

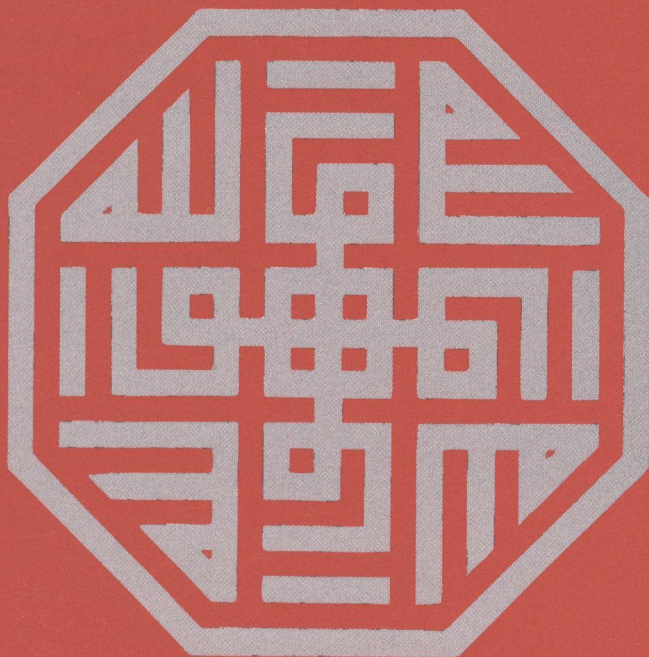
Abit Yaşar Koçak

HANDBOOK  
OF  
ARABIC DICTIONARIES



Verlag Hans Schiler

This book is a brief guide to Arabic dictionaries, their characteristics and development over centuries. A. Yaşar Koçak is Associate Professor in the Eastern Languages and Literatures Department at Istanbul University.



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## FOREWORD

The Arabic language has enjoyed a greater degree of interest and care than any other language. Scholars of linguistics have studied every aspect of this language since the pre-Islam period and have been meticulous in conveying their findings without alteration or compromise. In the Ignorance Period poets and the orators competed with each other for the most eloquent narration and interpretation and their interest in and devotion to the Arabic language were greatly increased by the birth of Islam. The language became an indispensable element in the fulfilment of religious obligations and especially for the understanding and preservation of the Koran. However, we notice that beside its role in religion, Arabic became a language to serve as a vehicle for other humanities and civilisations, in that a great number of writers were using it to produce innumerable works. Those who devoted their scholarship to the dictionary were undoubtedly far ahead of the others. They presented their works much like general-purpose encyclopaedias, from the point of view of understanding meaning and reaching far into the depth of things; discerning eloquent (*fasîh*), rare (*navâdir*) and foreign (*gharîb*) words from

each other. On the other hand the fact that the dictionary scholars were one step ahead of the others is attributable also to their compilation of items contained in books dealing with various topics. Despite all this, works in the Arabic dictionary field are very rare. A fair amount of attention has been given to questions such as the method and the development of lexicography, especially in the Arabic language. For my part I elaborated this work in order to assist learners of Arabic to cope with the difficulties they may encounter in this field. I hope it will be useful.

Dictionary (Vocabulary): This is a book containing a rather detailed inventory of the language by explaining, giving meaning(s) with a particular, *sui generis* disposition. In general the arrangement of such kind of books is either in alphabetical order or according to the topic (systematic). The denomination of dictionary we have given to these books has its counterpart in the Arabic *Mu'djam* معجم or *Kâmûs* قاموس. However the sources do not supply a clear knowledge of the time periods in which these expressions were used for the first time. Nevertheless we understand that the first users of the expression *Mu'djam* were the *hadith* scholars and that this started in the early III. Century of Hegira. Bukhârî has an alphabetical order system and in the *Mu'djam* style the

names of the *hadith* scholars are mentioned in its work entitled *al-Târih al-Kabîr*.

The first work titled *Mu'djam* was *Mu'djam al-Sahâbah* written by Abû Ya'la b. 'Ali al-Tamimî (died 307/919), followed by the works edited under the titles of *al-Mu'djam al-Kabîr* and *al-Mu'djam al-sagir* by Abû'l-Kâsim 'Abdullah b. Muhammed al-Baghavî (died 315/ 927). We can determine from the above that the expression *Mu'djam* was used by the *hadith* scholars and that it was borrowed by the linguists in its actual meaning. As concerns the use of the expression *Kâmûs* with the same meaning; according to our investigations it was first used by Fîrûzâbâdî (died 817/1414).

Being an illiterate community, Arabs were therefore unaware of the dictionary and consequently of its importance. Compelled to learn the meaning of some words and expressions by the birth of Islam, they undertook the task of editing on their own initiative.

As generally acknowledged, not all languages were collected and edited as a book when they first appeared and they subsisted for a while solely a means of speech, with some parts collected and edited later on. Some other parts disappeared altogether because they were not recorded.

In response, with the aim of preserving their language, each community started to reassemble the materials of their respective languages and to keep them within the form of a book we now know as a dictionary (vocabulary).

## REASONS FOR EDITING A DICTIONARY

One of the primordial reasons for editing a dictionary is the fear of making an error while reading, commenting or when endeavouring to understand the Koran. A further reason is to avoid the intrusion of foreign words into the original language. Furthermore, when deemed necessary to learn the meaning of a certain word, it is customary to refer to the scholars of the period. There was also the fear of losing knowledge in this field with the death of the scholars; this consideration underscores of the reasons above. We understand that the first person who planted the seeds of the editorial undertaking was Ibn 'Abbâs. He was succeeded later by Abû Umaymah b. Taghlib Rabâh al-Djarîrî (Died 141/758) who imitated the method of the former. Although they were presented as two of the most eminent scholars in the field for their having planted the first seeds of Arabic dictionaries, the first edition of a methodically arranged dictionary in its basic definition started with al-Khalîl b. Ahmad al-Farâhîdî (died 170 / 786).

Scholars post Ibn 'Abbas and Abû Umaymah compiled and gathered words independently of

the notions of meaning and details. The works carried out in this field appeared first within books containing words pertaining to one distinct topic. We may call them books of subjects (of reference).

Works such as Abû Hanifah al-Dinavarî's *Kitâb al-nabât*, al-Asmâ'i's *Kitâb al-ibil*, *Kitâb al-khayl*, *Kitâb asmâ al-vuhûsh*, *Kitâb al-nakhîl* and Abû Zayd's *Kitâb al-laban* and *Kitâb al-matar*, together with Ibn Kirkirah's (died 182/798) *Khalk al-insân* are the best examples of topic books.

