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Revisiting *Al-Maqamah* Genre:
A Literary Artifices of Medieval Arabic Literary Tradition

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Abstract:
This article is intended to examine how the genre of the Arabic Maqamah was absorbed by the various minority Eastern literatures in the Middle Ages. We will compare typologically the style of the Maqamah as it develops in four different languages from four different periods: Arabic, Persians, Hebrew and Syriac.[1]In as well as, we look into the thematic aspects of Maqamah genre, as a motivating factor in literary séance. The position of this literary genre, Maqamah, in the contemporary time, should be elucidated in this paper. In addition to observing the way in which these minor literatures each imitated and elaborated upon the Arabic model, we hope to understand the process by which this genre was assimilated into each of these literatures.

Keywords: *Maqamahgenre, literary artifices, medieval Arabic, styles, themes*

1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that the *Maqamah* was adapted more successfully by Hebrew writers than by any of the other non-Arab peoples.[1] Scholars are not, however, of one opinion as to how to define the genre as it takes shape in Hebrew. JefimSchirmann defines the *Maqamah* broadly, counting all belletristic works written in rhymed prose as part of the genre;[2] Samuel M. Stern defines the *Maqamah* in much narrower terms, seeing only works written according to the Arabic models of al-Hariri, such as *Tahkemoni* by *Yehudah* al-Harizi, as belonging to this genre.[3]Dan Pagis makes clear that neither Schirmann's broad definition nor Stern's narrow definition is in itself enough as a criterion to define a genre. Instead of the dichotomy of this sort, he suggests to examine the Hebrew rhymed belles lettres, not necessarily by recoursing to Arabic *Maqamah genre*.[4]

2. Its Origin

The Arabic genre of the *Maqamah* (pl. maqamat) was invented by Ahmad Ibn al-Husayn Abu l-FadlBadiʻu al-Hamadhani (358/398A.H. – 969/1008A.D.)[5]a man who claimed Arab ancestry, but who, as his name indicates, was from the Persian city of Hamadhan (now Iran). So successful was this new genre, that its author came to be known as *Badiʻ al-Zaman* (The Wonder of the Age). His work, as it has come down to us, consists of a total of fifty-two *maqamat*, the authenticity of a few of which has been challenged. Not all of *Badiʻ al-Zaman's* work contain the same *maqamat*, and they are not all arranged in the same order. Hence, modern editions of the text contain the sum total of what has come down to us, but arranged in an order determined by the modern editor, not the eleventh-century author.[6]

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[1] For the Hebrew *Maqamah* in general see, for example, J. Schirmann, The History of Hebrew Poetry in Christians Spain and Southern France, ed. E. Fleischer, Jerusalem 1997, pp. 93ff.

[2]Naoya Katsumata, The Style of the *Maqama*: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, in *Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Vol. 5:2, p.118.

[3] S.M. Stern, The Arabic Source of The Rooter *Maqamah*', *Tarbiz*, 17 (1946, p. 100, n. 23.)

[4]Naoya Katsumata, The Style of the Maqama: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, in *Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Vol. 5:2, p. 118.

[5]Over the past thirty years, several important studies have been appeared, all attempting, in one way or another, to identify sources or antecedents to *al-Hamadhani's Maqamat*. See for example: A.F.L. Beeston, "The Genesis of the Maqamat Genre, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, II (1971), p.1-12.

[6]In this juncture, see James T. Monroe, *The art of Badiʻ az-Zaman al-Hamadhani as Picaresque Narrative,* (Beirut, 1983), pp.109-132.

Another century went by before a second Arab writer, namely Abu Muhammad al-Hariri (445/515 A.H. - 1054/1122 A.D.), from the Iraqi city of Basra, succeeded in composing a major work in emulation of his august predecessor. In this instance, al-Hariri's autograph signed and corrected by him, has survived, hence we can be reasonably certain of authenticity, reliability and order of the contents.[7] It contains fifty *maqamat*, a number that, as time went by, came to be viewed as canonical, in the sense that, whereas a lightweight might try his hand at composing a *Maqamah* or two, serious writers in the *Maqamah* or two, serious writers in the *Maqamah* field were expected to compose at least fifty, if not more of them, in order to show that they were, at the very least, up to al-Hariri's standards.[8]

