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Lexicography: Classical Arabic

1. RANGE AND IMPORTANCE

Within Classical Arabic literature, lexicographical writings form an extensive and multifaceted branch, having produced remarkable results in the period from the late 2nd/8th century to the 12th/18th century and flourishing particularly in the 4th/10th century. Along with dictionaries proper – i.e. books arranging all the elements of the Classical Arabic vocabulary in alphabetical order and explaining them – there were many other types of books. The aim of covering the whole lexicon only seems to have arisen two centuries after the appearance of the first lexicographical monographs. The contributions range in length from just a few pages in the case of specialized treatises to more than five thousand quarto pages in the case of the printed edition of Murtaḍā az-Zabīdī's monumental *Tāj al-ʿarūs* (one of the latest and largest traditional works, compiled toward the end of the 12th/18th century).

Medieval Arabic lexicography is important in several respects, not least for its great practical value in understanding Classical Arabic texts. European lexicographical activities were for a long time mainly limited to translating the indigenous medieval dictionaries (→ Arabic studies in Europe). This method was followed from the times of Antonius Giggeius (*Thesaurus linguae Arabicae*, Milan 1632) and Jacob Golius (*Lexicon arabico-latinum*, Leiden 1653) until the second half of the 19th century, when Edward William Lane published his *Arabic-English lexicon* (London

1863–1893). Modern scientific lexicography of Classical or post-Classical Arabic started in 1881 with the *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* by Reinhart Dozy (published in Leiden), when, for the first time, texts were used as the basis for dictionaries. This method has been taken up on a much larger scale since 1957 in the *Wörterbuch der Klassischen Arabischen Sprache*, but so far only two letters (*kāf* and *lām*) have been covered (published Wiesbaden 1957–2004, mainly thanks to the self-sacrificing efforts of Manfred Ullmann). Paradoxically, one can say that the richness of the indigenous lexica has impeded the development of modern scientific lexicography. Therefore, we are still forced to make use of the medieval dictionaries with all their deficits in range, exactness, and documentation. Despite these failings, classical dictionaries are quite important for the history of linguistic thought due to their different methods of arranging the roots and the various types of dictionaries and their intentions and linguistic foundations.

2. LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL PRECONDITIONS

As early as the reign of the Umayyad dynasty (660–750 C.E.), the texts of the *Qurʾān* and the tradition (insofar as it was fixed) were canonized as reference points for jurisprudence, theology, ritual, and the public demonstration of political power. Consequently, a certain historical stage of the Arabic language attained the position of an enduring ideal. In the belles lettres and in learned circles (*majālis*), from about 750 C.E. onward, great importance is attached to ancient Arabic tradition, above all to pre-Islamic poetry. This interest is due to struggles within Arab society as well as to rivalries between Arabs and non-Arabs over cultural orientation, known as the *Šuʿūbiyya* struggle (see the references in Seidensticker 2002:149, n. 4). Pre-Islamic poetry or prose, the *Qurʾān*, and prophetic tradition could no longer easily be understood by Arabs of the 8th century because the language had changed considerably due to radical shifts in social and cultural life after the conquest of Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Iran. These changes affected morphology, phonetics, syntax, and, of course, vocabulary. These developments – canonization and change – inevitably brought about a



need to preserve and systematize. Attention was paid to both religious and nonreligious texts, and this is reflected in the development of two parallel strands of Arabic lexicography, which later partly merged. A voluminous literature devoted to obscure lexemes in the *Qurʾān* and the prophetic tradition (*garīb al-Qurʾān/al-Ḥadīth*) stands alongside dictionaries of merely secular orientation, such as the *Kitāb al-jīm* by ʿAbū ʿAmr aš-Šaybānī (d. about 213/828), which mentions only two quotations from the *Qurʾān* against 4,300 lines of poetry. A further factor strengthening the development of Arabic lexicography is the growing importance of Arabic as the language of administration. The Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 685–705 C.E.) had installed Arabic as the official language, and by the middle of the 8th century the conquerors' language had gained recognition in the chancelleries even of the more peripheral provinces. From the early Abbasid times onward (i.e. after 750 C.E.), officials of whatever ethnic background were required to have an advanced mastery of Arabic style. Moreover, Arabic was employed as a medium of literary expression even in nonreligious fields in many parts of the Islamic world (the most important exception being Persia). This proliferation meant that a growing need was felt for dictionaries designed less for scholars than for the educated classes, to concentrate on the common vocabulary rather than on obscure or rare items. An example of this type of dictionary is the *Mujmal al-luġa* by ʿAḥmad ibn Fāris (d. 395/1005), who explicitly says in his introduction that he has disregarded obscure words. The popularity of his book is attested by the large number of manuscript copies in libraries all over the world.