The movements of editing the Arabic language and literature reached an apex coinciding with the first editions of dictionaries giving meanings of words according to their own methods.

A natural result of this development, as it progressed through a series of steps, and eventually acquired today's dictionary form, was the classification of a word according to its sound as an utterance (vocal), arrangement of a word by rearranging its letters, arrangement of words according to their last letter and accepting that letter as *bâb* (chapter), and the first letter as *fasil* (section), and finally an arrangement in alphabetical order.

We may list, as shown here below, the most important dictionaries of the dictionary editing movements in chronological order - and swift succession:

- *Kitâb al-'ayn*, al-Khalîl (died 170/786)
- *al-Djîm* (= al-Hurûf), Abû 'Amr al-Shaybânî (died 206/821)
- *al-Gharîb al-musannaf*, Abû 'Ubayd Kâsim b. Sallâm al-Haravî (died 223/837)
- *al-Alfâz*, Ibn al-Sikkît (died 244/858)
- *al-Mundjid*, Kurrâ' al-Naml (died 309/921)
- *al-Djamharah*, Ibn Durayd (died 321/933)
- *Divân al-adab*(=mîzân al-lughah wa mi'yâr al-kalâm), Farâbî (died 350/961)
- *al-Bâri'*, al-Kâlî (died 358/967)
- *Tahzîb al-lughah*, al-Azharî (died 370/981)
- *Mukhtasar al-'ayn*, al-Zubaydî (died 379/989)



- *al-Muhîṭ*, al-Sâhib b. ‘Abbâd (died 385/995)
- *al-Sihâh*, al-Djavharî (died 394/1003)
- Makâyîs al-lughah wa al-mudjmal, Ibn Fâris (died 395/1004)
- *al-Muhkam* and *al-Mukhassas*, Ibn Sîdah (died 459/1066)
- *Asâs al-balâghah*, al-Zamakhsharî (died 538/1143)
- *al-‘Ubâb (=madjma‘ al-bahrayn)*, al-Sâghânî (died 650/1252)
- *Mukhtâr al-sihâh*, al-Râzî (died 666/1268)
- *Lisân al-‘arab*, Ibn Manzûr (died 711/1311)
- *al-Misbâh al-munîr*, al-Fayyûmî (died 770/1368)
- *al-Kâmûs al-muhîṭ*, al-Fîrûzâbâdî (died 817/ 1414)
- *Tâdj al-‘arûs*, al-Zabîdî (died 1205/1790)

- *Muhîr al-muhîr* and *Kutr al-muhîr*, al-Butrus al-Bustânî (died 1883)
- *Akrab al-mavârid fi al-fasîh wa al-shavârid*, Sa‘îd al-Shartûnî (died 1912)
- *al-Mundjid*, al-Ab Luis al-Ma‘lûf (died 1946)
- *al-Bustân wa Fâkihat al-bustân*, ‘AbdAl-lah al-Bustânî (died 1930)
- *Matn al-lughah*, Ahmad Rîdâ (died 1953)
- *al-Mu‘djam al-vasîr*, Arabic Language Institute of Cairo
- *al-Râid*, Djubrân Mas‘ûd
- *Larûs*, Khalîl al-Djarr

In our work which was aimed at helping students carry out their Masters’ and proficiency degrees in identifying Arabic dictionaries and to benefit from them, we will not identify and analyse each and every one of these dictionaries, which are worthy as independent texts when studied individually. But we will consider the evolution of the principal Arabic dictionaries that formed a school. It is our belief

that the review of one or two of such books will suffice since they resemble each other so strongly in their respective arrangement and structure.

We can maintain that, in the following schools, the dictionary movement developed over three centuries between the end of the II. Century of the Hegira and the end of the IV. Century, in accordance with their respective leaders and their works:

**1. Madrasah al-Taklîbât:** A school established by al-Khalîl, in which the order is effected by interchanging the letters composing the word. The school is divided into two sections:

**a) Taklîbât al-savtiyyah:** The group composed of al-Khalîl's *Kitâb al-'ayn*, Djavharî's *al-Tahzîb*, Abû 'Alî al-Kâfi's *al-Bâri'* and Ibn Sîdah's *al-Muhkam*.

The arrangement in this type of dictionaries is in accordance with the utterance point of the letters. The method used here starts from the guttural sounds "ع ح ه خ غ" going toward labial sounds "و ا ي".

**b) Taklîbât al-hicâiyyah:** The best example for that kind of dictionary is Ibn Durayd's *al-*

*Djamharah*. As a basis, the order is arranged by using the alphabetical composition set out by al-Khalîl.

**2. Madrasah al-Kâfiyyah:** A school born out of the expansion of the poetry under the dominance of the *sacî* (rhymed prose). Following from this arrangement, the school took as a basis the last letter of the word naming it as *bâb* (chapter), and the first one as *fasil* (section). Al-Djavharî with his *al-Sihâh*, Fîrûzâbâdî with his *al-Kâmûs* and Ibn Manzûr with his *Lisân al-'arab* were the pioneers of this school.

This school adopted the system which consisted of isolating the word from its surplus and arranging it alphabetically within itself, then nominating the last letter as *bâb* and the first one as *fasil*. However there are some difficulties in picking up words ending with a "و" *vâv*" or a "ع" *yâ*".

**3. Al-Madrasah al-Abjadiyyah:** This describes the group of today's dictionaries edited according to the alphabetical order. The pioneer of the group is Abû 'Amr, founder of this school, and contemporary of al-Khalîl, although he did not imitate the latter in his book *Kitâb al-djîm* (= *al-Hurûf* = the letters). In his work the author arranged the words in alpha-

betical order by taking only the first letter thereof. However, Barmakî is the linguist who, for the first time, applied today's system of an alphabetical order within the word itself; effected by taking into consideration the first character. If the word is "triliteral"; it is the second letter, if the word is "quadriliteral"; the third letter and in the case of "five-lettered words (*khumâsî*)"; the fourth letter thereof.

