and deals with them at the very beginning of both his *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* and *Kitāb al-mu'allimīn*. He emphasizes the fundamental impact writing has had on human civilization. He suggests that writing, recording data, and arithmetic are "the pillars" on which the present and the future of human civilization, and "the welfare of this world" rest.<sup>27</sup> As for reading, he takes a similar approach when he states that learning and understanding should be its two main objectives. In other words, reading is not just to satisfy one's desire to learn beautiful new vocabulary. We are advised instead that

He who reads the books of eloquent writers and leafs through the collections of sages to acquire ideas pursues the right course. He, [however,] who looks into these books [simply] to learn [more] words, pursues the wrong course.<sup>28</sup>

This kind of insight makes one wonder what explicit advice a celebrated writer such as al-Jāḥiẓ might proffer regarding the process of writing and composing books as a technical skill. Some initial answers to this query can be deduced from certain passages in the *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*.<sup>29</sup> They indicate how aware al-Jāḥiẓ was of the role of textual characteristics, such as meaning, language, content, form and style, in effectively expounding and promoting ideas. Furthermore, one also notes that al-Jāḥiẓ, on several occasions in his works, enthusiastically calls for clarity and conciseness of language and literary style, suggesting that any abundance of words must be justified by the richness of meaning and ideas expressed therein; he also states that lengthy exposition is to be restricted to dealing with complex issues.<sup>30</sup> A more detailed treatment of these issues shall, however, be left to future research.<sup>31</sup> Instead, the second part of

<sup>27</sup> *Kitāb al-mu'allimīn*, p. 60.

<sup>28</sup> *Kitāb al-mu'allimīn*, pp. 75–76; see also Günther, "Advice," p. 119.

<sup>29</sup> *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 6, pp. 7–9; and the translation given in Günther, *Ideas*, pp. xxxii–xxxiii. Cf. also Pellat, *The Life*, p. 172.

Al-Jāḥiẓ's *Fī l-balāgha wa-l-ijāz* ("On Eloquence and Conciseness") is an important treatise, though in great part lost. It is relevant because in it the author devoted himself to providing professional guidance to writers and to establishing rules for Arabic prose writing. An extract of this treatise, preserved in a British Library manuscript, was used by Pellat for his anthology *The Life*; cf. *ibid.*, p. 20, n. 28. See also n. 57 below.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Pellat, *The Life*, pp. 102–104, 104–106, 111–112; id., *Arabischer Geisteswelt*, pp. 163–166, 168–170, 179–181.

<sup>31</sup> A recent *Habilitationsschrift* offers fascinating new insights into this set of questions; see Lale Behzadi, *Al-fahm wa-l-ifhām. Kommunikationstheoretische Studien zur frühen arabischen Sprachkritik*, Göttingen: Philosophische Fakultät der Universität, 2004. Aspects of her research are presented in the article "Al-Jāḥiẓ and his Theory of Communication," forthcoming in *Al-Jāḥiẓ: A Muslim Humanist for Our Time*, Beirut: Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, forthcoming 2006 (= *Beiruter Texte und Studien*).

this paper will pursue certain complementary views on effective written communication offered by al-Jāḥiẓ's contemporary, colleague and, often, critic: Ibn Qutayba.

### Ibn Qutayba

Born in 213/828 into an Arabicized Iranian family in Kūfa, Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. Muslim al-Dīnawarī Ibn al-Qutayba al-Kātib, "the Writer," became known as one of the great Muslim polygraphs of the ninth century. He was noted in particular for his works on Sunnī theology and *belles-lettres*. As in the case of al-Jāḥiẓ, Baṣra was for Ibn Qutayba the city in which he mainly pursued his education and probably also made the acquaintance of al-Jāḥiẓ.<sup>32</sup> However, in contrast to al-Jāḥiẓ, who seems to have held no post of significance throughout his life, Ibn Qutayba was appointed chief judge of the city of Dīnawar in Western Iran for almost twenty years and later, for a short time, inspector of the *mazālim* ("appellation court") of Baṣra. He died in Baghdad in 276/889.<sup>33</sup>