This demand for lexicographical works was met by a great variety of dictionaries. The new interest in language gained a momentum of its own and thus added to the diversity of approaches. The most important systems of arrangement and their historical development are presented in the following sections, beginning with the semasiological lexica (starting from sign to meaning) with their three main types of arranging the roots (Secs. 3 to 5), followed by the onomasiological lexica (starting from meaning to sign, i.e. those which arrange the notions according to topic areas; Sec. 6), and finally the different types of spe-

cialized lexica (Sec. 7). As for the question of foreign influences, the hypothesis of influence by Greek lexicography is discussed on account of typological parallels (Rundgren 1973; Wild 1965:6–7; Weninger 1994), and in the case of the phonetic arrangement of the Arabic letters in al-Xalīl's order (see below, Sec. 3), the impact of Indian linguistic thought has been assumed (discussed in Law 1990). Yet, Arabic lexicography is a branch of literature which has its roots in Arabic-Islamic culture and was influenced only marginally by foreign cultures.

3. THE PHONETIC-PERMUTATIVE SYSTEM

The phonetic-permutative system of arranging the roots of the Arabic words, probably the most impractical system, is known to us from the earliest Arabic semasiological dictionary, the *Kitāb al-ʿayn*, which in its main traits goes back to al-Xalīl ibn ʿAḥmad (d. about 175/791). It is based neither on the so-called Abjad order of the letters (ʾ/b/j/d/h/w/z etc.) nor on the common Arabic alphabet (ʾ/b/t/ṭ/j/h/x etc.), which was probably already known in the 8th century C.E., but instead uses a third method of ordering. The key factor in this arrangement of letters is the place of articulation in the mouth or pharynx. The sounds articulated at the back of the pharynx (i.e. the laryngeals) are first in this sequence; the labials, articulated in the front of the mouth, close the so-called 'Xalilian order'. The resulting alphabet is 'ḥ/h/x/ġ/q/k/j/š/d/ṣ/s/z/ṭ/d/t/ḍ/ḍ/ṭ/r/l/n/f/b/m/w/ʾalif/y/ʾ'. Much more momentous for practical purposes was al-Xalīl's decision not to arrange the roots strictly according to this new alphabet but to include in each lemma the other combinations of roots which result from all possible permutations of the radicals. This means, for example, that the first trilateral root treated in the *Kitāb al-ʿayn*, ḥ-b-q, is immediately followed by the root h-q-ʿ (which one would expect to be treated two letters later). A third complication is the fact that within each chapter devoted to one of the letters from ʾ/ to ʾ/, there are subchapters treating separately the biliteral, geminated, sound trilateral, simply weak trilateral, doubly weak trilateral, and quadrilateral roots containing the letter in question.

To be accurate, this complicated system of ordering should be called 'phonetic – root-



classificatory – permutative’. It allowed Arab scholars to gain some interesting insights; for example, it showed that certain consonants are never combined in a true Arabic root. For everyday use, the system is distinctly impractical, but despite these drawbacks it survived until at least the 14th century C.E. Quite famous dictionaries arranged according to al-Xalīl’s method are the *Tahdīb al-luġa* by al-ʿAzharī (d. 370/980) and the *Mubkam* by the blind Andalusian scholar Ibn Sīda (d. 458/1066). Even in some dictionaries which abandoned the Xalilian order of letters, either the root-classificatory or the permutative system (or both of them) are retained. Like most other Arabic dictionaries, the *Kitāb al-ʿayn* gives numerous quotations, primarily taken from early poetry but also from the *Qurʾān* and from prophetic tradition (*Ḥadīth*).

