THEME AND LYRICISM: TWO CONSIDERATIONS IN THE ISLAMIC WRITING TRADITION MOTIVATING MUSLIM AUTHORS IN NAMING THEIR WORKS

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Abstract
The implementation of the sajʿ (rhymed prose) style for the denomination of works is a writing tradition among medieval Muslim intellectuals and a widespread artistic effort that is still extant today. Indeed, thematic restriction has played a role as a motivating factor in the creativity of authors in the classical era in terms of sajʿ. The objective of this paper is to present the distinctive solidarity between theme and sajʿ that stands out in the book titles of countless Islamic classics by means of a comprehensive examination of book names by Muslim authors between the 3rd and 10th centuries AH. This paper also attempts to identify why scholars could not renounce thematic restrictions and aesthetics based on ornamental sensibility when naming their scientific works.

Key Words: Islamic writing tradition, names of works, book title, onomastics, sajʿ (rhymed prose), aesthetics, embellished prose
Introduction

Experts in onomastics, a subdiscipline of linguistics, have often concentrated on the names of persons, places, and regions. Nevertheless, this discipline comprises a scope and flexibility that enables the examination of book titles put to paper in a certain language, region or culture. In particular, the significant amount of variable book titles created by Muslim scholars using a limited word staff as well as the striking artistic effort in the design of these titles are truly worth noting and deserve closer analysis.

Rhymed prose (تْرُنْرُ مَسْجِعَ), which initially emerged in works in the maqāmāt genre as of the 3rd century AH and rapidly flourished, is a much examined artistic style. The objective of this study is a comprehensive examination of the theme and form of book titles from various disciplines, particularly in the Arabic language and literature as well as tafsīr, ḥadīth, history of religions, Sufism, philosophy, botany, zoography, zoology, mineralogy, astrology, astronomy, and numismatics, created by the sajʿ style. The scope of our study covers the titles of works written between the 3rd and 10th centuries AH to follow the evolution and witness the ongoing vivacity of the sajʿ style, which became a writing tradition among medieval Muslim intellectuals.

1 It was Aristotle who identified this linguistic discipline for the first time. In the course of time, dozens of subdisciplines were formed in consideration of the relevant object or concept. Murat and Gülkanat, who describe onomastics as an extensive phenomenon with dynamic structure, indicate that it covers a vast scope, from the names of buses to flowers. See Mualla Murat and Gizem Gülkanat, “Onomastik Bilimi ve Eğitim,” Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi 5, no. 28 (2018), 248, http://dx.doi.org/10.16990/SOBIDER.4485.


3 According to Devin J. Stewart, sajʿ in Arabic literature and Arab society dates back to the pre-Islamic period and maintained its importance until the 20th century AD. Indeed, almost all Arabic works made use of this method. See “Sajʿ in the Qurʾān: Prosody and Structure,” Journal of Arabic Literature 21, no. 2 (1990), 101, https://doi.org/10.1163/157006490X00017. According to Shawqī
The content of this study excludes book titles that consist of a single word, such as "ُﺨَᘘ ᠔ﻟََءُاْ (The Avaricious) by al-Jāḥīz (d. 255/869), that include no artistic or aesthetic aspect of pronunciation regarding the formation of wording regardless of the quality of their content, such as "َﺎنُᘭﺒَ᠔ﻟ by the same author, or that have an extremely long name, such as "َُᢔᣂﻌِ᠔ﻟاﻤُﺒْﺘَﺪَأِ᠔وَدِﻳﻮَانُاﻟَََٔ by Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), which ultimately became known as Muqaddimah. Instead, we concentrate on relatively short or medium-length book titles that skillfully make use of certain techniques and practices of sajʿ, which is considered “wisdom (al-ḥikmah) composed in an expression (al-lafẓ)”⁴ that comprise a lyrical air in pronunciation, consist of the same letters but different words to lead to occasional misreading, and prioritize form and meaning together. The works referred to in this study are interesting, compelling, and even, occasionally, laconic examples with humorous emphasis in terms of pronunciation or meaning.

Pursuant to our methodology, we evaluate book titles in categorical terms and include the name and date of death of the author; thus, we aim to demonstrate how rooted the tradition is. To highlight the theme within a book title, we often make use of bold characters and frames to identify lyrical elements.

Scholars from every discipline have exerted significant effort to create artistic book titles; however, the men of letters are particularly worth noting. While certain book titles are composed through a literary language, they express a certain thesis or assertion. For instance, ـﻨْـнтَ_cancelled) in ِﻔْـﺿِل_الـsoon in إِلـْـمَـعُنيَّة _الـَـخَـبِيْش_ (Illuminating the Darkness: The Virtues of Blacks and Abyssinians) by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) underlines, on the one hand, the principle that “superiority should be sought in piety and not in color of skin,” while on the other, it provides a significantly eloquent introduction to the content of the

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work. Ibn al-Marzubān al-Muḥawwali (d. 309/921), who complains about the moral degeneration of the men of his time and their disobedience to rules of friendship, uses the title *فَضْلُ الْكَلَابِ عَلَى كُثْبِيْرِ مَمْنُ لَيْسَ النَّيَابِ* (The Book of the Superiority of Dogs Over Many of Those Who Wear Clothes).

Some authors are even more successful in echoing the content of their work in their book titles. Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), who is among these meticulous authors, calls his study about the permissibility of swimming *فَضْلُ السَّبَاحَة* his tract on the legitimacy of using spears *فَضْلُ السَّمَاَح* and his compilation of classical poetry and jokes about *إِذَا القَتاْيِفِ مَنْحِلُ النَّظَائِفِ فِي الكَتَافَةِ وَالْقَتَائِفِ* which managed to attract the attention of readers.

**I. Possible Intentions behind the Denomination of Books**

Muslim authors started the writing and registering movement as early as the 2nd century AH and attached particular importance to the names of their works. It was also a technical requirement to provide a work with a foolproof name. In his definition of the concept of a “book title (الْعُنْوَانَ)” among the eight essential elements within the opening pages of classical works, Kātib Chalabī (d. 1067/1657) writes as follows:

الْعُنْوَانَ: الْدُّالُ بِالْإِجْمَالِ عَلَى مَا يَأتي تُفْصِيْلَهُ وَهُوَ قَدْ يَكُونُ بِالْتَسْمِيَّةِ

وقَدْ يَكُونُ بِالْقِفْظَةِ وَعِبَارَاتِ تُسْمِى بِبَرَاعَةِ الْأَسْتِهْلاَلِ.

The title is the thing or part that briefly expresses the issues to be eventually detailed. It may be an (ordinary) denomination or be applied through wordings and inscriptions called *good beginning*.  