Ibn Qutayba admired al-Jāḥiẓ for his vast knowledge and complete mastery of the Arabic language as much as he criticized him for his free use of sources and, in particular, for his inquisitive and dialectical mind and style of writing. A statement, in which Ibn Qutayba made his mixed views on al-Jāḥiẓ public, is included in his *Kitāb mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* ("The Book of the Disputed Prophetic Traditions"), his most important 'theological' work, "in which are clearly set out his religious, heresiographical and political ideas."<sup>34</sup> There he says:

Al-Jāḥiẓ... is the last of the *mutakallimūn*<sup>35</sup> and a mocker of the forefathers. He is the cleverest in constructing arguments

<sup>32</sup>Ibn Qutayba does not indicate that al-Jāḥiẓ taught him by saying *ḥaddathanā* or *ḥaddathanī* ("he related to us" or "he related to me"), i.e., the terms he normally uses to speak of his teachers. However, Ibn Qutayba quotes al-Jāḥiẓ several times by name in a more general way. Therefore, Ḥuseini suggests that there can be "no doubt that Ibn Qutayba was one of al-Jāḥiẓ's pupils," whether directly, or indirectly through al-Jāḥiẓ's writings. Cf. Ḥuseini, pp. 13-14.

<sup>33</sup>See "Ibn Qutayba," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. (G. Lecomte).

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 845.

<sup>35</sup>*Mutakallim* is usually rendered as 'theologian.' Initially, however, it was simply a designation for 'eloquent people, experienced in (theological) discussion and debate.' Yet there is evidence from the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE that some particularly pious Muslims used the term in a derogatory sense for "loudmouth", as the orthodox Ibn Qutayba apparently does in our context. Al-Jāḥiẓ's writings, in turn, indicate that at his time the expression *mutakallim* was used in various ways. These include, first and foremost, the meaning 'theologian' (regardless of a scholar's

and the subtlest in making the small great and the great small.... He is perfectly capable of treating a matter and its opposite.... In his books, you find him aiming at arousing laughter and jesting, thus seeking to attract the juveniles and wine drinkers (*shurrāb al-nabīdh*). He makes fun of the *ḥadīth* [in a way that] knowledgeable people cannot fail to realize.... In fact, he is one of the biggest liars of the community (*umma*), one of its greatest fabricators of Prophetic traditions and strongest sponsors of deceit (*bāṭil*).<sup>36</sup>

Ibn Qutayba's seriousness, in contrast to what he perceives to be the levity evident in al-Jāḥiẓ's writing, is revealed especially in the systematic way in which he presents the material treated in his books. This achievement in the fields of writing and literature is worth noting, for it is both an expression of the originality of his mind and an essential element in the general exposition of his ideas.<sup>37</sup> In fact, Ibn Qutayba's preference for a method of portrayal that is as literary and elegant as it is systematic and purpose-oriented correlates well with his appreciation of simplicity and clarity in writing through philological precision and language use that is neither contrived nor pretentious or affected. That he himself applied these criteria is evident in his main literary work *Adab al-kātib* ("The Scribe's Manual of Proper Conduct"). Although this book was written for a specific group of writers — the secretaries and administrators known at that time as "writers" (*kuttāb*) — it attracted tremendous attention in the early centuries of Islam.<sup>38</sup> In fact, it acquired such wide

dogmatic stance), but also 'scholar with philosophical interests,' or 'intellectual.' See van Ess, *Theologie*, pp. 49–53. In his study of Ibn Qutayba (pp. 11–12), Ḥuseini remarks that in the 9<sup>th</sup> century the term *mutakallimūn* included all those who were inclined to philosophy and expressed their opinion on the various questions of religion without restriction, as opposed to the People of the Prophetic Tradition (*aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*). Interestingly enough, one group of *mutakallimūn* in Baṣra and Baghdad, namely the Mu'tazilites, are also known to have taken at this time a leading role in promoting new and popular fields of medieval Islamic learning such as philosophy, logic, astronomy, and mathematics, incorporating them into the study of 'classical' subjects such as language and religion. Al-Jāḥiẓ was a major representative of this 'new school,' while Ibn Qutayba, although being the younger of the two, belonged to the 'old school' which gave priority to the values of the 'classical' fields of Islamic learning.