4. THE ALPHABETICAL SYSTEM

The second method of ordering the roots is the alphabetical system, which is the one most familiar in Western lexicography. It is found in rudimentary form in the second oldest semasiological dictionary known to us, the *Kitāb al-jīm* by ʿAbū ʿAmr aš-Šaybānī (d. about 213/828). Its order is not fully alphabetical, as the author groups the roots only according to the first radical. Within the chapters *ʿalif*, *bāʾ*, *tāʾ*, etc., the roots are grouped by the informants who provided them or by mere association. This stage could be called one-third alphabetical, as only one of the radicals, usually three in number, is taken into account when ordering. Naturally, this was only a transitory stage, used primarily for specialized lexica on difficult words in the *Qurʾān*, in prophetic tradition, etc., from the 10th to the 12th centuries. Ibn Durayd’s (d. 321/933) voluminous *Jamharat al-luġa* is admittedly not a specialized dictionary and also uses this system, but by mixing it with the other peculiarities of the *Kitāb al-ʿayn*, its method of ordering proved to be a dead end.

The next stage, ordering by the first and the second radical, is known from Kurāʿ an-Naml’s (d. 310/922) *al-Mujarrad*, devoted to rare words. Another two-thirds alphabetical work is the voluminous *Kitāb šams al-ʿulūm* by Našwān al-Ḥimyarī (d. about 573/1178), which aims to encompass the whole Arabic lexicon. A

peculiarity is Našwān’s way of grouping the words within the single chapters, defined by the first and second radicals. Within a division into nouns and verbs, he arranges the derivations of a given root according to a fixed order of morphemes, thus providing information which is not generally provided by the Arabic script.

The final stage of this system, i.e. complete alphabetical arrangement, seems to have developed as early as the 9th century. One of the earliest philologists to use the fully developed alphabetical system was ʿAbū Ḥanīfa ad-Dīnawarī (d. 282/895) in the encyclopedic section of his *Kitāb an-nabāt*, a work devoted to botany in the widest possible sense. He himself points out the practical advantage of this way of ordering. Az-Zamaxšarī’s (d. 538/1144) *ʿAsās al-balāġa*, devoted to metaphorical expressions, and al-Fayyūmī’s (d. about 770/1368) *Kitāb al-miṣbāḥ*, treating the technical vocabulary of Islamic jurisprudence, are two famous examples from later centuries.

5. THE RHYME SYSTEM

The rhyme arrangement in its mature form was used right up to modern times and can be considered as the Arabic way of ordering roots par excellence. In fact, it is closely related to the alphabetical system. The single chapters or books of these dictionaries using the rhyme system contain all roots having a common *last* radical consonant; within these parts, one has to look up entries in the same way as in an alphabetical work. It seems that this system was first developed for compiling rhyme dictionaries. This is evidenced by the title of al-Bandanījī’s (d. 284/897) *Kitāb at-taqfiya*, which means ‘rhyme book’. As the title suggests, it gives rhyming words (and their respective meanings) and is thus a helpful tool when composing poetry. Al-Bandanījī’s work may well have been the model for al-Fārābī’s (d. about 350/961) *Dīwān al-ʿadab*, but he combines the rhyme arrangement with subtle classifications of roots, parts of speech, and morphemes.

The fact that these dictionaries could be used for finding rhymes was useful not only for poets but also for the wider sections of the educated classes who needed to express themselves in rhymed prose (→ *saġʿ*). But none of all the works mentioned so far, whatever

their system for arranging roots, provided users with easily accessible information on the meaning of all the lexemes of the simpler as well as the more elevated Classical Arabic vocabulary. It was al-Fārābī's nephew al-Jawharī (d. about 400/1009) who filled this need, in his *Tāj al-luġa wa-ṣiḥāḥ al-ʿarabiyya* (commonly *aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ*). It is arranged exclusively according to the radicals in rhyme order, and from al-Jawharī's times onward until the *Tāj al-ʿarūs* (late 18th century), most important dictionaries were arranged according to this prototype. Ibn Manẓūr's (d. 711/1311) *Lisān al-ʿArab* is based on the *Ṣiḥāḥ* in its arrangement and material and also contains the data from four other works (namely, the books of al-ʿAzharī and Ibn Sīda mentioned above as well as two works by Ibn Barrī and Majd ad-Dīn ibn al-ʿAṭīr). In modern Western scholarship, the *Lisān* has gained preeminent status as a work of reference for Classical Arabic vocabulary. The *Qāmūs* of al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415), also composed according to the *Ṣiḥāḥ*, was held in similarly high esteem in Arab countries, its title *al-Qāmūs* having become the Arabic word for 'dictionary'.