In the month of Shawwal 504/April 1111, al-Hariri read his *maqamat* out loud to a group of scholars and men of letters, so that the latter could either take them down by dictation, or correct any errors in their personal work, this being the way literary works were published and disseminated in the medieval Arab world. In attendance at that session was an indefatigable Andalusi traveler named Abu l-Hajjaj Yusuf ibn 'Ali al-Quda'i's lips, or from those of some other authorized transmitter is not known, and was then inspired to compose the collection translated in this volume.[9]

While the *Maqamah* genre exhibits many features that are specific to Arabic literature, it also shares a number of characteristics with other literatures. For the sake of convenience, it may be regarded as one branch, and a very important one at that, of the picaresque genre. In this respect, it constitutes a counter-genre to noble literary genres such as epics, romances of chivalry, sermons, Holy Scriptures, etc. In these, the reader is offered an idealistic and positive view of heroic and morally superior individuals at work battling against the forces of evil. In contrast, in the picaresque genre, the terms are inverted, for the reader is offered an equally idealistic, if negative portrait of anti-heroic and morally inferior individuals who succumb to the forces of evil, as they attempt to persuade one another and the reader that there course of action is the right one.[10]

3. Imitations and Elaboration of Arabic *Maqamah*

The Arabic Maqamah is one of the most beloved genres of Arabic literature,[11] having been established as a distinct literary category by Badi'al-Zaman al-Hamadhani (968A.H.-1008A.D.)[12]and reaching its peak[13] with Abu Muhammad al-Qasim al-Hariri (1054-1122 A.D.).[14] The genre involves a collection of stories (maqamat), in which each story – composed in rhymed prose, with metrical poems being integrated into the narrative- contains its own plot, while the narrator and protagonist remain fixed characters throughout the collection. The narrator tells a wide variety of tales in which the protagonist is usually an itinerant beggar who uses his rhetorical and poetic gifts to ply money from the pockets of others. Scholars of the genre have yet to examine with sufficient thoroughness the question of how the genre was viewed by the Arab authors. As is well known, Jews, as well as Persians and Syrians (apparently, only one Syrian), tried their hand at the compensation of *maqamat* in their own languages; *maqamat* written in Hindustaniand Malaysian[15] are also extant. Through literary analysis of the *maqamat* it is possible to determine the function of the genre for the non-Arab communities and to detect the ambivalent attitude these minority literatures held towards it.

A Persian author by the name of QadiHamid al-Din 'Umar b. Mahmud Balkhi (d.1164 A.D.)[16]tried his hand at the *maqamat*. In the year 1156 A.D. he wrote 24 *maqamat*.[17] He was a judge in the city of Balkh, in northern Afghanistan. Apparently he was held in high esteem in that society. Hamid al-Din helped his young contemporary, a well-known Persian poet, Anvari-I Abivardi (d. 1187A.D.), to flee from the rages of the people of Balkh, after Anvari had written a satirical poem about the city. In panegyrical*qasidah* that Anvari wrote in honour of Hamid al-Din, the latter's *Maqamah* are singled out for high praise.[18]*Maqamat-IHamidi* were written, as the author himself admits, according to the Arabic models of Badi' al-Zaman al-Hamadhani and al-Hariri.[19] It appears, however, that Hamid al-Din was influenced by al-Hamadhani more than by al-Hariri. The

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[7]See Pierre A. Mackay, Certificate of Transmission on a Manuscript of the *Maqamat* of Hariri (MS Cairo, Adab 105), Transmission of the American Philosophical Society series 2, Vol.   LXI, part 4 (Philadelphia, 1971).

[8]James T. Monroe, (trans./ed.) *Al-Maqamat al-Luzumiyyah*, by, Abu l- Tahir Muhammad Ibn Yusuf al-Tamimi al-Saraqusti Ibn al-Astarkuwi, p. 2.

[9]James T. Monroe, (trans./ed.) *Al-Maqamat al-Luzumiyyah*, p. 2.

[10]James T. Monroe, (trans./ed.) *Al-Maqamat al-Luzumiyyah*, p. 3.

[11] For an attempt to define the (Arabic) Maqamah genre, see A. Kilito, Le genre "Seances" : For a more recent attempt, see J. Hameen-Anttila, 'The Early Maqamah: Towards Defining a Genre', 51, (1997), pp. 577-99.

[12]See *Maqamat Badi' al-Zaman al-Hamadhani*, ed. 'Ali bn Mulham, Beirut 1993.

[13]Sadan traces the difference between al-Hamadhani's style and that of al-Hariri to a change of aesthetic taste that took place in Arabic literature during this period.