<sup>36</sup>Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb ta'wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, pp. 59–60.

<sup>37</sup>Ibn Qutayba clearly distinguished between the study of religion and the study of literature. For him, the former required 'complete submission and imitation,' while the latter was a 'free art,' which allowed to transmit literary texts from people, irrespective of their religious affiliation. Hence, Ibn Qutayba felt free to study all kinds of poetry, regardless of the topic it dealt with. He was not shocked by love-poems or wine-poems, and even could appreciate the literary merits of 'immoral' verses. Cf. also Ḥuseini, p. 73.

<sup>38</sup>From the fourth century of Islam until the present, generations of writers com-

circulation among students of the Arabic language and style of writing that it was seen as a pillar of classical Arabic literature.<sup>39</sup>

With *Adab al-kātib*, Ibn Qutayba became a pioneer in his field in two respects: first, for the first time in the history of Arabic literature, he made available to wider circles of writers and readers the treasures of the Arabic language (which he had collected from oral sources and from often highly specialized, philological writings). Second, by doing so, he proved himself to be one of the very first Muslim intellectuals to make conscious use of a 'book' in order to educate employees of the state and to communicate to a wider public his concepts of writing. A few examples of his advice will illustrate this.

At the beginning of the introduction to *Adab al-kātib*, he tells his readers, among other things, that:

It is...deemed desirable that the writer (*kātib*) choose his words in his writings (*kutub*) according to the intellectual capabilities of both the writer [himself] and the one to whom they are written.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, he says, a writer should always be aware of the person for whom his writing is intended; therefore

[A writer] should not address common people with noble words, nor noble people with common words.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, Ibn Qutayba stresses that the writers (*kuttāb*) gave up this principle of their own accord. This resulted in a situation, as he observes, in which the *kuttāb* no longer distinguished between those people with

mented on this work.

<sup>39</sup>The celebrated historian, sociologist and philosopher Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) expresses this notion in his discussion of "the discipline of literature" (*ilm al-adab*). Here he places Ibn Qutayba's *Adab al-kātib* first in his 'short list' of the most prominent testimonies of Arabic *belles-lettres*. He says: "In class (*majālis al-ta'lim*), we learned from our professors that four works constitute the basic principles and pillars of this discipline. These are: *Adab al-kātib* ("The Scribe's Manual of Proper Conduct") by Ibn Qutayba; *al-Kāmil* ("The Complete [Guide to Arabic Language, Literature, Grammar, and Morphology]") by al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898); the *Kitāb al-bayān wa-t-tabayīn* ("The Book of Eloquence and Exposition") by al-Jāhiz; and the *Kitāb al-nawādir* ("Book of Rare Phenomena [in the Arabic Language], known also as *al-Amālī* ("Dictations [on Arabic Philology]") by Abū 'Alī al-Qālī al-Baghdādī (d. 356/967). All other books [in Arabic language and literature] depend on these four and are derived from them." Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, vol. 2, p. 257, no 2392; and Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, pp. 340-341.

It is, among other things, for these wider, 'literary' implications of *Adab al-kātib* that I have decided in this article to render the term *kātib* as 'writer,' rather than 'scribe' or 'secretary.'