6. THE ONOMASIOLOGICAL DICTIONARIES

From around the end of the 8th century C.E., the first so-called onomasiological dictionaries or thesauri were composed (i.e. those which supply the notions for certain topic areas). Depending on the thematic scope of the subject matter treated, two groups can be distinguished. The first group consists of monographs on narrow semantic fields, such as treatises on camels, horses, falcons, pigeons, sheep, goats, palm trees, grapevines, the sun and moon, clouds and rain, and weapons, and also on oaths and curses. A strong interest in pre-Islamic Bedouin life is evident. These specialized treatises were composed from the earliest days of Arabic lexicography until quite late times. By the middle of the 11th century, for example, about thirty books on the parts of the human body (*xalq al-ʿinsān*) had been written, and on the eve of the Ottoman invasion of Egypt, Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) contributed to this branch of lexicography by writing his *Kitāb ġāyat al-ʿiḥsān fī xalq al-ʿinsān*.

The second group is made up of books not restricted to a narrowly defined subject matter but rather at least intending to cover the complete Arabic vocabulary. One of the earliest of these works was an-Naḍr ibn Ṣumayl's (d. 203/819) *Kitāb aṣ-ṣifāt*, the organization of which is known to us although the work itself is lost. The earliest extant book is *al-Ġarīb al-muṣannaf* by ʿAbū ʿUbayd (d. 224/838). The organization of the subject matter does not always seem very logical to us; animals, for example, are treated in three different places in the book. The onomasiological branch of lexicography reached its zenith in Islamic Spain in the 10th and 11th centuries, starting with Ibn Sīd al-ʿAndalusī's (d. 382/992) *Kitāb as-samāʾ wa-l-ʿālam* 'Book of heaven and the world', which is said to have run to forty or even one hundred volumes but is now mostly lost. Ibn Sīda's (d. 458/1066) similarly extensive *Kitāb al-muxaṣṣaṣ* has been preserved and printed. Judging by the extant part of it, the former work was less finely subdivided than the latter, but it is probable that it served as a model, as did ʿAbū ʿUbayd's *al-Ġarīb al-muṣannaf*. The Cairo printed edition of the *Muxaṣṣaṣ* runs to seventeen large volumes. The thematic organization in the first volumes is better thought-out than in ʿAbū ʿUbayd, although there are a number of quite arbitrary insertions. From a certain point onward, Ibn Sīda seems to have given up his attempts at intelligible organization and merely arranged short chapters at random. The latter part of the *Muxaṣṣaṣ*, from Volume 13 onward, is in any case organized according to morphology, the model again being ʿAbū ʿUbayd's book. Ibn Sīda explains that only the onomasiological arrangement allows the user to find a term he does not know. In fact, his book is extremely useful for the study of the historical development of the Arabic vocabulary.

Even lexica that made no attempt at a systematic arrangement of the individual chapters could be successful. As the great number of manuscript copies show, the *Kitāb al-ʿalfāḍ al-kitābiyya* by Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn ʿĪsā al-Hamaḍānī (d. 320/932) was highly esteemed. More than three hundred chapters, bearing titles such as "To prepare for something" or "To do something well or badly", list nouns, verbs, and whole phrases, the connection between the chapters being more or less arbitrary. Another



popular book of this type was at-Ta'ālībī's (d. 429/1038) *Fiqh al-lūga*.

7. SPECIALIZED DICTIONARIES

Books on *nawādir* contain the unorganized raw material of Arabic lexicography. They explain rare and obscure (*nādir*) expressions from ancient poetry and Bedouin speech. The beginnings of this type date back to the 8th century, and its heyday was in the 9th century. 'Abū Zayd al-'Anṣārī's (d. 215/830) and 'Abū Miṣḥal's (d. mid-3rd/9th century) *Kitāb an-nawādir* are preserved, and both have been printed.