By the abovementioned *good beginning*, Kātib Chalabī understands not only meaning, but also the formal aesthetic ensured

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6 Barāʿat al-istiblāl, which is used in the sense of “good beginning” in verse or prose, is examined in classical references under the term *ḥusn al-ibtidāʾ*. This style, which ensures an impressive beginning to the qaṣīdah of a poet, the prose of a writer and the correspondences of a scribe, has been in use since earlier periods. See, for example, Abū l-ʿAbbās Shīhāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-
by *saj*ٍ. Indeed, an attentive examination of bibliographical and biobibliographical works, particularly *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, reveals how Muslim authors made use of “denomination” as an effective instrument to attract readers’ attention to the book because they would duly benefit from the work. In other words, the essential objectives of classical authors in the creation of the names of their works are *extraordinariness* to the degree of astonishment, *noticeability* to the degree of intensity, and *artistry* to the degree of confusion in terms of syntax.

In our opinion, there are understandable reasons why Muslim authors since the early days have given interesting names to their works. A laconic name that appropriately expresses the content and wish was an incontestable factor in providing the author with popularity. Accordingly, many authors tried to attach their nicknames and epithets to the names of their books in a phonetically aesthetic manner. For instance, the frequently referenced work by Abū l-Faraj al-Isfahānī (d. 420/1029) is often mentioned together with the name of its author and became known as “الأُغْنَاءِ لِإِلْـضَفْهَانِ”.* The same applies for the names of three following works: “الأَمَامِيِّ لأَبِي عَلِيَّ الْفَالِيِّ,” *وَفْقَيَاتُ الأُغْنَىِّ لِإِلْـضَفْهَانِ”* and “مَنْ عَدْرُ وَخَانَ لِإِلْـضَفْهَانِ.”

In addition to their noble goal of “disseminating knowledge,” the authors also proved their mastery and experience in the Arabic language in the eyes of readers through the extraordinary names of their works. Furthermore, a successful “denomination” meant a higher number of qualified readers and therefore higher commercial “earnings.”

The *saj*ٍ style٧ has often been employed in the enigmatic expressions of soothsayers, oratories, moving counsels such as

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testaments, gnomical sayings, influential sayings such as maxims and parables, as well as religious ritual expressions since the Jāhiliyyah and early Islamic period. On some occasions, Muslim scholars benefited from *saj* to ensure the formal attractiveness of their work. Indeed, as is still true today, a simple and unadorned title created pursuant to *saj* in those days not only sounded nice but also raised notable curiosity about the content and moved the reader to access the inner pages. In addition, we should bear in mind that a rhymed phrase stylized by a calligrapher is pleasing to the eye. Indeed, book titles such as “ْوضوع الكُلوَّوك” and “َاخِيُّ اللَّهُ سُلُوك” both sound and look nice.

Another reasonable ground for the use of puns in book titles is the aesthetic concern arising from the need to add an appropriate extension beginning with “ْحُـﺷَ” or “ـي ﺷَـﻓِْح” to the original title to name the studies within the age-long tradition of commentaries. The titles are created in this way and for this purpose in countless numbers of commentaries. The name given by al-Suyūṭī to his very well-known commentary of the ḥadīth collection *جامعَةَ الجوامِع* is an artistic example:

In the Muslim world, almost all popular commentaries on *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by the renowned ḥadīth scholar al-Bukhārī are named pursuant to the same method, and commentators have displayed praiseworthy endeavors to create puns with the name of al-Bukhārī. Here, we present some for clarification:

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449)
Al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451)
Al-ʿAjlūnī (d. 1162/1749)
Ḥasan al-ʿIdwī al-Ḥamzāwī (d. 1303/1886)
Muḥammad al-Khiḍr al-Shinqīṭī (d. 1354/1936)

In addition, we should note works that are written to summarize a voluminous book and that often rely on clichés such as “ْحُـﺷَ” or “ـي ﺷَـﻓِْح” or even those written in relation to a
certain work and expressed with terms such as “تَشْوِيح,” “تَهْذِيب,” زُيِّدَة,” or “ذِيل/تَدِيب.” “تَفْقِيح” “تَفْقِيح” 8.

In addition to the foregoing, we should not overlook the influence of Arabic as the common cultural language of the medieval Islamic world. Accordingly, scholars preferred to name their works in Arabic since it was available for ornate prose, even if their work was in fact written in Ottoman Turkish or Persian. For example, the title of a book in Persian that was written and presented to Sultan Bāyezīd II in 895 (1490) by Ḥusayn al-Khaṭṭābī al-Jilānī, a scholar known for his studies on medicine, astronomy, and mathematics, reads حَحْسَاـبِحْفَـﺔُا. The same applies for a work written in Turkish (first 222 pages) and Persian and presented to Murād III (1574-1595) by al-Ḥazīnī (d. 1002/after 1594), who named it جَوَاـﻫِرُا. Interestingly, this work about Aḥmad Yasawī and the Yasawiyyah order bears the strong seal of the abovementioned writing tradition in its title even though it is not actually in Arabic. Another example is the Persian work called أَوْزَادُ الْأَخْبَاب َفْضُوْصُ الْأَزَاَبُ by Kubrawī shaykh Yahyā ibn Aḥmad al-Bākharzī (d. 736/1335) about mystical etiquette. We can even refer to the name of the Turkish work written in Mecca by the 11th-century (17th-century AD) Ottoman mathematician ʿAlī ibn Wali ibn Ḥamzah al-Jazā’iri in 999 (1590), which is translated in Turkish by the 8th-century (14th-century) Tunisian qāḍī and sex manual writer Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Tīfāshī (d. 651/1253), is translated in Turkish by the

8 See, for example, Shumaym al-Ḥillī (d. 601/1205), Ismāʿīl Rusūkḥī Anqarawī (d. 1041/1631), Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Masʿūd (d. 8th/14th century), ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Mawsīlī (d. 1041/1631), Al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392), Mughaltāy ibn Quli (d. 762/1361), Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).
Ottoman Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Kamāl, who preferred an even more fantastic Arabic name for the translation: رَجُوعُ السَّبْيَحُ إِلَى صُبْاءَ فِي الْفُؤُودِ ُعلى الْبَيْاءِ (The Return of the Old Man to His Youth). Another sex manual, called by Abū Bakr ibn Ismā’īl al-Azraqī, was translated by Deli Birader Meḥmed Ghażālī (d. 941/1535?) into Turkish with the following Arabic title: زائفُ الْحُمُومِ وَذَافِعُ الْغُمُومِ (What Disperses Sorrow and Destroys Sadness).