<sup>40</sup>*Adab al-kātib*, p. 14.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

whom one could communicate freely (and to whom one could provide instructions) without the need to observe etiquette of a high standard, and others whom one must approach in a particularly courteous manner so as to 'invite' them to draw the intended conclusions. The latter may be achieved, as he elaborates, by employing a well thought-out presentation and a neat style of writing. He exemplifies this idea by saying that there are:

- a) [readers] one addresses in writing with [the expression] *fa-ra'yaka fī kadhā*, "so, state your opinion on this or that matter," and
- b) others one addresses [with the expression] *fa-in ra'ayta kadhā*, "so, if you would [please] state your opinion on this or that matter."<sup>42</sup>

Ibn Qutayba maintains that the first is used only to address one's peers. It is not to be used for superiors and masters (*al-ru'asā' wa-l-asātidha*), because "it implies an imperative, or command" (*li-anna fihā ma'nā l-amr*); this is why it is in the accusative (*nuṣiba*).

As for the language used to achieve a desired effect on an audience, Ibn Qutayba states that he favors the first person singular. He discourages the use of the first person plural in writing, for the royal 'we' was restricted to God in the Qur'ān, and to the use of rulers and other eminent people who issue commands and prohibitions.<sup>43</sup> He substantiates these views by discussing certain textual evidence from the Qur'ān, thus specifying some of these linguistic tools which make writing an effective and successful medium of communication.

Ibn Qutayba then provides writers with the major elements of "arrangement" or "organization of speech" (*tanzīl al-kalām*).<sup>44</sup> These are the four modes of expression, which altogether constitute "the pillars of [written] communication" (*da'ā'im al-maqālāt*).<sup>45</sup>

### 1. To *ask* for something,

<sup>42</sup> *Adab al-kātib*, pp. 14–15. This, at least, seems to be what Ibn Qutayba intends to say here, although his out-of-context use of these technical expressions remains somewhat ambiguous. Unfortunately, al-Baṭalyawsī, an 11<sup>th</sup> century Andalusī commentator of *Adab al-kātib*, does not offer further explanation of these phrases in his discussion of the passage under consideration here; cf. his *al-Iqtidāb*, pp. 125–130.

<sup>43</sup> *Adab al-kātib*, p. 15

<sup>44</sup> *Tanzīl al-kalām: tartībuhu*; cf. al-Baṭalyawsī, p. 125.

<sup>45</sup> Etymologically, *maqāl* or *maqāla* (from the root *q-w-l*, 'to say,') means 'statement' or 'utterance.' However, it is worth noting that "in a typical hundred pages of text from the classical period, it is found only once with this 'oral' sense" (cf. "Maḳāla," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. (P. Dumont), referring to al-Jāḥiẓ's *oeuvre*). In other words, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE the semantic field of *maqāl* included the meanings of a '[written] article' or 'essay.' This view is supported by both the text and the context of Ibn Qutayba's use of this expression.

2. To *inquire* about something,
3. To *instruct* something [i.e. to tell people what to do], and finally
4. To *provide knowledge* of something.<sup>46</sup>

Ibn Qutayba further elaborates this concept in the following advice: "When you request [something in writing], be courteous. When you ask [for something], be clear. If you instruct [someone] in something, be firm. And if you inform [someone about something], first verify [the matter]." Interestingly, he expressly suggests also to "say as much as you can in the little you write." However, one should not forget that:

Conciseness (*ījāz*) is not desirable for every context or book. Rather, each context requires its own [appropriate] wording (*li-kulli maqāmin maqāl*). Had conciseness been desirable in every case, God would have employed this [principle everywhere] in the Qur'ān. However, He is elaborate in passages [where things have to be] confirmed, concise in others for [the sake of] precision, and repetitive in others in order to explain and make [things] understandable.<sup>47</sup>

Therefore, unnecessary conciseness in writing is to be avoided. This is particularly true when addressing a wider public. In such cases, it is better to elaborate and repeat, for this ensures that one is correctly understood.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, he advises us not to use artificial words, for such words blur the natural logic required in the presentation and communication of deep insights. Also, unclear words and an unnatural style of writing may cause suspicion in the hearts of the people regarding the