[14] See Al-Sharishi, *Sharh Maqamat al-Hariri*, ed. Ibrahim Shams al-Din, 3 vols, Beirut 1998.

[15] This Maqamah was mentioned by M.E. Jacquet, 'Melanges malaise, javanais et polynesiens', Journal Asiatique, tome 9 (1832), p. 252. As in Naoya Katsumata, The Style of the Maqama: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, in *Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Vol. 5:2, pp. 118.

[16]Naoya Katsumata, 'The Style of the Maqama: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac', in *Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Vol. 5:2, pp.

[17] See QadiHamid al-Din 'Umar b. Mahmud Balkhi, *Maqamat-I Hamidi*, ed. 'Ali Akbar Abarqu'I, Isfahan 1970.

[18] See *maqamat-ul Hamidi*, pp. 11-13 (in the introduction).

[19] See *maqamat-ul Hamidi*, p. 4.

style of *Maqamat-I Hamidi* is much simpler than that of al-Hariri's *maqamat*, and some of the Hamid al-Din's *maqamat* are nothing other than translations or elaborations of al-Hamadhani's.[20]

One Syrian author, known as 'Abdisho' bar Berikha, also venture into *Maqamah* composition under the inspiration of the Arabic *maqamah*.[21] That author, an East Syrian (Nestorian) metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia, died in 1318.[22] Prominent among his many works was *MemradeSayome*, that is, a list of church authors from four different periods: the authors of the Old Testament, the authors of the New Testament, the authors of the Greek Church and, at the end of the list, the authors of the Syriac Church.[23] The final part of the list is an important source for our knowledge of Syriac literature. Also interesting is an Arabic poem that 'Abdisho' wrote as an introduction to the Gospels, under the inspiration of the style of the Qur'an.[24] We see, then, that both al-Harizi and 'Abdisho' used Arabic not only for a communicative purpose, but also for an aesthetic one.[25] At any rate, the most important work that 'Abdisho' wrote in Syriac was a *maqamah* but the name of *Pardaisada'Den*.[26] He wrote this work, as he himself appended a commentary in which he explained the difficult terms in the text in 1316. Also interesting in this is Yehudah al-Harizi's promise, in an Arabic dedication of *Tahkemoni*, to append a commentary to the difficult terms in the text.[27]

4. The Themes of the *Maqamah*

A struggle of this sort with Arabic model also takes place over the content of the *Maqamah*. While it is true that for the authors of the *Maqamah* style, not content, was determinative, it is interesting to ask what they considered appropriate content for the formal and essential aspects of the *Maqamah*. In this respect, it will be helpful to look at the work of the Persian author Hamid al-Din, who was the most faithful of non-Arab writers to the Arabic model from the thematic point of view, and his *maqamat-iHamidi* demonstrates all the elements of the characteristic Arabic *Maqamah*.

The non-Muslim authors, on the other hand, had an ambivalent attitude toward the thematic aspect of the Arabic Maqamah, as we have seen above, al-Harizi, for instance, tries to dissociate himself from the Arabic *Maqamah* when it comes to matters of style. Although it can be said that his *Maqamah* is faithful to the Arabic model from the thematic point of view, one can sometimes observe even in this respect an attempt on the part of the author to introduce a change to the Arabic model in order to make the work more suitable for the literary taste of the Hebrew readers. We find changes of this sort in, for instance, his preacher's *Maqamah*.[28]

As we have stated above, alongside the classical *Maqamah* of al-Hamadhani and al-Hariri, which are characterized by content that deals with the protagonist's deceitfulness and trickery, there are also *Maqamah* that deals with ethical and religious matters, such as those by al-Zamakhshari and Ibn al-Jawzi (1116- 1201). The preacher's *Maqamah*, which is concerned with withdrawal from the world, is not just the property of al-Zamakhshari and others; it is also found among writers who sought to entertain in their Maqamah. Usually this sort of *Maqamah* consists of three parts: (1) the opening, in which the narrator meets the proselytizer who preaches religion and ethics before the people; (2) the body of the sermon, which consists entirely of ethical and religious messages delivered by the preacher; and (3) the conclusion, in which the preacher reveals his true identity to the people. It is important to point out that the content of the second (moral) sections of the *maqamat* resemble each other regardless of who the author is (e.g. a common fate awaits all men, regardless of class, life style, religious leanings and so on). What determines the final sections of preacher's *maqamat* by different authors in terms of their relation to the second section of the *maqamah*, we will be able to identify differences between various authors and to understand what positions these specific differences reflect.[29]