II. Diversity within Thematic Restriction

The most striking point in the book titles by Muslim authors is the impression of restriction with five to ten themes or terms. As shown by numerous examples below, our authors seem to have restricted themselves with a limited number of words, such as “تُحْفَة,” “نُرُوْقَة,” “رَوْضَة,” “دُرﱠة,” “عَقَد,” and “زَوْقَة.” However, adjectives, phrases, and singular or plural forms in the company of these terms created huge diversity and, in a way, revealed the true skill of the author. In other words, even though a medieval author apparently seemed to have constrained himself in a very limited frame, he both stood out and proved his artistry by setting his personal seal on the mentioned clichés. Sajʿ is the most common style for this purpose since it reflects the phonetic aesthetic in the best manner. Indeed, thematic restriction was the main motivation behind the creativity of classical authors in terms of sajʿ. Consequently, it is possible to talk about a clear solidarity between theme and sajʿ in the titles of countless Islamic classics.

Presumably, the most appropriate examples of this practice are book titles that consist of names of jewelry and precious stones. Indeed, the association of book titles with certain valuable objects, particularly jewelry, was a common tradition and style among Muslim authors to arouse interest. Pearl was the most prominent of such objects; accordingly, hundreds of famous works were crowned with the singular or plural form of this word, “دُرُرٌ plu. دُرَّةٌ.” In addition, “pearl” was employed together with numerous useful adjectives available for sajʿ techniques, such as “precious, exceptional, unique, well-protected, untouched/virgin, well-ordered/well-arranged, dispersed, chosen/select” or “flawless.” Examples in the following list show how a limited theme can be diversified by means of additions to attain a phonetically artistic structure. The elements highlighting sajʿ are given in boxes:
In addition to pearl, many other gems or jewelry adorn the covers of books in their singular or plural forms, such as jewel (جوهر), gold (عَلَد), pearl (نَوَادِيَةٌ), ruby (نَوَادِيَةٌ), collar (نَوَادِيَةٌ), necklace or line for pearl (نَوَادِيَةٌ), pearl beading (نَوَادِيَةٌ), or gold bullion (نَوَادِيَةٌ). The list may be complemented with terms that recall adornment/ornament in the broader sense, such as "حلقة" plu. دِيْبَاجة, "حلية" plu. دِيْبَاجة, fashion/model (طِراز), crown (خَزَائَن), jewel (كَُنْز), and "خُزَائَن" plu. (آكِيل) "كَُنْز" in the sense of treasury.9

III. Use of Terminology that Emits Positive Connotations to the Reader

Authors opted for emotionally positive terminology, such as cheer, pleasure, happiness, and joy, to arouse interest among readers as well as terms of consolation to eliminate sadness and grief. In this context,

9 Here are some interesting examples of the abovementioned terms:
Abū Ishāq al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 413/1022)
Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʾalībī (d. 429/1038)
Al-Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144)
Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505)
Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094)
Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī (d. 956/1549)
Fatḥ ibn Khāqān al-Qaysī (d. 529/1135)
Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr al-Jarrāḥī (d. 833/1478)
Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī (d. 779/1377)
Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1375)
Abū ʿAlāʾ Allāh al-Mawwāq (d. 897/1492)
the first group comprises numerous words, and on each occasion, the book title is finalized with striking puns in line with these terms or concepts as their adjective or determinatum. Popular expressions with positive associations include happiness (سرور), joy (بهجة/مباهاج), compassion (ثقة), well-being (حُسن), gift (تخلفة), and curio (ظروفه). For example, a work about provisions related to obligatory alms (زكاة) of gold and silver is called زكاة العينين في زكاة المغتنين, whereby the author makes an elegant implication as to the efficacy and privilege of the pleasant reading of his book. The same applies for a work on sexual themes and pornography by Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad al-Tīfāshī, named زكاة العينين في زكاة المغتنين. On the other hand, al-Ḥubūr wa-l-surūr fī wasf al-khumūr, which was written by al-Nawājī (d. 859/1455) and was subject to severe criticism due to the vulgar love poetry and obscene materials in its content but was supported by art patronage and eventually became a highly demanded work, brings together the words pleasure/joy and drink in its title. When the denomination caused a reaction, the author, by elusion, had to change the name of his work to Ḥalbat al-Kumayt.

In addition, the concept of “beauty” comes to the forefront as another emotional term with positive connotations. Numerous concepts with roughly the same meaning, such as “beauty (حُسن),” “the

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10 Some examples include the following:
- Kamāl al-Dīn al-Anbārī (d. 577/1181)
- Yahlīyā ibn Ḥusayn al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 1099/1687)
- Jamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭṭaṭ (d. 718/1318)
- al-Tīfāshī (d. 718/1318)
- al-Kāfiyya (d. 879/1474)
- Zayn al-Dīn al-Īrāqī (d. 806/1404)

11 Other examples include the following:
- Al-Malik al-ʿAshraf al-Raṣūlī (d. 696/1296)
- Al-Muṭṭalhār ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 381/991)
- Ibn Aranbūghā al-Zardakāsh (d. 867/1463)
- Zayn al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb (d.2)
- Ibn Zafar al-ʿṢiqillī (d. 565/1170)
most beautiful (أَخْسَنُ), “beauties (مَلِّخَة”), “comeliness (مَنَاهِل),” and “handsome (أَنْبِيَق”),” have been used to render more aesthetic hundreds of book titles. On the other hand, there are a significant number of consoling expressions, such as “سُلْوَان” or “سُلْوَة”.

“Water” as the source of abundance is another concept with positive connotations employed by Muslim authors in book titles. Nourished by teachings of the Islamic revelation that descended in the Hejaz Desert, Muslim nations attached particular importance to water in their civilizations as the main source of life. Indeed, a Qur’ān verse declared the universal rule that “water is the source of life.” In addition, depictions of Heaven often pointed out rivers as the primary feature of paradise. One of the shortest sūras in the Qur’ān was named كُوْنُر, meaning “gushing water.” These and similar factors provided a pragmatic theme for Muslims to highlight the importance of their work since they longed for Adam’s wine in their desert region. Accordingly, it is not surprising to see in the titles of hundreds of Islamic classics terms such as wellspring (مُنَبَّع), waterfront (مُؤَرَّدُ), river (نَهْرُ), sea (بَحْرُ), ocean (مَحْيَط), headspring (مُحْرَص), fountain (صُهُبَيج), rain (فَطْرَة), downpour (ضَعْرَة), or sip (فَطْرَة). Particularly after the conquest of al-Andalus, Muslims came across new fauna and flora that paved the way for the conceptual enrichment of book titles in parallel with floral and hunting themes in the literature. Accordingly, such themes came to the forefront in the titles of works by Andalusian scholars.