<sup>46</sup> *Adab al-kātib*, p. 15. Not without pride in his Iranian descent — Ibn Qutayba's family was from Marw in Khurāsān — he quotes here from what the Sasanid ruler Kīsrā Aparwīz (r. 591–628 CE) said when instructing his scribe. This passage is also a good example of the significant influence of Persian literary and cultural tradition on Arabic writing in early Islamic times in terms of stimulating new concepts, aesthetics and styles.

<sup>47</sup> For further ideas in this regard, Ibn Qutayba refers the reader to his *Kitāb ta'wīl mushkil al-Qur'ān* (cf. *Adab al-kātib*, pp. 15–16). It is interesting to note also that al-Jāhīz offers nearly identical views of the appropriateness *vs.* inappropriateness of conciseness in expression (cf. his *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, vol. 1, p. 91; and n. 31 above), a fact that both illustrates and corroborates the general observation that classical Arabic writers feared nothing more than boring the reader (cf. also Mez, pp. viii–ix). As Rosenthal put it, "this fear persisted throughout the centuries and found expression in the frequently professed aversion to unnecessary length and the claim of having exercised restraint for the sake of brevity. While conciseness had special meaning for the entertaining literature, it soon invaded the scholarly and scientific community, where it led to the popularity of compendia." Cf. Rosenthal, "Of Making Many Books," pp. 43, 45.

<sup>48</sup> *Adab al-kātib*, p. 16.

'true' creeds of faith — a crucial point for an orthodox Sunnī theologian such as Ibn Qutayba.<sup>49</sup> Ibn Qutayba also voices clear disapproval of two groups of people. The first are those who arrogantly believe that they are the exclusive possessors of all knowledge. The second are those who make fun of other people's style of writing and are even critical of the Book of God, without really understanding it.<sup>50</sup>

### Conclusion

The prominent place that al-Jāhiz and Ibn Qutayba are granted in Arabic literary history is justifiably related to their exquisite crafting of the Arabic language, using powerful images and skillful didactic exposition. According to Ibn Khaldūn and other scholars, this originality of literary expression has caused some of their books to be regarded as exemplary models of *adab* literature.<sup>51</sup> However, it is of no less importance for our understanding of the development of Arabic literature to note the vigorous stances which al-Jāhiz and Ibn Qutayba took in propagating and promoting reading, writing, and books. Indeed, their sharp observations and careful reflections on a rapidly developing book culture in medieval Muslim society, expressed in a finely crafted and aesthetic language, can well be expected to have been profoundly inspiring both to the reading public in general and to the professional writers in particular. Hence, their innovative views on the written word must not only be seen as a lasting testimony to these scholars' great knowledge, literary skills, and passion for reading and writing, but also as a stimulus for the evolution and enlightenment of the medieval Muslim reader. Indeed, these ideas may well have been a catalyst for the production and reception of literature in medieval Islam, and remain highly relevant and 'current' in many regards to modern readers and writers.

<sup>49</sup> *Adab al-kātib*, p. 14. As in prose writing, Ibn Qutayba developed similarly appealing ideas regarding Arabic poetry. In fact, he revolutionized the theory of Arabic literary criticism when he proposed to move away from conventional criteria of assessment that gave priority to the established reputation of a poet rather than the actual merits of a poem's structure and composition. Instead, as is evident in his *al-Shi'r wa-l-shu'arā'*, ("Poetry and Poets"), he insisted that "poetry should be judged on its own merits, irrespective of its period [of origin]." This was appropriate, as Ibn Qutayba maintains, "for God did not confine knowledge and poetry and eloquence to one age [to] the exclusion of another, nor has He designed them for one people exclusively," as al-Ḥuseini, pp. 27 and 74–75, renders the passage.