The representatives of this school were Ibn Fâris with his *al-Makâyîs* and *Mudjmal*, al-Zamakhsharî with his *Asâs al-Balâghah*, al-Bustânî with his *Muhît al-muhît*, al-Fayyûmî with his *al-Misbâh al-munîr*, al-Ab Luis al-Ma'lûf with his *al-Mundjid*, and finally Sa'îd al-Sharnûtî with his *Akrab al-mavârid*. These types of dictionary activities, which give precedence to the facility of consulting a dictionary, continue today.

Further to this, with the birth of the Islamic religion and the event of the expansion of the Arabic language among non-Arabic communities, the Arabic dictionary movement impacted on the vocabulary of other communities, instigating the preparation of numerous dictionaries. The Arabic-Turkish-Persian dictionary of Minisky is worthy of mention among the first books in this field.

# I. Madrasah al-Taklîbât

## 1. Kitâb al-‘Ayn كتاب العين

### The Author

Abû ‘Abd al-Rahmân al-Khalîl b. Ahmad al-Farâhidî (100-170/ 718-786). He was an Arabic linguist and grammarian who was born in Oman. He received his education in Basra and became renowned there.

He received lessons from Abû ‘Amr b. al-‘Alâ and had many individual pupils. The most famous of them was Sîbavayh.

Al-Khalîl led the life of an ascetic who refused all worldly offerings. He made a pilgrimage to Mecca almost every year.

Al-Khalîl was not only the first to present the science of "prosody (*‘Arûd*)" but he also prepared the first dictionary arranged according to the utterance of the letters.

### Kitâb al-‘Ayn

In the preface of his work, al-Khalîl explains mainly how he wrote and arranged his work according to the sounds and the utterance points of the letters; the dictionary is arranged

as per the sources of the characters, beginning with the letter 'ayn = ع one of the guttural sounds and leading in alphabetical order up to the labial sounds. That is why his dictionary was called *Kitâb al-'Ayn* .

An arrangement in alphabetical order was followed in *Kitâb al-'Ayn*, beginning with the guttural sounds and directed toward the labial ones.

ع ح ه خ غ / ق ك / ج ش ض / ص س ز  
ط د ت / ظ ذ ث / ر ل ن / ف ب م / و ی

Al-Khalil followed a further arrangement, according to the distance of the utterance point of the letters, putting aside the characters added onto the word and taking into consideration only the root letters (radicals). The rearrangement meant that words obtained by displacing the letters were also located in the same place. For example, he placed the words obtained by the displacement of the letters such as:

ع ب د / ع د ب / ب ع د / د ع ب / ب ع د

at the same place as the word ب د ع, and explained the fact. Al-Khalil considered each and every letter of the alphabet as a section, calling

them *Kitâb*. He divided the book into sections equal to the total number of letters and gave the name *Kitâb al-'Ayn* to the first section where the dictionary begins with the letter 'ayn, for the second section; *Kitâb al-hâ*, and the third section; *Kitâb al-khâ*. He also arranged the sections he named "Kitâb" as follows:

- sound word composed by two letters, as in  
قد, لو, قد
- a trilateral word composed by three sound letters forming the basis of the word بحر, جعل
- defective trilateral word either *mithâl*, hollow or defective و عد, قال, جرى
- assimilated words وشى, شوى
- quadrilateral words دحرج
- five-letter words سفرجل

Nevertheless al-Khalîl assembled trilateral and quadrilateral words in one single section because there were so few of them. On the other hand, when giving the meaning of the words, the author supported and substantiated the meaning with extracts from the Koran, works



from the *hadith*, and proverbs and poems. In addition al-Khalîl also cited some of his contemporaries in related articles in his book, especially his pupils al-Asma'î (216/831), Abû 'Ubayda (209/824) and Sîbavayh (180/796).

Being the first work in the dictionary field, it is to be expected that some missing points, errors and difficulties might exist in the *Kitâb al-'Ayn*. There have been many publications dealing with this aspect of the book and criticising *Kitâb al-'Ayn*. We may mention, among others, the two works, namely Abû Bakr al-Zabîdî's (379/989) *Istidrâk al-ghalat al-vâki' fî al-'ayn* and al-Khatîb al-Iskâfi's (420/1029) *Ghalat al-'ayn*. If we wish to find a word in the *Kitâb al-'Ayn* there is a certain procedure to be followed:

- to determine the basic root letters of the word
- to open the *idgham* if the word is *mudaaf*
- to be familiar with the utterance point of the word's first letter and consequently the rearrangement of the utterance points
- to pay attention to the words obtained by means of transposition of the letters; to determine if the word is dual, trilateral, quadrilateral, five-lettered or six-lettered.

## 2. Kitâb al-Djamharah **كتاب الجمهرة**

### **The Author**

Abû Bakr Muhammed b. al-Hasan b. Durayd (321/933), an Arabic grammarian and a man of letters, was born in Basra in the year 223/838. He was renowned for his extraordinary memory.

He received lessons from masters such as Abû Hâtim al-Sidjistanî (died 248/862) and al-'Utbî (died 256/869). Well known linguist scholars like Abû'l-Faradj al-Isfahânî (died 356/967), Ibn Khalavayh (died 370/980) and al-Zadjjâdj (died 311/923) were among his students.

He wrote several valuable works in his field of interest. *Al-Djamharah*, his three-volume work with the major part of the last volume arranged as an index, is the second largest dictionary surviving today after al-Khalîl's *Kitâb al-'Ayn*.

### **Kitâb al-Djamharah**

This is one of the most noteworthy dictionaries of the Arabic language. It is also known as *al-Djamharah fî al-lughah* and *Djamharah al-lughah*. Ibn Durayd dedicated this work to 'Abd Allah b. Muhammed Mikâlî.

Being in the style of *Kitâb al- 'Ayn*, it followed a different method of arranging chapters.

Unlike al-Khalîl, Ibn Durayd included words of common and frequent use in the Arabic language. That is why his work was called *al-Djamharah* (major part, majority).

In the preface, the author gives information about its arrangement, the particularities of the letters, their varieties and utterance points and the rhythm of the words. He divided the materials of his dictionary not according to the utterance points of the letters but by taking into consideration the alphabetical order and the creation of words by interchanging the place of the letters.