Books on *ġarīb al-Qur'ān* and *ġarīb al-Ḥadīth* explain rare and difficult words from the *Qur'ān* and from the prophetic tradition. Normally they are devoted to one corpus or the other, but 'Abū 'Ubayd al-Harawī (d. 401/1011), in his *Kitāb al-ġarībayn*, treats lexemes and phrases from both sources. The earliest preserved book on *ġarīb al-Qur'ān* is *Tafsīr ġarīb al-Qur'ān*, ascribed to Zayd ibn 'Alī (d. 122/740), grandson of the caliph 'Alī ibn 'Abī Ṭalīb. However, most of it is now considered apocryphal. We are not on firm ground until we reach Ibn Qutayba's (d. 276/889) *Tafsīr ġarīb al-Qur'ān* and 'Abū 'Abdallāh al-Yazīdī's (d. ca. 313/925) *Ġarīb al-Qur'ān*. Both books give the words they explain in the order of their occurrence in the *Qur'ān*, i.e. from Sura 1 to Sura 114. In ar-Rāġib al-'Iṣfahānī's (d. 502/1108) *al-Mufradāt fī ġarīb al-Qur'ān*, the notion of *ġarīb* is given such a wide meaning that the book is in fact a concise dictionary of Qur'ānic language. It is arranged in full alphabetical order. The earlier works on *ġarīb al-Ḥadīth* follow the order in which prophetic traditions are arranged in the large *Ḥadīth* collections: either like a *musnad* collection ('Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām [d. 224/838] and Ibn Qutayba [d. 276/889]) or like a *muṣannaḥ* collection (al-Ḥarbī [d. 285/898]). The first dictionaries to use a strictly alphabetical order date from comparatively late times (Ibn al-Jawzī [d. 597/1200]: *Ġarīb al-Ḥadīth*; Majd ad-Dīn ibn al-'Aṭīr [d. 606/1210]: *an-Nihāya fī ġarīb al-Ḥadīth wa-l-'aṭar*).

Works on *'addād* are devoted to homonyms with two meanings which in some way are opposed to each other (→ *ḍidd*). The great interest Arab philologists took in this phenomenon can perhaps be explained by the role the theory

of *'addād* played in the exegesis of the *Qur'ān* (references in Seidensticker 2002:158, n. 23). Books on *'addād* were composed from the last decades of the 8th century onward. Their total number amounts to nearly two dozen, about half of which are preserved. Among them an early example is Quṭrub's (d. 206/821) *Kitāb al-'addād*. The matter of the *'addād* was intensely discussed within the larger framework of the so-called *Ṣu'ūbiyya* quarrel, i.e. the dispute about the merits of Arabic culture compared to, principally, the Iranian cultural tradition. The Arabs' opponents argued that the large number of such lexemes could only be the result of intellectual confusion. The Arab reaction to this charge in part denied the existence of contradictory meanings, and in part tried to qualify and explain the phenomenon. 'Abū ṭ-Ṭayyib al-Luġawī (d. 351/962) adds an appendix to his *Kitāb al-'addād*, listing 'pseudo-*'addād*', and Ibn al-'Anbārī (d. 328/940), in his book of the same title, argues that the seemingly contradictory meanings have a common semantic origin and that the context normally provides clarity. Many books on *'addād* did not order the words treated; al-Luġawī groups them according to the first radical; and aṣ-Ṣaġānī (d. 650/1252) uses a fully alphabetical arrangement.

Books on homonyms were composed from the beginning of the 9th century. An early instance is 'Abū l-'Amayṭal's (d. 240/854) *Kitāb mā tafaḥa lafḍuhu wa-xtalafa ma'nāhu*. Here, no system of ordering is discernible at all. Al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898) devoted a small book to homonyms and ellipses in the *Qur'ān*; perhaps his apologetic mode of argumentation is due to the fact that the matter was also discussed in the *Ṣu'ūbiyya* quarrel. Ibn aṣ-Ṣajārī's (d. 542/1148) book, arranged according to the first radical, contains no fewer than 1,670 lemmata. Kurā'an-Naml (d. 310/922) preferred the onomasiological arrangement, which is quite surprising in the case of homonyms, because in theory every word ought to be included in at least two places. In fact, the author decided to enter each word only under the more common meaning and to give the other meanings under that heading.