<sup>50</sup> *Adab al-kātib*, pp. 2–3.

<sup>51</sup> See n. 41 above. For the definition of *adab* as "the literary scholarship of a cultivated man;" see Bonebakker, pp. 16–30, and Lapidus, pp. 39–61.

One might recall here, for instance, al-Jāḥiẓ's novel thoughts on independent reading as a means of imparting and absorbing knowledge, or Ibn Qutayba's practical advice on prose-writing and penmanship. We might also keep in mind that our writers were explicitly addressing here "an emerging new class of readers, the self educated, part of whose cultural needs had, for various reasons, to be met by private reading rather than through taking part in study sessions."<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, we must realize that both ninth century Muslim scholars clearly attributed the preservation of text to the written word. Remarkably, they did so at a time in Islamic history when memorization and aural transmission were generally held in the highest esteem. In fact, they made it very clear that it "is only thanks to written notation that oblivion does not rule uncontested and that people have the possibility of calling to mind what they have learned. If the transmission of knowledge were confided solely to the human memory, which is characterized by significant limitations of an innate and contingent nature, the knowledge of humanity would have been in great part lost."<sup>53</sup>

Al-Jāḥiẓ and Ibn Qutayba perceived the book as both a store of knowledge and a guarantee of its authenticity in the course of transmission. Furthermore, they expressed the idea that the various kinds of writings — and books in particular — are vital carriers of both culture and communication.<sup>54</sup> For them, the written word constitutes an important link between the present and the past, and books and other kinds of writings are effective tools that help cultural memory to materialize.

Finally, we observe that al-Jāḥiẓ and Ibn Qutayba engaged in a vital debate at that time. This debate dealt, among other things, with the question of how a fruitful connection could be established between Muslim intellectuals and the various fields of Arabic-Islamic scholarship on the one hand, and the actual, everyday needs of Islamic society on the other. While it appears that al-Jāḥiẓ artfully pondered the manifold sides of this question rather than attempting to offer answers to it, Ibn Qutayba, in contrast, successfully combined traditional and new elements of writing in a practical response to these pressing needs.<sup>55</sup> His pragmatic and innovative ideas on writing, along with his application of a clear and 'purpose-oriented' prose in his own works,<sup>56</sup> offered much

<sup>52</sup>Bray, "Lists and memory," p. 210.

<sup>53</sup>Ghersetti, "L'utilità della scrittura," p. 73. I thank Dr. Letizia Osti (Basel) for drawing my attention to this important study.

<sup>54</sup>Al-Qazzāz, *al-Fikr al-tarbawī*, p. 26.

<sup>55</sup>See also Gibb and Landau, *Arabische Literaturgeschichte*, pp. 93–96.

<sup>56</sup>This view is supported by a statement in *Adab al-kātib*, p. 9, lines 4–7, where Ibn Qutayba identifies the 'target audience' of his books as people truly learned and genuinely interested in scholarship. He specifies furthermore that his books are not written for those others who falsely present themselves as writers, whereas, in fact,



needed practical advice and training to the writing profession. This seems to have contributed considerably to attracting new followers to Ibn Qutayba, who eventually became the representative of a new school of writing, while al-Jāḥiẓ did not.

Nonetheless, I shall grant the concluding words of this paper to al-Jāḥiẓ, since it is he who advises us most charmingly that there is a point at which to stop, for:

What is blameworthy... is anything that causes weariness,  
becomes excessive and turns into prolixity...<sup>57</sup>

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Atiyeh, George N., ed. *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East*. Albany, N.Y., 1995.

Al-Baṭalyawsī, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallah Muḥammad b. al-Sayyid. *Al-Iqtidāb: sharḥ adab al-kātib*. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā and Ḥāmid ‘Abd al-Majīd, eds. Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1981.

Bloom, Jonathan M. *Paper before Print, The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001.