The structure of the word (*binâ*) is as follows for Ibn Durayd:

- Dual, quadriliteral, *mudaaf* and assimilated
- being strong trilateral, the ones whose 'ayn (medium letter of the radicals) and *lâm* (last letter of the radicals ), are defective
- rare (*nâdir*) words
- strong quadriliteral
- strong five-lettered

The above structures are also divided into chapters according to alphabetical order. For instance:

Words beginning with the letter *bâ* are arranged as *bâb bâ* and as *bâb tâ* with the addition of the following letter *tâ*, as *bâb tha* with the subsequent character *tha*, and with the next letter *cîm* for other words without returning to the preceding letters. As for the words obtained by compiling the letters preceding the letter with the *bâb* title, there will be naturally other *bâbs* since the book follows the *kalb* method.

Still in Ibn Durayd's work, we note that the *hamzah* (ء) does not follow a single pattern and that he considered it as a sometimes defective letter. This view is consistent with that of earlier linguists, while sometimes it is recognised as a real letter amongst recent linguists. He accepted the *hamzah* as a real letter in the chapter of *mudaaf* words and as a defective one in other chapters. Nevertheless he added a section called *al-navâdir fî al-ḥamzah* containing rare words beginning with the letter *hamzah*, as an attachment to the end of trilateral words section.

There is a great resemblance between this work of Ibn Durayd and al-Khalîl's *Kitâb al-*

'Ayn from the angle of style, explanation and substantiation.

However since the *al-Djamharah*, having an important place in the development of the Arabic lexicography, has a rather jumbled classification system, it is not always easy to find words required.

Being an important work, *al-Djamharah* was published in four volumes, including an index, (Haidarabad, 1344-1351). Further to this publication were two undated offset printings, one in Baghdad and one in Beirut.

### 3. Makâyîs al – Lughah مقاييس اللغة

#### The Author

Ahmad b. Fâris b. Zakariyâ al-Kazvînî al-Râzî (died 395/1004). Originating from Kazvîn, he was a linguist and a man of letters connected to the *Kufe* school. After spending a part of his life in Hamadân, he went to the Ray city and lived there till his last days.

Personalities like Badi' al-Zamân al-Hamadânî and al-Sahib b. 'Imad were among his pupils. He wrote on a great many subjects. One of them is *Makâyîs al-Lughah* which is of great interest for us.

### **Makâyîs al-Lughah**

In this dictionary, Ibn Fâris's basic objective was to convey the original and common meaning of the roots of each and every word. By using the word *Makâyîs*, he endeavoured to give the meaning of letters forming any word within the limits of a rule.

The author began his work with a short preface where he explained his objective and the method he used in explaining the words, then went on to describe the sources he would draw upon while writing this book. The method he used in creating his work is as follows:

He divided his dictionary into a section called a *kitâb* for each letter, beginning with the letter *hamzah* and concluding with the letter *ى* (*yâ*). Every section or *kitâb* was divided into three parts or chapters (*bâbs*).

He assigned double *mudaaf* words to the first chapter, trilateral to the second chapter and words with more than three radical letters to the third chapter. He also arranged the words forming the chapter in alphabetical order by taking their radicals as a basis. This arrangement is also applied according to the first and subsequent letters. For instance he began the first letter *ghayn* *غ* for the section with the word having as its second letter *fa* *ف*.

The letters placed before the letter *ghayn* and not taken into consideration are handled once more at the end of the section.

Let us focus on the double *mudaaf* chapter of the *Kitâb al-Djîm* with the aim of seeing the situation more clearly. Also after

جح, جخ, جد, جر, جز, جس, جش, جص

جض, جظ, جع, جف, جل, جم, جن, جه, جو

he completes the section by adding the جت, جب, بت, جأ entries composed by the letters ب, ت, ء preceding *djîm*.

It means that correct use of the dictionary will be only possible by paying attention to the alphabetical arrangement followed by the author in the division of *kitâb*, and to chapters structured according to the structure of the words.

## II. Madrasah al-Kâfiyah

### 1. al-Sihâh **الصحاح**

#### **The Author**

Ismâ'îl b. Hammâd al-Djavharî (died 400/1003), being one of the pioneers of *Madrasah al-kâfiyah*, is a linguist of Farab origin. He came to Baghdad in his early youth and spent a while there. Afterwards he went to Hijaz where he strolled among Arab Bedouins, gathering materials for his book. He then returned to Khorassan and to Nishabour. He died while trying to fly with wings.

#### **Al-Sihâh**

Having a special place in the Arabic language, it is a dictionary thoroughly studied and taught by all scholars. It has been subject to a great deal of criticism and commentary.

Al-Djavharî created his work without referring to written sources and based it solely on materials he collected while strolling among Bedouin Arabs. Because of this he named his work *al-Sihâh*. At the beginning of the work, there is a preface in which the author explains how he created the work and the method he applied to it.



Al-Djavharî arranged his book in alphabetical order taking the last of the root letters (radicals) of the word as a basis.

The work was divided into twenty-eight chapters, each one headed by one letter of the alphabet and beginning with *hamzah* ending with the letter *ya* forming thus twenty eight sections. Words ending with the letter *vâv* و are found in one single chapter. Those words without the *hamzah* and ending with the soft *alif* (*alif' al-layyinah*), the origin of which is not a *vav* or a *ye*, are compiled in the subsequent chapter.

Words contained in each section were all inscribed in the same place without considering their structure (double, trilateral, quadrilateral or five-lettered). When giving the meaning of the words, al-Djavharî points out whether the verbs are in the past or future tenses, infinitive form or adjective derivatives thereof. The transitive or intransitive nature of verbs is also indicated, as is the singular or plural form of substantives. Besides, in each chapter, and where appropriate, he deals with the numerous language problems related to syntax and grammar.

We notice that the sections of some chapters number fewer than twenty-eight; the number

of alphabet letters. The reason for this is that words beginning with some of the letters may not end with certain letters of the Arabic alphabet. For instance a word ending with *râ* ر and beginning with a *lâm* ل does not exist in the Arabic language. That is why the chapter with the least sections of all the chapters is the one called *zâ* ظ. It has sixteen sections.

In order to find the word *مكتبة* in this work we have to first determine its root letters *كتب* and then go to the *ك* section in the chapter *ب*, which is the last letter of the word.

## 2. Lisân al-‘Arab لسان العرب

### The Author

Djamâl al-Dîn Abû'l-Fadl Muhammed b. Mukarram b. ‘Ali b. Manzûr al-Khazradjî (711/1311) was an Arab linguist scholar born in Egypt. He worked in Dîwân-i inshâ, Cairo. He was Kâdi of Tripoli for some time, returning to Egypt after completing this duty. In the last years of his life he became blind.

