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A Three-phase Model for the Reception of the Term Rhetoric in the Islamic World

Mohammad Ahmadi

School Of Law, Waseda University, Japan

Abstract

The Greek term *rhetoric*, transliterated into Arabic as *raṭṭiq*, entered the intellectual landscape of the Islamic world in the 8th century CE, either shortly before or during the Graeco-Arabic translation movement. Through a chronological analysis of key Arabic and Persian texts, this study proposes a three-phase periodization that traces the evolving reception and adaptation of *rhetoric* within Islamic scholarship:

1. Initial Transliteration Phase: Marked by the direct phonetic rendering of the Greek term as *raṭṭiq* without semantic adaptation.
 2. Terminological Experimentation Phase: Divided into two sub-phases, this stage follows the semantic transition from interpreting *rhetoric* as *al-balaghah* (eloquence) to its eventual association with *al-khaṭbah* (oratory).
 3. Standardization Phase: Characterized by the decline or deliberate omission of the original Greek term, following the successful integration of an established Arabic equivalent within the scholarly tradition.
- This proposed framework offers insight into broader processes of conceptual assimilation and linguistic adaptation in classical Islamic thought. It illustrates how Muslim scholars engaged with, reinterpreted, and ultimately naturalized Greek rhetorical terminology to align with the intellectual, linguistic, and pedagogical norms of their tradition. By tracing this evolution, the study also contributes to a deeper understanding of the reception and reinterpretation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* within the Islamic commentary tradition on the Greek philosophical heritage.

Keywords: *Rhetoric*, *Al-khaṭbah*, *Al-balaghah*, *Raṭṭiq*, Conceptual Translation, Graeco-arabic Transmission