Bonebakker, S.A. “*Adab* and the concept of *belles-lettres*.” In Julia Ashtiany et al., eds. *‘Abbāsīd Belles-Lettres*, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 16–30.

Bray, Julia. “Lists and Memory: Ibn Qutayba and Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb.” In Farhad Daftary and Josef W. Meri, eds. *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam. Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung*. London et al. 2003, pp. 210–231.

de Bury, Richard. *The Love of Books: the Philobiblon of Richard de Bury*, translated into English by E.C. Thomas. Champaign, Ill., Project Gutenberg [199?]. [Electronic reproduction, Boulder: Net Library, 1999.]

---

the image they provide is more important to them than learning.

<sup>57</sup> These lines (quoted from Pellat, *The Life*, p. 112) are part of al-Jāḥiẓ’s *Fī l-balāgha wa-l-‘jāz* (“On Eloquence and Conciseness”); for this work, see n. 29 above.

- *Philobiblon oder Über die Liebe zu den Büchern*, anlässlich der Internationalen Buchkunst-Ausstellung 1989 in Leipzig hrsg. von Erhard Walter, übers. von Alfred Hartmann. <sup>1</sup>Leipzig, 1989.
- Endress, Gerhard. "Das Buch in der Kultur des Islam, Buch- und Bibliothekswesen im Mittelalter." In Wolfdietrich Fischer, ed. *Grundriß der Arabischen Philologie*. Vol. 1. Wiesbaden, 1982, pp. 271–274, and pp. 306–308.
- van Ess, Josef. *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert der Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*. Vol. 1, Berlin–New York, 1991.
- Ghersetti, Antonella. "L'utilità della scrittura e la lode del libro: testimonianze di alcuni scrittori arabi medievali [The Usefulness of Writing and the Praise of the Book: Evidence from a Few Mediaeval Scholars Writing in Arabic]." In *Annali di Ca' Foscari: Rivista Della Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere dell'Università di Venezia. Estratto* 32.3 (1994) (*Serie orientale* 25), pp. 67–76.
- Gibb, H.A.R. and J.M. Landau. *Arabische Literaturgeschichte, dargestellt von Hamilton A.R. Gibb und Jacob M. Landau*. Zürich, 1968. (= *Bibliothek des Morgenlandes*).
- Grebe, Werner. "Die Bücherliebe bei den alten Arabern." In *Aus dem Antiquariat. Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel* (Frankfurt a.M.). No. 66 (1981), pp. A 285–A 290.
- Günther, Sebastian. "Advice for Teachers: The 9<sup>th</sup> Century Muslim Scholars Ibn Saḥnūn and al-Jāḥiẓ on Pedagogy and Didactics." In Günther, ed. *Ideas (op. cit.)*, pp. 89–128.
- . "Assessing the Sources of Classical Arabic Compilations: The Issue of Categories and Methodologies." In *British Journal of Middle East Studies* 32.1 (2005): 75–98.
- . "Education: Islamic Education." In *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*. Maryanne Cline Horowitz, ed. Detroit, 2005. Vol. 2, pp. 640–645.
- , ed. *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*. Leiden 2005. (= *Islamic History and Civilization Series* 58).
- . "Al-Jāḥiẓ and the Poetics of Teaching." In Tarif Khalidi, ed. *Al-Jahiz — A Humanist for Our Time*. Beirut: Orient-Institut der DMG, 2006, forthcoming. (= *Beiruter Texte und Studien*).