The *Dīwān al-'adab* by al-Fārābī (d. 350/961), mentioned in Section 5, orders words according to parts of speech, simple or extended morphemes, and vocalization, on the

level just below the root class. Because of this arrangement and the huge amount of material included, the *Dīwān al-ʿadab* is the most important Arabic dictionary with a morphological arrangement. In addition, the last volumes of Ibn Sīda's (d. 458/1066) *Muxaṣṣaṣ* may be counted among these works, as well as 'Abū 'Ubayd's book, which Ibn Sīda uses as a model (see above, Sec. 6). From the 9th to the 13th centuries, several books were written to discuss the question of the agreement or difference in meaning of the verbal Forms I and IV. Aṣ-Ṣaḡānī (d. 650/1252) composed some smaller works on the lexemes of the morpheme types *infī'āl*, *fa'alān*, *fa'ālī*, and *yaf'ūl*.

The term used by Arab philologists for the phenomenon of pairs of synonymous lexemes which differ in just one of the radicals (e.g. *jadaṭ* and *jadaḥ* 'grave') was → *'ibdāl*. Ibn as-Sikkīt's (d. about 246/860) *Kitāb al-qalb wal-'ibdāl* treats these pairs in 36 chapters, each one devoted to one of the consonants which can replace each other. The most voluminous book in this area, 'Abū ṭ-Ṭayyib al-Luḡawī's (d. 351/962) *Kitāb al-'ibdāl*, arranges the chapters in strictly alphabetical order.

Language change posed a special problem in Classical Arabic because the canonization of the pre-Abbasid educated standard language led to a markedly conservative attitude. Not surprisingly, the literature devoted to cleansing the language is quite extensive. Along with semantic 'errors', deviant vocalization and morphology were also denounced. The first extant work of this ilk is *Kitāb mā yalḥanu fīhī l-'awāmm* by al-Kisā'ī (d. 189/805), and many other books bear the same title or were called *Lahṇ al-'awāmm*. Despite the term *'amma*/*'awāmm* 'common people', the target of the criticism is not colloquial or dialectal Arabic but rather insufficient mastery of standard Arabic. Many books lack an alphabetical or onomasiological arrangement of subject matter, although in some cases a distinction is made between formal and semantic offenses. Ibn al-Jawzī's (d. 597/1201) *Taqwīm al-lisān* arranges its material according to the first radical. Particularly prominent are Ibn as-Sikkīt's (d. about 246/860) *'Islāḥ al-manṭiq* and Ṭa'lab's (d. 291/904) *Kitāb al-faṣīḥ*, which both present the correct forms and usages, arranged according to morpheme and vocalization in large numbers of chapters (about one hundred and forty, respec-

tively). The large number of manuscript copies, commentaries, and extracts shows that they were very popular. Some works devote special attention to pairs of lexemes which differ only in one consonant of similar pronunciation. As the titles suggest, the risk of error was especially great in the case of the phonemes *ḍād* and *ḍā'*.

8. CHARACTERISTICS

Arabic lexicography did not develop a theory of semantics or lexicology. A special branch of thought called *'ilm al-waḍ'* (→ *waḍ' al-luḡa*) touched upon questions of semantics and the philosophy of language, but as it did not emerge before the 14th century, it did not influence lexicographical practice, which had reached its final form centuries earlier.

From the very beginning, compilers of Arabic dictionaries attached great importance to quotations to illustrate the particular meaning of a lexeme. In some cases, data were collected by special field research. Several philologists of the 9th century are said to have traveled extensively in order to receive instruction from the Bedouin of central Arabia. For the modern user, it is important to be aware of the limitations of what was considered worth explaining. Apart from the *Qur'ān*, prophetic tradition, proverbs, and ancient Bedouin prose, only pre-Abbasid poetry prior to about 730 C.E. was considered worthy of treatment. Consequently, large areas of the Arabic lexicon were completely ignored by Arab lexicographers. Some new material was added in the 10th century, but from the beginning of the 11th century the predominant method was to recompile material from earlier dictionaries.