To briefly describe his written works, Ibn Manzûr is the author of five hundred books written by his hand. Beside *Lisân al-‘Arab*, the

main topic of our work, he wrote many more works.

### **Lisân al-‘Arab**

The author created his work by combining and arranging al-Azharî’s *al-Tahzîb*, Ibn Sîdah’s *al-Muhkam*, al-Djavharî’s *al-Sihâh*, Ibn Durayd’s *al-Djamharah*, and Ibn al-Asîr’s *al-Nihâyah*, where he deals with the rare words in the Koran and of the hadiths.

When we start examining the *Lisân al-‘Arab*, it appears clearly that, beside its being one of the largest dictionaries of Arabic, it is also, even nowadays, an immense source of Arabic poetry. It gives access to innumerable poems by various poets practically impossible to locate in currently existing Diwans or other sources. Consequently, this work was not considered to be solely a dictionary, but was also considered to be a book of grammar, syntax, literature, *hadith* commentary and a book of *fiqh*.

Ibn Manzûr begins his work with a long introduction where he ruminates on the superiority of the Arabic language and its links with the Koran. He proceeds to criticise dictionaries such as *al-Tahzîb*, *al-Muhkam*, and *al-Sihâh*, then explains the purpose of his own work, provides explanations for both *hurûf al-*

*mukatta'a* (broken letters) of the Koran and for the letters of the alphabet.

Ibn Manzûr adopted the form of this school and arranged his materials in accordance with the last letter of the words, dividing his work into twenty-eight chapters, each having twenty-eight sections. He also explained the verses, hadiths and couplets mentioned in order to support the exactitude of the meaning given to a word. However, contrary to the first edition cited above, the *Lisân al-'Arab* has since been re-published in the alphabetical order observed by contemporary dictionaries. Finding the meaning of a given word in this dictionary is a matter of following the procedure of al-Sihâh; by determining first the origin; i.e. the root letters of the word. For instance, the original of the word *ميثاق* is *وثق*.

Consequently the meaning of this word may be determined by referring to the chapter *kaf ق* and to the section *vâv و*.

### 3. Al-Kâmûs al-Muhit **القاموس المحيط**

#### **The Author**

Abû Tâhir Madjd al-Dîn Muhammed b. Ya'kûb al-Shirâzî, al-Fîrûzâbâdî (815/1412), one of the leading scholars of Arabic language

and literature, was born in the city of Kazvîn in Shirâz.

Al-Fîrûzâbâdî, who completed his elementary education in Kazerûn, learnt the Koran by heart at an early age. He went to Shiraz at age eight and received language and literature instruction from various scholars. Later on, he settled in Iraq. He undertook a number of journeys to Egypt and Damascus. After his time in Iraq, he settled in Zabîd, where he was appointed as a judge.

Al-Fîrûzâbâdî died in the year 815/1412, leaving many valuable works.

### **Al-Kâmûs al-Muhît**

In the preface of this work, a very well-known dictionary in the academic world with several reprints, al-Fîrûzâbâdî describes *al-Kâmûs al-Muhît* as a summary of two thousand books. He establishes links between language and the Koran to emphasise its importance, and describes his aim in writing this work, the method he applied and the reason for the chosen title.

The author also arranged his materials in the rhyme order, a system adopted by al-Djavharî. The justification for this is the level of popular interest in al-Djavharî's *al-Sihâh*.

In the arrangement of the materials, the author inscribed the *mudjarrad* words before the augmented ones, and cited references such as *hadith* and *fiqh* scholars at the end of respective articles. When mentioning the names of cities, places or plants, he provided medical information by referring to its uses or applications. Nothing concerning people or society was mentioned in the dictionaries. Furthermore, when giving the meaning of words, details such as the opinion of linguist scholars on topics of *shavâhid*, the Koran, *hadith*, poetry, grammar and syntax were omitted.

Anticipating copy staff's errors in transcription, al-Fîrûzâbâdî declares explicitly that he added vowels to all words with the exception of those currently known, and the vowel of *fathah*.

Without giving details, al-Fîrûzâbâdî used symbols instead of frequently repeating words. For instance:

- country, city                      د
- village                                      ۵
- place                                      ع
- *djam* 'al-djam'                      جـج

- famous م
- *hadith* ث
- mountain ل
- djam‘ djam‘ al-djam‘ ججج

Although al-Fîrûzâbâdî declares in the preface of his work that his work is the summary of two thousand books, the reader notes that, for the most part, it is based almost exclusively on Ibn Sîdah’s *al-Muhkam* and al-Sâghânî’s *al-‘Ubâb*.

*Al-Kâmûs al-muhît*, one of the most famous dictionaries in the Arabic language, has, among other books, attracted the attention of the academic world. Some academics have commented on and translated it, others summarised and some others criticised it.

*Al-Okyanûs al-basît* known as Mütercim Âsîm Efendi’s *Kâmus* translation, is not only a translation but also carries commentary and even corrections. It is an extremely valuable work in the Turkish language. This book is an incomparable and unique source for compilers of Arabic-Turkish dictionaries.

## 4. Tâdj al-Arûs تاج العروس

### **The Author**

Abû'l-Fayd Muhammed al-Murtadâ al-Husaynî al-Zabîdî (died 1205/1791) is one of the rare personalities of his times. He was born in the year 1145/1732 in Belgram, five leagues away from Kannevdj at the south of the river Ganges in the north of India. At seventeen, in the year 1162/1748, al-Zabîdî went to Zabîd, a town in Yemen, to study. Although he left the city after completing his study, experiences gained there left their mark on his personality. He moved to Egypt in 1167/1754, set off on pilgrimages to Mecca several times, receiving occasional lessons from local scholars while giving lessons to many of his own students. His reputation increased during his time in Egypt.

He was deeply shocked in the year 1196/1781 by the death of his wife Zubeide. Al-Zabîdî, by then very famous and extremely wealthy, left all his friends to lead a cloistered life at home. This life of solitude continued until 1205/1791 when al-Zabîdî returned home in the Arabic month of Shaban. He observed the holy Friday prayer in the al-Kurdî mosque opposite his house before suffering an attack of leprosy.



He had lost the ability to speak by evening and the savage course of his illness brought about his death the following Sunday.

Beside his interest in the *hadith* and the dictionary, he had applied himself successfully to other branches of inquiry. The wealth of his scholarly legacy, his compiling, classifying and presenting of a great many reference works reflected the nature and the style of ancient scholars representing the glorious periods of the Islamic world.