- . “‘... nor have I learned it from any book of theirs.’ Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī: A Medieval Arabic Author at Work.” In Rainer Brunner et al., eds. *Islamstudien ohne Ende. Festschrift für den Islamwissenschaftler Werner Ende*. Würzburg, 2002, pp. 139–153.
- Huseini (sic), I.M. *The Life and Works of Ibn Qutayba*. Beirut, 1950. (= *American University of Beirut. Publication of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Oriental Series 21*).
- Ibn Khaldūn, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad. [*al-Muqaddima*.] *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn wa-hiya al-juz’ al-awwal min Kitāb al-‘ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtada’ wa-l-khabar*. Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Sa‘īd al-Mandūh, ed. 2 vols. Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Kutub wa-l-Thaqāfa; al-Makka al-Mukarrama: al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya, <sup>1</sup>1414/1994. — English translation see Rosenthal.
- Ibn Qutayba, ‘Abdallāh b. Muslim al-Dīnawarī. *Adab al-Kātib*. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, ed. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya al-Kubrā, 1382/1963.
- . *Kitāb ta’wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*. Muḥammad Zuhūrī al-Najjār, ed. Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1393/1972.
- Al-Jāḥiẓ, Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr b. Baḥr. *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, ed. 7 vols. Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Halabī, 1938–1958.
- . *Kitāb al-mu‘allimīn*. In Ibrahim Geris [Ibrāhīm Jiryis], ed. *Kitābān li-l-Jāḥiẓ. Kitāb al-mu‘allimīn wa-kitāb fī l-radd ‘alā al-mushabbihā* [English title: *Two Essays by al-Jāḥiẓ: “On Schoolmasters” and “Refutation of Anthropomorphists.”*] Annotated, with an introductory study, and ed. by Ibrahim Geris, <sup>1</sup>Tel Aviv [also: ‘Akkā: Maṭba‘at al-Surūjī], 1980, pp. 57–87.
- Lapidus, I.M. “Knowledge, Virtue, and Action: The Classical Muslim Conception of *Adab* and the Nature of Religious Fulfillment in Islam.” In B.D. Metcalf, ed. *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984, pp. 39–61.
- Lecomte, G. “Ibn Qutayba.” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, s.v.
- Mansūr, Sa‘īd Ḥ. *The World-View of al-Jāḥiẓ in Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, <sup>1</sup>Alexandria: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1977. (= Ph.D. Thesis, McGill University Montreal, 1968).

- Mez, Adam. *Die Renaissance des Islams*. Heidelberg, 1922.
- Pellat, *Arabische Geisteswelt* = Charles Pellat. *Arabische Geisteswelt. Ausgewählte und übersetzte Texte von al-Ġāhiz (777–869). Unter Zugrundelegung der arabischen Originaltexte aus dem Französischen übertragen von Walter W. Müller*. Stuttgart, 1967.
- Pellat, C. "al-Djāhiz." *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v.
- . *The Life* = Charles Pellat. *The Life and Works of al-Jāhiz: Translation of selected texts. Translated from the French by D.M. Hawke*. London, 1969.
- Al-Qazzāz, Muḥammad Sa'd. *Al-Fikr al-tarbawī fī kitābāt al-Jāhiz*.<sup>1</sup>[Cairo:] Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1415/1990.
- Rosenthal, Franz, trans. *Ibn Khaldūn. The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. 3 vols. New York 1958. (= *Bollingen Series XLIII*).
- . "Significant Uses of Arabic Writing." In *Four Essays on Art and Literature*, Leiden: Brill, 1971, pp. 50-62.
- . "'Of Making Many Books There Is No End:' the Classical Muslim View." In G. Atiyeh, ed. *The Book in the Islamic World* (op. cit.), pp. 33–70.
- Rufai, Ahmet. *Über die Bibliophilie im älteren Islam. Nebst Edition und Übersetzung von Ġāhiz' Abhandlung Fī Madḥ al-Kutub*. (Inaug. Diss., Berlin 1931) Istanbul, 1935.
- Schipperges, Heinrich. "Dein Buch — das Unbekannte Wesen." In *Bibliothek und Wissenschaft* (Wiesbaden). Vol. 16 (1982), pp. 85–100.
- Schoeler, Gregor. "Writing and Publishing: On the Use and Function of Writing in the First Centuries of Islam." In *Arabica* 44 (1997): 423–435.