From the modern point of view, the definitions given in the ancient lexica have many deficiencies. Metaphorical and rare use stand indistinguishably side by side with literal and common meanings. In addition, meanings are wrongly deduced from the context or simply guessed at. In general, the formulation of an abstract lexical definition was not considered an aim of prime importance (on definitions in Arabic lexica, see the literature adduced in Seidensticker 2002:164, n. 42).

An interesting exception to this general rule is 'Aḥmad ibn Fāris's (d. 395/1005) *Mu'jam maqāyīs al-luḡa*. As its aim is to trace back all



derivations of a root to one or two primary meanings, the author does not direct his attention to single quotations or special usages but rather tries to find a common origin for several lexemes.

Not surprisingly, religious matters had repercussions for Arabic lexicography (cf. Kopf 1956). The notion of the divine origin of language certainly contributed much to the conservative attitude to the Arabic language because it did not allow for language change. Al-ʿAṣmaʿī (d. 213/828) is said to have kept aloof from certain philological problems in the *Qurʾān* and the prophetic tradition in order not to come into conflict with traditional exegesis. In using the ancient dictionaries, it is useful to know that in some cases meanings are given which have their origins in exegetic or dogmatic disputes (cf. Rippin 1983). A particularly delicate issue was the question of foreign words, especially in the *Qurʾān*. Many thought it hardly conceivable that there should be words of non-Arabic origin in a text which styled itself ‘a clear Arabic book’. Some early and some late authorities did not take offense at that possibility, but others objected. ʿAbū ʿUbayd (d. 224/838) prudently argued that some foreign words dated from the pre-Islamic period. The famous jurist aṣ-Ṣāfiʿī (d. 204/820), the philologist ʿAbū ʿUbayda (d. about 213/828), and the historian and commentator on the *Qurʾān* at-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) denied that there were any such borrowings but rather asserted a coincidental similarity in the articulation of words with a similar meaning in two languages (cf. Kopf 1956, Sec. 3; Gilliot 1990, Chap. 4). A separate set of lexicographical monographs on the question developed only at a later date. The most famous representative is al-Jawālīqīʿs (d. 539/1114) *al-Muʿarrab*, which orders the words according to the first letter only.

9. FURTHER READING

For more bibliographical references, see Seidensticker (2002). References to many printed editions of Arabic dictionaries can be found in Weipert (2002). An important work of reference for bio-bibliographical information for the time up to about 430/1038 is Sezgin (1982; Sezgin 1984:310–319 supp.; and Weipert 1989:228–246). A weighty contribution to the history of Classical Arabic lexicog-

raphy, arranged chronologically, is Kraemer (1953). Haywood (1960) is the fullest monograph on the topic in a Western language but is outdated now. The most complete overview in a monograph in Arabic is Naṣṣār (1968). Important information far beyond the topic proper (al-Xalil’s *Kitāb al-ʿayn*) is given in Wild (1965).

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Lexicography: Monolingual Dictionaries

I. INTRODUCTION

In the first half of the 2nd century A.H. (8th century C.E.), speakers of Arabic encountered numerous communication problems due to the variability of their language at the time. Natural processes of language change, due primarily to the lack of standardization, were evident in the way people pronounced words, structured words morphologically, and structured sentences. This phenomenon spurred Sibawayhi (d. 168/784) to write the first comprehensive Arabic grammar, *al-Kitāb*. This work set forth rules for all aspects of grammar, including phonology, morphology, and syntax.

Much of the variability in grammar during this period was evident in how people used words to convey meaning. Speakers of Arabic used familiar words in novel ways, which created the need for a standardized dictionary of Arabic. This need was satisfied when al-Xalīl (d. 175/791) developed the *Kitāb al-'ayn*, the first Arabic dictionary. Thus began the discipline of Arabic lexicography ('Aṭṭār 1990:11; → lexicography: Classical Arabic).

This entry focuses primarily on the preparation and development of modern Arabic/Arabic dictionaries and how they compare with medieval Arabic/Arabic dictionaries. It also discusses the methodologies and techniques used in the creation of Arabic dictionaries and provides a critical analysis of these methods. The