12 Q 21:30.
13 For examples, see
Ibn ‘Ajibah (d. 1224/1829)
Ibn ‘Allān (d. 1057/1648)
Shaykhzādah (d. 1078/1667)
Ibn al-Majdī (d. 827/1424)
Al-Haythamī (d. 807/1405)
Al-Bulqīnī (d. 805/1403)
Al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415)
Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751/1350)
Kamāl al-Dīn al-Khwārazmī (d. 836/1433)
Evidently, Muslim authors, who decorated book titles with varying amounts and forms of water, were also interested in secondary concepts associated with it. Consequently, the titles of countless works include natural and pastoral concepts from Arabian and European flora.\(^\text{14}\) One of the most common natural themes is the "garden" and its derivatives, such as “زَوْضَة” (زَوْضَةٌ, plu. زَوْضَةٍ) “ْجَنَّة” (ْجَنَّةٌ, plu. ْجَنَّةٍ), "ْرُضِّيَّتْر” (ْرُضِّيَّتْرْ, plu. ْرُضِّيَّتْرْ), and "ْثَمَر” (ْثَمَر, plu. ْثَمَر) “ْثَمَرِيَّتْر” (ْثَمَرِيَّتْرْ, plu. ْثَمَرِيَّتْرْ).\(^\text{15}\) In addition, terms related to a flower (زَهْرَةٌ/زَهْرَاتٍ) fruit (زَمَّةٌ/زَمَّاتٍ) and, in particular, directly or indirectly related to “scent” (ْقُوَائِمْ) (ْقُوَائِمٌ, plu. ْقُوَائِمٍ) “ْكَنْدَة” (ْكَنْدَةٌ, plu. ْكَنْدَةٍ) and, in particular, directly or indirectly related to “scent” (ْقُوَائِمْ) (ْقُوَائِمٌ, plu. ْقُوَائِمٍ) “ْكَنْدَة” (ْكَنْدَةٌ, plu. ْكَنْدَةٍ), amber (ْعَنْدِبَرُ), fragrant (ْمَعَظَمُ), spring (ْزَيْبَعُ) were also in use because they were sine qua non elements of the same theme.\(^\text{16}\)

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\(^\text{15}\) For examples, see ʿUmar ibn Khalaf al-Siqilli (d. 501/1107) Al-Shahrazūrī (d. 687/1288) ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ al-Malaṭṭ (d. 561/1166) Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) Al-Malibārī (d. 991/1583) ʿAli ibn Muḥammad al-Khāzin (d. 741/1341)

\(^\text{16}\) For some examples, see Abū Iṣḥāq al-Ḥuṣrī (d. 413/1022) Al-Qaṣṭallānī (d. 923/1517) Ibn Sammāk al-ʿĀmilī (8th century AH) Shihāb al-Dīn Ahmad al-Tīfāshī Al-Suyūṭī Shihāb al-Dīn al-Khāfājī (d. 1069/1659) Ahmad al-Maqrīzī (d. 1041/1632)
Theme and Lyricism in the Islamic Writing Tradition

Many astronomical terms made an appearance in book titles, particularly sun (شمس), as the most powerful light source, moon (قمر), full moon (يَدْرُ), star (نجم), meteor (شَهَاب), or the place where the sun or moon rises (مَطَالِع).

In addition, book titles comprised man-made instruments of illumination such as lamp (مصباح) or lampion (شِهَاب). For instance, the work by the famous Sufi ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (d. 561/1166) on the holiness of Prophet Muḥammad’s ascension to heaven is named ﴿السَّرَاحَ الْوَهْجَ في ليلة المَطَار﴾.

In addition to the foregoing, a few concepts likely to arouse interest among disciples have served as a key in the creation of book titles. These expressions include the following terms with the same meaning: “غَيْنِيَة” and “غَيْنِيَة” mean what is sought and desired by students of Islamic sciences; “غَيْنِيَة” means what requires nothing further; and “بَلُغَة” means the very simple thing needed for life. In addition, book titles include expressions such as “نهاية”, “نهاية”, “غَيْنِيَة”, “غَيْنِيَة”, which refer to a certain goal and the summit to be attained. For instance, the versatile medieval Muslim scholar and physician Ibn al-Akfānī (d. 749/1348) named his work on preventive medicine ﴿غَيْنِيَة الْلَّيْبَمَ عِندَ غَيْنِيَة الطِّيْسٍ (Rich Information for Intelligent Men in the Absence of Physicians). Likewise, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shirāzī (d. 730/1330) claimed that his work signified the peak of astronomy at the time and accordingly named it ﴿نهاية الإذراك في دراية الأفلاط﴾.

Some book titles, in turn, allowed for an assertive and even arrogant discourse by an author who claimed that the information therein was the ultimate knowledge attainable in the respective branch or discipline. Such titles include ﴿نهاية الأفلاط في علم الكلام (The

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See, for example,

ʿAbd al-raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Biṣṭāmī
Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī (d. 864/1459)
Al-Suyūṭī
Ibn Jamāʾah (d. 819/1416)
Ibn al-Wardi (d. 749/1349)
Alḥār thousand and the seventh, last of the four, and the highest Heaven (IF),

Al-Dīn al-Ghażālī (d. 815/1412)
Ibn al-ʿAdīm al-Ḥalabī (d. 660/1262)
Likewise, authors often employed terms such as “الْآثِرَاتِ” (“Al-Taba‘i,” “الآثِرَاتِ,” and “الْآثِرَاتِ” to point out the sufficiency of a work in its respective discipline without the need for any other book:

Ibn al-Ajdabī (d. 470/1077)  

In some books, the titles consist of terms such as “stair” (ُسْلَمٌ), (ُمَرْقَةٌ), (ُمَرْقَةٌ) and “step(s)” (ُدَرَجةٌ), which signify the spiritual paths (ُرَكْبَاتٍ) to be taken by means of relevant work. Thus, the work is introduced to the reader as a means of attaining a distant or high objective. For example, the famous work by Ibn Hishām al-Nahlawi (d. 672/1274) is named as below:

أُوْضُحُ المسالك إلى ألفية ابن مالك.

Such works are also considered a pathfinder, guide, assistant, source of right guidance, or evidence, and they are named accordingly. For instance, pursuant to his objective of spiritual

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19 Some relevant examples include

Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmīdī (d. 631/1233)  
Kamāl al-Dīn al-Damiri (d. 808/1405)  
Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmīdī  
Al-Jamā‘ī (d. 600/1203)  
Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210)  
Al-Dabī (599/1203)  
Ibn al-‘Adīn (660/1262)  
Abū l-Ḥasan al-Qalṣādī (d. 891/1486)  
al-Maydānī (518/1124)

20 Some examples include

Al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085)  
Ṭashkubrīzādah (d. 968/1561)  
Ibn al-Mībrād (d. 909/1503)
guidance for the reader, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751/1350) named his work as follows:

Some book titles benefit from other practical similes. In this context, some works are introduced as a kind of indispensable spiritual nourishment (غذاء) or sustenance (زائد). For example, Ibn al-Jazzār (d. 369/979), the famous 4th-century pharmacist and physician, named his work, which was translated into Latin in a relatively earlier period thanks to its fame in the Muslim world, through an assimilation of indispensable practical knowledge in his book to the sustenance of travel or sustenance.