Beside more than a hundred works we could list to illustrate his distinction, he also created a majestic work worthy of special interest. It is in fact *Tâdj al-'arûs*, the commentary on al-Fîrûzâbâdî's famous work *al-Kâmûs al-Muhîr*.

### **Tâdj al-'Arûs**

Al-Zabîdî completed this work within a few years thanks to the encouragement of Muhammed b. al-Tayyib al-Fâsî al-Lughavî (died 1170/1756), one of his teachers. This teacher had provided a lengthy two-volume commentary on the work of al-Fîrûzâbâdî's *al-Kâmûs*. Unsatisfied with the commentary of his teacher, al-Zabîdî expanded on it, and while remaining faithful to its main sources, added explanatory texts and comments. Al-Zabîdî began writing *Tâdj al-'arûs* seven years later

upon his return to Egypt, completing it in the year 1188/1774. It was written entirely by the author's own hand. Being one of the largest and the most valuable dictionaries of the Arabic language, this work was published first in Cairo (1306-1307).

While preparing his work, he used as sources al-Djavharî's *al-Sihâh*, al-Azharî's *al-Tazhîb*, Ibn Sîdah's *al-Muhkam*, Ibn Manzûr's *Lisân al-'arab*, al-Sâghânî's *al-'Ubâb* and *al-Takmilah*, al-Zamakhsharî's *Asâs al-balâghah*, Ibn Durayd's *al-Djamharah* and Ibn Fâris *Makâyîs al-lughah*. When we examine *Tâdj al-'arûs* independently of the works mentioned above, we are made aware of the author's knowledge of a great many works dealing with *amsâl*, syntax, grammar, history, etymology, literature, the Koran and its interpretation, geography, medicine, places, plants and animals.

He adopted the order of *Kâmûs al-muhît* while arranging the *Tâdj al-'arûs* and beginning with the *hamzah* chapter and the *hamzah* section. The same order was followed throughout the alphabet. To look up a word in this dictionary, it is necessary to identify its root letters; i.e. after first sorting out the extra characters, and then to search for the word in question by taking its last letter as chapter and its first as section.

### III Al-Madrasah al-Abdjadiyyah

The alphabetical order applied in the dictionaries did not appear all of a sudden. It had evolved to that stage through a series of phases as we mentioned in the previous pages. Some researchers state that alphabetical classification based on meanings first appeared in al-Zamakhsharî's *Asâs al-Balâghah* while others maintain that the pioneer in this field was al-Barmakî (died 398/1007) who classified al-Djavharî's *al-Sihâh* in alphabetical order.

Making use of the advantages the alphabetical order system offered to researchers, lexicographers undertook to arrange the new editions of *al-Sihâh*, *al-Kâmûs al-muhît* and *Lisân al-'arab* according to the form mentioned here above.

#### 1. *Asâs al-Balâghah* أس اس البلاغة

##### **The Author**

Abû'l-Kâsım Djâr Allah Mahmûd b. 'Omar b. Muhammed al-Zamakhsharî (died 538/1143), a scholar of commentary (*tafsîr*), language and a man of letters, was born in 467/1075 in Zamakhshar, a village of Havarizm. He was

nicknamed Djâr Allah (God's neighbour) because he went to Mecca and settled there. He came back to al-Djurdjaniyyah, another village in Havarizm, after several trips to different cities. He remained there till the end of his life.

Al-Zamakhsharî, whose family was very pious, received his elementary education from his father. He never married as his commitment to learning was whole-hearted; and in a short period of time had become one of the eminent scholars in his field.

He wrote many books in the area of commentary, language and literature. One of his works worthy of consideration is his book titled *Asâs al-Balâghah*, as it heralded a new era in the field of Arabic lexicography.

### **Asâs al-Balâghah**

By citing the figurative alongside the physical meaning of words, al-Zamakhsharî introduced a new element to Arabic lexicography. He held firmly to his conviction that it was essential to understand the refinement of the Holy Koran, and this belief is implicit in all his works.

It differs from prior works of its genre in its treatment of classification and content, in that the root letters of the words in this work are taken as a basis, beginning with the first letter

thereof. Working from this premise, each letter of the word is considered as a chapter and the work divided into twenty-eight chapters while the words in each chapter are arranged within themselves in alphabetical order. For instance:

The following words and their arrangement together with the letter ب have been taken from the *hamzah* chapter:

أب س، أب ه، أب و، أب ي،  
أب ب، أب د، أبر

Al-Zamakhsharî compiled the materials he needed for his work by means of extensive research. He studied the Arabic recited by poets at literary fairs, and the language spoken at folkloric gatherings.

The author paid special attention to the actual meaning of the words he worked with. This constitutes the most important difference regarding content distinguishing *Asâs al-Balâghah* from other dictionaries.

The work was greatly appreciated by many scholars and it attracted commentary, summaries and reclassification. Having forged a new path in the Arabic lexicography, *Asâs al-Balâghah* was edited several times by various publishers.

## 2. Al-Misbâh al-Munîr المصباح المنير

### The Author

Abû'l-'Abbâs Ahmad b. Muhammed al-Fayyûmî (760/1358) was born and educated in the Egyptian town of Fayyûm. Later he went to Hamah, Syria and settled there. He became the orator of the city's al-Dahshah mosque.

### Al-Misbâh al-Munîr

In this work al-Fayyûmî explained – through some additions – many odd and rare words he encountered in Ibn al-Râfi'î's (died 557/623) work relating to the *fiqh* of the *Shâfi'î* order called *Fath al-'azîz fî sharh al-vadjîz*. He created a great work for his explanation of the subject of words' declension. Later al-Fayyûmî abridged what was an overly large book, alphabetising its contents, and calling his work: *Al-Misbâh al-munîr fî gharîb al-sharh al-kabîr li'r-Râfi'î*.

According to the author's statement in the foreword, *al-Misbâh* is the summary of seventy books. Al-Fayyûmî divided the articles of his book into sections under the title of each letter as *kitâb*. (as in *Kitâb al-alif*, *Kitâb al-ba*, *Kitâb al-ta*, etc.). Following *Kitâb al-vâv*, it is not known why he named the letters *lâm* and

*yâ* as *bâb al-lâm* and *bâb al-yâ* instead of *kitâb*. Furthermore every article under the title of *kitâb* is also arranged alphabetically within itself. As for the letter hamzah, he inscribed it as *ي* in order to facilitate reading. For instance:

The hamzah in the word ذئب is written as *yâ* in the form of ذيب. In the case of the letter preceding *hamzah* being *otrah*, he wrote it as *vâv* by changing it into "vâv" while if hamzah is the last radical letter of the word (*lâm al-kalimah*), he inscribed it either as *vâv* or *yâ*.