In addition, a ḥadīth commentary by al-Suyūṭī attained successful harmony between the relevant theme and the name of the author:

A group of book titles claim that truths unknown to most are explored by the author. Indeed, such titles may ensure interest in a certain work among readers. Presumably, the following title stimulates remarkable motivation for those who want to know more about the views of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah about the whirling ritual and music:

We may note the use of expressions with sexual content in book titles. They mostly echo the male perspective and reflect lust, including examples such as houri(s) (حُور), bride (عروس), and virgin (بُكر). For instance, Ibn al-Dalāʾī (d. 478/1085) compiled some ḥadīths that constituted the basis for jurisprudent

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22 Other examples include

- Al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565)
- Abū l-Hasan al-Qalṣādī (d. 891/1486)
provisions as early as the lifetime of Prophet Muḥammad and named his compilation as follows, hinting that it was the first of its kind:

افْتَضَاضُ أَبَكَارَ أَوَايْلٍ (الأُخْبَار)

*(Defloration of Virgins, The Firsts of Narrations)*

The prolific 15th-century author al-Suyūṭī crowned the title of his annotation about *Anwār al-tanzil*, the renowned tafsīr by al-Bayḍāwī, with a name pleasing to male lust:

ْاﺬْوَاهَذَ اَبِكَارٌ وَ شَوَارِدُ اَلْأَفْكَارَ

*(Virgins with Recently Blossomed Nipples [and] Overlooked Ideas)*

In fact, we encounter elements with sexual connotations in a semi-humorous context in the titles of *حَﺸَﻔَﺔِ أَمِدُخُوْلاَل حَكْرَةُ فِي أَخْاَمَ ذُخُوْلِ الْحَذْفَة* and some other works by al-Suyūṭī.23

Another smart move by Muslim intellectuals to enhance the popularity of a work was to refer to Qur’ānic terminology, making use of its profound influence on the spiritual world of readers.24 Accordingly, many classical and modern works skillfully incorporated certain concepts from holy scripture in their titles. For instance, the name chosen by the Arab linguist al-Muḥībī (d. 1111/1699) for his work about duals is inspired by the Qur’ān:

جَنْتَانِيْنِ فِي نُوْعَـيْ المُثَـئْتَيْتَيْنِ

In a similar manner, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Alī Ibn al-Wazīr al-Ṣān’ānī (d. 1147/1735) employs a clause completely identified with the Qur’ān in his work about a certain period in the history of Yemen:

ْبَطِقُ الْحَلْوَيِّ وَ سَخَافُ الْمَـنِّ وَ الْسُـلَّوِيَّ

23 Other examples include

Al-Tha’labī (d. 427/1035)
Shams al-Dīn al-Āmulī (d. 753/1352)
Al-Dawwānī (d. 908/1502)
Qāḍī Burhān al-Dīn (d. 870/1466)

Finally, it is worth noting that the thematic restriction, self-imposed by authors in naming their works, as seen in the foregoing examples, has occasionally led to certain confusions. Authors from different periods or different disciplines have sometimes chosen very similar and even identical names for their respective works. For instance, the same name is shared by a work of the 5th-century author Kamāl al-Dīn al-Anbārī (d. 577/1181) on grammar and a book by the 11th-century author Abū l-Qāsim al-Samarqandī (d. after 888/1483) on metaphor as a term of rhetoric. Likewise, the paths of Ḥasan ibn Bishr al-Āmidī (d. 371/981) and al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995) intersect in the names of their works: 

Most likely because of this defect, authors added distinctive expressions to the similar beginning of titles. An example can be seen below, showing one classical and one modern work:

Al-Maqqarī (d. 759/1358)  
Maʿrūf al-Ruṣāfī (1875-1945)

Therefore, the mere mention of book titles may not be sufficient in academic references; the name of the author should also be indicated on some occasions to prevent confusion.

IV. Strong Language of Refutations or Military Terminology in Book Titles

The severity of criticisms within the content of a work is successfully reflected by their authors in book titles inspired by a rhetoric peculiar to military language. In this respect, book titles have, in a sense, served as a platform of defiance and the settling of accounts between authors from different madhhabs and backgrounds in public. The titles of many classical works are, so to speak, an area where scientific authorities square accounts with one another or seek prestige. The title of a work by al-Suyūṭī in response to criticisms against Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767) by the famous historian and ḥadīth scholar al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādí (d. 463/1071) is a clear example of such a denomination: (Arrow Aiming at Chest of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādí). Likewise, the Ḥanafī jurist Ibn al-Dayrī (d. 867/1463) aims at the chest of apostates in the title of his work: (Outlaw Arrows Stuck in the Heart of Apostates).
In addition to “arrow,” “sword” is another much-referenced military weapon, including all its types and qualities. For instance, Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) gives the following name essentially about “punishment for insulting Allah, prophets, and companions” but also punishment for disunion, blasphemy, the violation of agreements by dhimmīs, apostasy, profaneness, and banditry: المُسْلُوعُ عَلَى شَابِيَّ الرُّسُول (Unsheathed Sharp Sword against Insulters of Prophet). In a similar manner, the biographer Taqī al-Dīn ibn ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Tamīmī (d. 1010/1601) named his work (which is no longer available) about his scapegrace son Ḥasan as شُوَّافُ الْعَلْاقَةِ عَلَى أَهْلِ الْوَلَدِ الْعَلْاقَةِ (Shiny Sword on the Neck of Rebel Son), implying his rage and fury. Quṭb al-Dīn al-Bakrī (d. 1162/1749), a relatively later author, named his work in a similar way: السَّيْفُ الْحَادِّي عَلَى الرُّضْعِ الْمَتَّٰاَقِيَّ (Sharp Swords in Response to Apostates). In another later work, Ibn ʿUsfūr al-Baḥrānī (d. 1186/1772) writes a refutation by hinting at the title of Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah of Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd (d. 656/1258) and calls it ﻣُـﺄَمِنُ ﻋَلَى ﺛَقَابَةِ ﺻَلَاحِـي (Iron Sword Hanging on the Neck of the Author of “Iron Chains”).

The terminology becomes even harsher, employing natural elements instead of military tools in times of heated rivalry between faiths, ideas, or madhhabs. For instance, Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1567) puts his foe to “burning thunderbolts” in the title الصَّوْاعِقُ الْمُحْرَقَةِ عَلَى أَهْلِ الرَّفْضِ الْمَرْذُوفِ (Thunderbolts Burning Refusers and Profanes). In refutation of al-Haytamī’s work, Amin al-Ḥulwānī (d. 1316/1898) tries to neutralize this attack by means of treacherous waters: الصَّوْاعِقُ المُحْرَقَةِ عَلَى الصَّوْاعِقَ المُحْرَقَةِ (Floods to Drown Burning Thunderbolts). In modern times, a work for the refutation of Riḍā Khān Biralwī (d. 1921) makes the respondent an aim of burning meteors: السَّهَابُ الْمُتَّٰاَصِبُ عَلَى السَّهَابِ الْمُتَّٰاَصِبُ.

In some titles, interest is aroused through partially humorous touches. For instance, when Ibn Dihyāh al-Kalbī (d. 633/1235) wrote الصَّارِمُ الْهَنْدِيَّ فِي الرُّدِّ عَلَى الْكَنْدِيَّ (A Sharp Sword in Criticism of Abū l-Yumn al-Kindī) (d. 613/1217), he received a humiliating rejection in return:

نَـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْـْ~

A similar approach is observed in the famous tract by Ibn al-Murarḥal (d. 699/1300), the poet and man of letters from Malaga, in
response to criticisms against him: \( \text{With Stones and Sticks} \).

In his work in response to allegations by a scholar who was a Muslim before converting to Christianity, al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141) adopts humor as well as explicit defamation and violence: قطع لسان النابح في المترجم بالوضح (To Tear off the Tongue of Who Barks in Response to Eloquence).

Evidently, such defiance in book titles not only consolidated the respective community or fanatical followers of authors but also established a strong motivation to attract curious intellectual minds.

In addition to military terminology, critical or refutation works employed some libelous expressions that may damage the pride of readers as well as those with elements of violence. The two following examples, each written in defense of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), may clarify our point:

- Al-Suyūṭī
- Al-Biqāʿī (d. 885/1480)

V. Techniques

There are certain criticisms and allegations that early Muslim intellectuals were interested in form rather than content and that therefore ornate prose and the sajʿ style are insufficient for the appropriate expression of the meaning. However, the objective of this paper is not to respond to such allegations or to show the evolution of the Arab style depending on eras. Instead, in this chapter, we will dwell upon positive examples of the extent to which certain book titles reflect the content. Indeed, Muslim authors have displayed extraordinary attention in determining the title of a work and have yielded appropriate book titles neither more nor less than required despite limitations due to sajʿ and alliteration techniques. For instance, an explanatory tract about the nuance between bribery and a gift includes outright “clarity” in rhetorical terms: تَحْقِيقٌ الْفَضْيَةِ في الفَرْقِ بَيْنَ الرِّشْوَةِ وَالْهِدَيَةِ.

A similar situation is observable in the laconic title of the sorrowful work by al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) on scarcity and famine in Egypt until his lifetime: إِغْطَاءَةُ الأَمُّةِ يُكْشَفَ الْغَمَّةُ. Finally, the title of a book by the 18th-century Azhar shaykh al-Damanhūrī (d. 1192/1778) about
hemorrhoids involves explicit clarity: 

The following section of our study identifies certain techniques used in book titles that we find interesting in terms of form and theme. We provide relevant explanations after classifying them under certain categories.

A. Rhymed Book Titles of Two, Four, or Six Words

Muslim authors apparently did not exclude aesthetic elements such as meter, pun, and sajʿ even in the formation of remarkably short titles that consist of two words. Indeed, hundreds of classical works are designed in a very concise manner since this style ensures significant advantages in pronunciation and memorability.

Some of the two-word book titles with sajʿ are possessive constructions. One of the earliest examples is مَحَاصِنَة مَحَاصِنَةُ ابْن سَعْد (d. 203/647). Furthermore, بَذَايْنَة الْبَذَايْنَة by Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmīdī and غَوْارِفُ الْمَعْارِف by al-Suhrawardī consist of two plural words with the same meter, whereas بَذَايْنَة الْبَذَايْنَة by Kamāl al-Dīn al-Anbārī and تَخْرِيج الْتَخْرِيف by Ibn Abī l-Iṣbaʿ (d. 654/1256) consist of two singular concepts with the same meter.

Some of the two-word titles are in conjunctive form and connected to one another with the letter و. Plural examples with the same meter

25 For other examples, see
Sayf al-Dīn al-Dihlawī (d. 1052/1642)
Ibn Abī l-Shukr (d. 682/1283)
‘Ali ibn Žāfīr (d. 613/1216)
Salāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Ṣafādī (d. 764/1363)
Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmīdī
Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmīdī
Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī
Kamāl al-Dīn al-Anbārī
Al-Asʿad ibn Mammātī (d. 606/1209)
Fakhr al-Dīn ʿAlī Šāfī (d. 939/1532-33)
ʿAli ibn Muḥammad al-Khāzin
Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 663/1265)
include the "النَـاَحِيَّةَ والْمَـزَاخِ" by Al-Jāḥiẓ and the "النَـاَحِيَّةَ والْمَـزَاخِ" by Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023), whereas singular examples with the same meter include the "النَـاَحِيَّةَ والْمَـزَاخِ" by Abū Maṣūr al-Thaʿalibī (d. 429/1038) and the "النَـاَحِيَّةَ والْمَـزَاخِ" by Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373).²⁶

In addition to the two foregoing categories, there are rhymed book titles of two words with prepositions. Pursuant to our examination, this preposition may sometimes be "في" as in "ُقْتِصَادُ الفِـِّيْ" by Al-Ghazālī, as in "ُقْتِصَادُ الفِـِّيْ" by Abū l-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī (d. 381/992), or even "من" as in "ُقْتِصَادُ من الفِـِّيْ" by Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148).²⁷

In punned noun phrases that consist of four words and are connected to one another with a conjunction, the determinatum is associated with the determinatum and the determinant is associated with determinant; in addition, there is an effort to establish a parallelism based on phonetic assimilation between equivalents in regard to adjective clauses. For better comprehension of the relation between words, we highlight the relation between elements in the first example below:

Ibn Abī l-Khiṣāl (d. 540/1146)

²⁶ For other examples, see
Hamzah ibn ʿAli (d. 411/1012)
Muḥammad al-Tamīmī al-Dārimī (d. 378/989)
Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī
Al-Suyūṭī
Al-Shahīd al-awwal (d. 786/1384)

²⁷ Also see the following examples:
Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭarsūsī (d. 758/1357)
Al-Suyūṭī
Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004)
Qāsim al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333)
ʿUmar ibn Badr al-Mawṣili (d. 622/1225)
Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 984/1577)
Al-Suyūṭī
Abū Maṣūr al-Thaʿalibī
Punned book titles of six words literally recall an equation. The title is divided in two in the middle by means of a conjunction, leaving three words on each side in a symmetrical manner. Some examples are as follows:

al-Nahrawānī (d. 387/997)