Al-Fayyûmî showed the vowels of most of the words and noted also their synonyms.

### 3. Muhîl al-Muhîl محيط المحيط

#### The Author

Butrus b. Bulûs b. ‘Abd Allah al-Bustânî (1330/1883) was born in al-Dibiyyah, a village in Lebanon. He was taught Syriac, Italian and Latin there and in Beirut along with Arabic language and literature. He learnt Hebrew and Greek as well later.

He worked as a teacher and for some time as a translator at the American consulate in Beirut. Americans requested his assistance while

translating the Old Testament into Arabic from Hebrew. *Muhît al-Muhît*, which he called *Kutr al-Muhît* when he was later to summarise it, is the most interesting of the author's many works.

### **Muhît al-Muhît**

Al-Bustânî used al-Fîrûzâbâdî's *Kâmûs al-Muhît* as a basis for writing his work. Unsatisfied with it, he extended his sources to include other books. He called his work *Muhît al-Muhît* because it was vast and encompassing.

Although *Kâmûs al-Muhît* was accomplished, he himself had difficulties using the work due to its arrangement. He thus arranged it in alphabetical order according to the original radical letters and enlarged it.

Al-Bustânî suggests in the foreword of his work that when the meaning of a word is to be determined, it is possible to find it out where the original is placed alphabetically at the section of the first letter of the word if the word is *mudjarrad*, and if it is increased, by converting the word into the *mudjarrad* form, then looking for it in the first letter of the *mudjarrad* form. In the case of a letter like *alif* or *yâ*, it is to be converted from its original form into another character by converting it back to its original form. However it should be stressed



that competence in dictionary use is acquired only through frequent and habitual use.

In his work, as in that of al-Zamakhsharî, al-Bustânî made use of all kinds of poems without distinguishing between old and new poets, in order to explain and document the meaning of the words. Again, after noting the alphabetical order of letters in the Arabic alphabet at the beginning of the section dedicated to it, he gives its denomination in Hebrew and Syriac, as well as its various applications and its value according to the *abjad* calculation method. He shows the vowels of all of the words to prevent the reader from lapsing into defective reading and uses the letter ج (djîm) as a symbol to indicate the plural of the word. Furthermore, the author eliminated some of the commentaries and explanations from his work consisting of two gigantic volumes to assist students in using it. He called this work *Kutr al-muhît*.

It appears now that, thanks to al-Bustânî, the matter of alphabetical order is settled once and for all, and that there will be no reverting to dictionary compounding activities. This work has been greatly influential in the field of book editing. As is the case with other works, there have been various studies dedicated to this work.

## 4. Al-Mundjid المنجد

### The Author

Luis b. Nakûlâ Dâhir al-Ma'ûf (1365/1946), a priest of the Yasû'i (Jesus-Jesuit) branch of Christianity, was born in the town of Zahlâh, Lebanon in the year of 1284/1867. He completed his education in the Yasû'iyyah faculty of Beirut. Then he read philosophy in England and theology in France. He learnt several Eastern and Western languages. In 1906, he was appointed manager of the newspaper *Al-Bashîr*. He died in Beirut in the year 1365/1946.

### Al-Mundjid

Being an important work of Luis al-Ma'ûf, this is a dictionary that explains words' meanings in a simple and easily understandable style.

When the author completed his work in 1908, he called it *al-Mundjid*. The most frequently edited dictionary surviving to this day, *al-Mundjid* has celebrated its twenty-fourth edition. Beirut editors Dâr al-Mashrik have published every edition of this work, the most recent in 1981. In the latest edition, in a separate section from the main text, *al-Mundjid* in-

cludes a foreword to its twenty-first edition, together with thirty-six tables illustrating animals, ships, arms, means of transportation, different garments and musical instruments, an additional section on aphorisms and proverbs and a section on celebrities.

Luis al-Ma'lûf arranged the contents of his dictionary in alphabetical order, placing the triple *mudaaf* verb at the beginning of the entry and relegating the augmented ones to their individual places by converting them to their original positions. For instance:

The word **فر** is mentioned in the **فر** article, the word **شد** in the **شد** article.

Furthermore, abbreviations such as **فا** for active participle, **مفع** for passive participle, **ج** for the plural, **مص** for the infinitive, **م** for the feminine, and **مٹ** for the double were used. The vowel point (*'ayn al-fi'l*) in the middle of the root letters of the present-aorist tense is also represented. However, rare words, narration and *shavâhid* were taken out. For the first time in the science of lexicography, some explanatory pictures were used.

Every page was divided into three columns; the main words were printed in bold red while

derivatives or words related to the main word were inscribed in fine red characters to enable the reader to locate them without difficulty.

While preparing his work, al-Ma'lûf took the *Muhît al-muhît* as a basis. We may even call it the summary thereof. Although he took *al-Muhît* as a basis, we see that he also referred to *Tâdj al-'arûs* and to other dictionaries as well.

As it is the case with every work, al-Mundjid fails to list certain items and contains errors. Scholars have made them the subject of a number of books and articles.

## 5. Al-Mu'djam al-Vadjîz المعجم الوجيز

This dictionary was enlarged and published by the Arabic Language Institute of Cairo (Madjma' al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah). It is a succinct and concise school dictionary whose language is suited to the study of every period. Rather than old/archaic words, it contains both those words that respond to necessities, and neologisms and words converted into Arabic.

Within a section covering words related to social life and civilisation, a synthesis was created through the combining of words from the twentieth century language, the period of

Djâhiliyyah and the language used in the era of the birth of Islam. In addition, *al-Mu'djam al-Vadjîz* was supplemented by pictures and graphics to make it as useful as possible.

The real physical meaning comes before the abstract one; verbs before nouns, trilateral words before quadrilaterals, the *mudjarrad* word before the *mazîd* one, the subjunctive verb before the transitive according to the arrangement in the dictionary. As for the verbs, they are arranged as follows: first priority to *mudjarrad* trilateral, then *mazîd* trilateral augmented by one letter, *mazîd* trilateral augmented by two letters, and *mazîd* trilateral augmented by three letters. Thereafter the arrangement proceeds in the following order: *mudjarrad* quadrilateral, *mazîd* quadrilateral augmented by one letter, and again *mazîd* quadrilateral augmented by two letters. The nouns were classified in alphabetical order.