Ibn Hudhayl al-Fazārī al-Andalusī (9th century AH/14th century AD)

Ibn Hudhayl al-Fazārī

In both prose and verse, the most superior implementation of the art of *muqābalah* (comparison and collation) is to create a harmony in contradiction between more than two opposites. Muslim authors have yielded the most meticulous examples of this craft and created phrases that establish reciprocal relations between opposite elements.

in book titles of both four and six terms, as seen in the following examples:

‘Aziz Maḥmūd Hudā’ī (d. 1038/1628)
Al-Qarabāghī (d. 942/1535)
Al-Waṭwāṭ (d. 718/1318)

B. Utilization of Arabic Plural Forms in the Creation of Puns

Muslim authors mobilized all means of linguistics to create book titles that are pleasing to both the eye and the ear. In this respect, they often referred particularly to certain plural patterns. Thanks to their pronunciation and lyrical resonance that remain in the memory, “فَعْاءٍ" and “فَعَالْ" are the most preferred patterns. For instance, al-Suyūṭī preferred "اِنْخَافُ النَّبِيّاءِ" and "أَخْبَارُ النَّفَاقِ" for his satirical tract about unlikeable typologies.

Likewise, "اِفْعَالٍ" is used by Ibn al-Mitrān al-Dimashqī (d. 587/1191) in بِيِّنتَانِ الأَطْبَاءِ وَرَوْضَةُ الأَطْبَاءِ: the meter "فَعَاةٍ" is used by al-Kāfiyyājī (d. 879/1474) in سَيْفُ الفَضْلَةَ عَلَى النَّفَاقَ: by Kafawī Ḥusayn Effendi (d. 1010/1601) in سَوَانَخُ التَّكْوِيلَ وَلَوَانَخُ التَّوْكِيلَ: and "فَعَالٍ" by Zakariyyā al-Qazwīnī in آَثَارُ الْبَلَادِ وَاخْبَارُ الْعِبَادِ.29

The foregoing list should be complemented with feminine plural forms as one of the most available patterns for puns:

Al-‘Awfī (d. 629/1232)
Al-Iṣfahānī (d. 410/1010)

29 For other examples, see
Abū l-‘Abbās al-Jurjānī (d. 482/1089)
Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)
Al-Jāḥīṣ
Ibn Iyās (d. 930/1524)
Anonymous
Al-Suyūṭī
The authors, who had mastered syntax, were able to create astonishing combinations even in unforeseeable plural forms. In addition, some examples show that plurals in a certain meter coexist with other plurals that are similar in terms of form or pronunciation, albeit with different meters. Moreover, there are a significant number of examples in which a plural form skillfully creates a pun with a completely different, non-plural word:

Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Balawī (d. 604/1208)  كتاب الفياج للأنباء
Al-Khaṭīb al-ʿUthmānī (d. 780/1378) رحمة الأنثى في اختلاف الأنثى

Another effective pun technique is the phonetic harmony established by a present participle derived from the same root and plural forms of words that rhyme with it, such as “noun of place” or “infinitive with mim.” Old scholars invented striking titles in this respect. The artistry in the following examples becomes even more interesting when the chosen words are read by pausing on them:

Alḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghaznawī (d. 593/1197) عدّة الناسك في المناسك
Marʿī ibn Yūsuf al-Karmī (d. 1033/1624) دليل الطالب لنبيل المطالب
Ibn Abī l-Rabīʿ (d. 688/1289) سلوك الملك في تثبيرالمالك
Ibn al-Akfānī إرشاد الفاصدي إلى أئتي المقاصد
Taqī al-Dīn al-Jarrāʾī نُخبة الزاكى و الساجد في أحكام المساجد

C. Skillful Assembly of Nouns and Verbs in Puns

Since the classical period, Muslim authors have invented interesting book titles where one part of the pun consists of a noun and the other is created by appropriate verbs. In this respect, the harmony between nouns and verbs is remarkable. For better perception of this harmony, the noun at the beginning and the verb at the end should be read without wovelizing their final letters (by a pause). For instance, the classic by al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) on history should be read as follows:

العبر في خبر من عابر

al-ʿIbar fi khabar man ghabar

Some striking examples are given below:
Thus, nouns and verbs are brought together to create puns. In addition, we encounter the interesting assimilation of a possessive conjunction with a pronoun and a noun without a pronoun. For example, the tract by al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415) about famous personalities whose names are ascribed to others than his father is named as follows:

D. Titles Based on Wordplay

Because of the intense use of puns, some book titles recall tongue twisters and consist of alliterations that are relatively difficult to pronounce. Indeed, it is by no means easy to memorize these book titles, and pronunciation undergoes frequent tongue slips. This might be considered a joke by the author as well. For instance, Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806/1404), who wants to enlighten his contemporaries with the important information in Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn, names his work “إنَّ الْإِسْرَآرَ فِي مَنْ نُسِبَ إِلَى غَيْرِ [ابْيَهُ]”. Likewise, ‘Alī al-Dawlah al-Simnānī (d. 736/1336) names his work on the virtues of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib “مَا نَرَأَيْنَاهُ لِلْمَعَازِمِ رَحْمَةَ الْأَنْبَاءِ”, whereas Shihāb al-Dīn Mahmūd al-ʿĀlūsī (d. 1270/1854) names his work, originally a testament, “إِنَّ الْأَنْبَاءِ لِلْأَنْبَاءِ أَطْبَقٌ”.

Furthermore, the mathematician Ismāʿīl ibn Ibrāhīm al-Mārdīnī (d. 1270/1854) designs his own elementary numbers as a kind of equation, namely, “إِغْدَادَةُ الإِسْرَأَرَ فِي أَسْرَارِ الأَعْدَادِ”.