Some abbreviations and symbols were used in *al-Mu'djam al-Vadjîz* as is the case with some other dictionaries. For instance:

Abbreviations such as ج for the plural, ج⇒ for *djam' al-djam'*, ' ' to indicate the 'ayn of the aorist tense .

In order to find the meaning of a word given in this dictionary, whether a verb or a noun, the origin; i.e. the radical letters, are determined first. If the word is a verb, then starting from the first letter in the order thereof, the trilateral and its *mezîd* and the quadrilateral and its *mazîd* are looked up in alphabetical order within itself as explained above. If the word needed is a derivative noun, whether trilateral or quadrilateral, initially its origin must be determined and evaluated according to alphabetical order. For instance: The meaning of the word **المعتصم** is looked up under its origin which is **عصم**.

However in case the word in question is not a derivative but an Arabicized (*mu'arrab*) word, all its letters are considered as original. For instance:

Since the word **سندس** has entered into Arabic from another language, all of its letters are thus accepted as original and its meaning is looked up in the article **سندس** composed by the letters **د ن س س**, while the word **جلسرين** is found under the entry **جلسرين** composed of the letters **ن ي ر س ل ج**.

### **Al-Mu‘djam al-Vasît**

The National Education Ministry of Egypt issued a commission in 1936 for a dictionary tailored to contemporary to contemporary demands. Under the auspices of the Arabic Language Institute of Cairo, Ibrâhîm Mustafa, Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyâd, Hâmid ‘Abd al-Kâdir and Muhammed ‘Ali al-Nadjdjâr undertook the task, led by the great research scholar ‘Abd al-Salâm Hârûn. Work on the dictionary started in 1940 and was finished in 1960: It was published in the form of two large volumes of 1,100 pages, with three columns per page and about thirty thousand entries, one million words and approximately six hundred pictures. It is a work of meticulous scholarship. The commission adhered to the following principles during preparation of the work:

- The verbs are listed before the nouns.
  
- The *mudjarrad* verb is listed before the augmented one.
  
- The physical meaning of the word **comes** before its figurative meaning.
  
- The intransitive verb precedes the **transitive**.

- The letter djîm (ج) is used to indicate the plural.
- The vowel of the *'ayn al-fi'l* of the aorist tense is indicated.
- The letter vâv (و) is used to denote the new meaning of the word.
- The abbreviation مو is used to indicate that the word was in common use during the period preceding the oral era of the language.
- The abbreviation مع is used for Arabicized words formed by reducing letter(s) of foreign words or by adding to them.
- The abbreviation مج is used to indicate those words agreed upon by the commission which prepared the dictionary.
- The word محدثة is used to indicate a new word in common use during the last century.

Words were classified according to the principles listed above and in accordance with the first letter of their original form, while also in



alphabetical order within themselves. Since its publication, the work has become the most acclaimed Arabic dictionary after *al-Mundjid*, which uses pictures and graphics to assist the user in understanding meanings.

The explanations given and the information and terms supplied in the *Mu'djam al-vasit* have invested it with an academic value beyond its merit as a regular dictionary and as such it is acknowledged to be the generally preferred dictionary.

In dictionaries which follow alphabetical classification of the original word, difficulties such as isolating the original form from additional letters, converting the letters soft *alif*<sup>1</sup> and *ya*  $\mathcal{C}$  to their original forms or placing the omitted letters in their previous position are insurmountable obstacles for elementary students of Arabic. Linguists who recently became aware of this situation conceived of arranging the words according to pronunciation; that is according to how they are spoken, and not according to their origin. This view was reinforced by their study of dictionaries edited in foreign languages, and was refined as a method with current application.

This arrangement, recognised and applied at various times in former centuries, is experi-

encing renewed interest today. The movement toward it was initiated by Lebanese linguists.

We will deal here with *al-Mardji* , a work prepared in 1963 by al-‘Alâilî and *al –Râid* a summary of *al-Mundjid*, one of the dictionaries that was prepared in 1964 by Djubrân Mas‘ûd.

## 6. Al-Mardji‘ المرجع

### **The Author**

‘AbdAllah al-‘Alâilî, a scientist of language and fiqh, was born in Beirut in 1914. He received his higher education at Azhar University of Cairo.

### **Al-Mardji‘**

Beside being a dictionary, *al-Mardji*‘ has the distinction of being a scientific and literary work. Its entries are arranged according to pronunciation i.e. to the way they are spoken.

In his introduction, al-‘Alâilî states that he prepared his work as a response to what some linguists had said about the Arabic language. The author used some symbols to define words and expressions which he classified according to their respective pronunciation. Furthermore, as a person who used this form in the Arabic

lexicography for the first time, he gave the meaning of the symbols at the bottom of each page, thus relieving the reader of the burden of turning pages back and forth.

Although an incomplete dictionary, *al-Mardji* is an innovative work in the field of lexicography. Its editing methods are commended and it should serve as a model for future works.

## 7. Al-Râid الرائد

### **The Author**

Djibrân Mas'ûd, a Lebanese writer, was born in the year 1930 in Beirut. There he founded the publishing house Dâr al-Hikmah. Beside *al-Râid* he also wrote books such as *al-Ramâd al-ahmar* and *Min Muzakkirât Madjnûn*.

### **Al-Râid**

Djibrân Mas'ûd began his work with a preface in which he stated that he wanted to prepare a dictionary that would be novel in its field for eliminating the difficulties encountered by students trying to find the meaning of a word.

All words, whether nouns or verbs, were arranged alphabetically according to the first letter of how they sound; in other words as

they are pronounced and not according to their original form.

For instance: the following words are entered in their pronounced form, without taking into consideration the radicals: the word أرسل under the letter *hamzah* ء, the word ترأسل under the letter ت, and the word الرسالة under the letter ر. Besides, he also included new words and expressions that had entered into the Arabic language and were used by various branches of academic enquiry.

The author was particularly interested in benefiting from the development in printing techniques. He printed words that need to be explained in bold red colour while he entered the explanations in a style that is easy to understand. As was the case with others, his work too was criticised for its content and for its method.

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