1. Book Titles Formulated in Anagrams

Scholars also opted for anagrams in which they reversed a given title or two terms therein or created a kind of riddle between words by reversing the letters in these terms to create parallel, contrasting, or associated combinations. For example, al-Suyūṭī establishes such a relation between the words “كتِب” and “کَتْب” as well as “فُرُزُان” and “أَفْزَان” in the title of his work that seeks to gather his contemporary...
scribes under a standard practice of Qur'anic orthography:

In a similar manner, when naming his book about the fire in Damascus in 740 AH, Ibn al-Wardī applies the technique of alteration and establishes such a relation between the words وَصْف and صَفْو as well as قَرَحِ and قَحو:

The qaṣīdah anthology by the famous book seller and poet al-Ḥaẓīrī (d. 568/1172), also known as the “book guide,” is named in a manner we can include in the same category:

Below are some interesting book titles that are derived pursuant to the technique of an anagram, where a relation is established between two words by the interchange of the places of letters:

Ibn Khaldūn

Ibn al-Kirmānī (d. 833/1430)

Ibn al-Naqīb al-Miṣrī (d. 769/1368)

Nizām al-Dīn al-Nisābūrī (d. 730/1329)

2. Technique of Establishing Relationships between Dotted and Non-Dotted Letters

Some wordplays in book titles establish relations between words that are formally identical but vary through dots. Such relations are often between analogous letter groups such as ع-غ, خ-ج, ص-ض. For example, the title of the famous biography of his contemporaries by Ibn Ḥajār al-ʿAsqalānī has such an aesthetic aspect:

٤٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠agoon
3. Technique of Reading the Same Word with Different Vowels

Vowels are a phenomenon in the Arabic language that allows diverse pronunciations of the same word. This characteristic has pushed classical Muslim authors to make use of this linguistic feature and to turn it into an artistic advantage. Consequently, authors have found a kind of pleasure in gathering together in their book titles analogous words that differ through one or more vowels despite consisting of the same letters. Thus, we have many classical works that can be pronounced in different manners with or without vowels; this method points out the subtle wit and fine anticipation of the author.

For instance, in his 
Ibn Saʿīd (d. 685/1286) employs a change of vowels in the letter mim, whereas shaddah is replaced in by Raḍī al-Dīn Ibn al-Hanbalī (d. 971/1563). The title of the following work by the Shāfiʿī jurist Muḥib al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī (d. 694/1295) would be hard to read if the letter āḍ is not vowelized:

In this regard, some examples in which a kind of play is made with words and concepts are given below:

‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1038)
Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142)
Asʿad Effendi (d. 1166/1753)
Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505)
Al-Jaʿbarī (d. 732/1332)
Ibn al-‘Irāqī (d. 826/1423)

Another important category based on phones and timbers is ensuring matchup or identification by dropping or adding a letter. For example, Jamāl al-Khalwati (d. 899/1494) makes use of the formal and vocal similarity between “حَبْيَةٌ” and “حَبْيَةٌ” in his work 
Likewise, there is a similar relation between the words “قِنَاع” and “قِنَاع” in the work by Manṣūr ibn Yūnus al-Buhūtī (d. 1051/1641).
4. Technique of Title Formation Based on the Pronunciation of Analogous Letters

In some titles, authors opt for wordplay based on pronunciation by establishing a relationship between phonetically similar letters. This relation, which can be found between ز/ظ and similar duos, comprises such artistry that it can only be understood through an attentive experience of pronunciation. For example,

Al-Firūzābādī
Ibn ‘Abd al-Zahir (d. 692/1293)
Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī

5. Techniques of Dropping, Adding and Changing Letters

Another particularly effective and successful implementation of sajʿ is to bring together words, one shorter and one longer in pronunciation, within the same book title. More precisely, authors use this technique to create the shorter word by dropping some letters of the longer. For instance, the work by al-Suyūṭī in praise of a rooster is named كَدِيدِ فَضْلِ الْدِّودِ, where the author obtains the word كَدِيد by dropping one letter of كَدِيدِ.

The same applies for سَافِرِ مِن فيعِلْ بَارِض by Shāfiʿī jurist Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 773/1372) and تخَبير الْمُوسِينَ فيما يُقَال بِالْمِسْحُورِ by al-Firūzābādī. The opposite examples are observable in the titles of الكَتِبِيَّة الْأَلْفَامِيَة في علم الفَأْضِ by the famous mathematician Ibn al-Hāʾim (d. 815/1412) and المَوْافِي في نَظْمُ القَوَافِي by the renowned elegiac poet Abū l-Baqāʾ al-Rundī (d. 684/1285).

Another common sajʿ method is to use two words together that consist of an equal number of letters with a single different letter. For instance, Nizām al-Dīn al-Nisābūrī (d. 730/1329) named his annotation as follows:

Other examples include
Muhīyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī
Al-Biqāʾī
Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Ṣafadī
E. Skillfully Created Titles with Puns in Compliance with Proper Nouns

Proper nouns are another area of application where Muslim authors proved their creativity in the style of *saf*. In the titles of thousands of classical works, these nouns are matched with words that are phonetically appropriate and pleasing to the ear. By combining authors' language taste with their subtle wit, many foreign names are adapted to the meters and patterns of the Arabic language. In addition, there is no distinction regarding whether a name actually belongs to a person, place, or book. Successful examples are observable in a work by Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafi about scholars of Samarqand, where he uses the word “sugar” (ْﺪــﻨْــﻗَ) together with a place name (ْﺪــﻨْــﺮْﻗَـﺳَﻤَ) in the work by Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 600/1203) with the adjective “ْﻣُﻐَ” on the famous “ﻤُﻮَﻃﱠﺄ” of al-Imām Mālik; and finally, between the word “ﻓَﺎﺷُﻮش” and the proper noun “ﻗَﺮَاﻗُﻮش” in the political criticism by Ibn Mammātī, who wrote about the deeds of Bahā’ al-Dīn Qarāqūsh (d. 597/1201), the potent governor of Cairo in the time of Shalāh al-Dīn (589/1193).

31 Other examples with prominent artistic aspects include

*a) Person Names*

ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī
Abū Ṭālib al-Marwazī (d. 614/1217)
Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 953/1546)
Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401)
Al-Bīsāṭī (d. 843/1439)
Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī al-Maqdisī (d. 744/1439)

*b) Place Names*

Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb
Al-Sakhāwī
Conclusion

Rhymed prose, which Muslim authors could not help but employ in naming their works, is one of *sui generis* characteristics of Arabic linguistics. In fact, this practice based on phonetic aesthetics has become an artistic effort uncommon in other cultures but ever popular among Muslim authors.

It is fair to say that the works written during first two centuries AH do not include such ornamental endeavors or concerns. Nevertheless, particularly as of the early 3rd century AH, scholars have tried to generate titles with eloquent, compelling, and artistic wordings so that their intellectual crops and scientific studies are remembered in an easier manner. Consequently, the work by a scholar or man of letters attracted greater attention from intellectual circles and attained greater popularity among the public.

The embellishment of book titles by ornamental concerns can bring together a Mauritanian scholar, an Andalusian poet, a Basrian journalist or a Yemeni historian in a very specific field of language and in the same pot of pleasure.

The influence and pressure of the age-long tradition of composing thematic and lyrical book titles in the Muslim world is also observable in non-Arabic works. For instance, the same method has been followed for centuries in the Ottoman writing tradition; similarly,
Iranian scholars, who wrote in Persian, could not stand idly by this tradition as they named their respective works.

The technique of making use of the power of *sajʿ* is based on the humorous and artistic syntax of words in book titles. This technique still preserves its importance today, and modern authors continue to name their works with similar attention and sensitivity.

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