The motif of preaching and asceticism is further and more sharply developed with al-Hariri. He establishes a fixed place for this motif (the first of every 10 *maqamat*, namely, the first, 11th, the 21st, the 31st, the 41st), and he grants the *maqamat*conclusion a determinative role in order to counter the preaching of the second section and render it comic. So, for example, in the first *Maqamah* (al-maqamah al-san'aniyya). It is important to print out that the conclusion here is longer and more developed than what we have seen in al-Hamadhani. The preacher, after having finished his sermon, receives money from his audience, and the

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[20] The twenty-second *Maqamah* of Hamid al-Din, *Maqamah-yisikbajiyya*, is a translation of the twenty-second *maqama* of al-Hamadhani, *al-maqamah al-madiriyya*. See Muhammad TaqiBahar, SabkShinasi, vol. 2, Tehran 1349 A.H., PP. 344 - 56.

[21] For the studies on Syriac *Maqamah*, see, for example, J. Murdock, 'Ebed-Jesu'sMakamat', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 3 (1853), pp. 475-7; also in, W. Wright, *A History of Syriac Literature*, London 1894, pp.285-9.

[22] For the author's general works and biography see, for example, S.H. Griffith, 'Abdisho' bar Berika', in The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, ed. A.P. Khazdan, New York 1991, p.4.

[23] For the editions and translations of this work, see, G.P. Badger, The Nestorians and Their Rituals, vol. 2, London 1852, pp. 361-79; *Fihris al-Mu'allifin*, ed. Yusuf Habbi, Baghdad 1986.

[24]See, Naoya Katsumata, The Style of the *Maqama*: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, in Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures. Vol. 5:2, pp. 117-137.

[25] R. Drory makes an interesting distinction regarding the use of languages by Jews under the cultural influence of Arabic: Arabic serves a communicative function, and Hebrew an aesthetic one. See, R. Drory, The Emergence of Jewish-Arabic Literary Contacts at the Beginning of the Tenth Century, Tel Aviv 1988, pp.44-45

[26] Means: "Paradise of Eden". Salah 'Abd al-'Aziz Mahjub, *Qasa'id 'Abdishu' al-Subawi min khilalkitabihijannat 'adan*, Ph.D Dissertation, Cairo, 1995 (Arabic translation of the whole work).

[27] See R. Drory, The Hidden Context: on Literary Products of Tri-cultural Contacts in the Middle Ages', p. 46-47 (1991).

[28]Naoya Katsumata, *The Style of the Maqamah*: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, in *Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Vol. 5:2, p. 126.

[29]Naoya Katsumata, The Style of the *Maqama*: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, in *Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Vol. 5:2, p. 126.

narrator, who has followed him in order to discover his identity, finds him sitting with his young servant surrounded by choice morsels and wine. The narrator's critical stance toward this deceit angers the fictitious preacher, so much so that the narrator feels a real sense of danger (hatta khiftuanyastuwa 'alayya).[30] At the end of the *Maqamah* the narrator asks the servant his name, and this is the first encounter between the narrator and the protagonist AbuZayd al-Saruji. The function of the second section, which does not differ from al-Hamadhani's in term of content (the preaching of an ethical/ religious sermon), is fundamentally changed because of the conclusion, which turns the preacher into a comic figure and leaves nothing in the way of al-Hamadhani's ethical atmosphere. The preaching affords each writer an excellent opportunity to demonstrate his verbal dexterity and virtuosity (through the mouthpiece of the preacher), and at the same time to display the richness of the Arabic language which is, after all, the main purpose of the *Maqamah*. Nevertheless, the additional aspect, namely the body of the sermon- which, despite its secondary status, we witnessed with al-Hamadhani- is entirely transformed here. The ethical aspect of the content helps to expose the deceitful nature of the protagonist, who makes use of his rhetorical and verbal powers even in this religious field.[31]

5. The Styles of the *Maqamah*

One of the salient characteristics of the *Maqamah* as a genre is its language. The Arabic *Maqamah*, especially al-Hariri's, are often difficult to understand because of the artificiality of their diction and the frequent wordplay. Throughout the Ages, this style has served the Arabs as a proof of the superiority of the Arabic language. Authors of minority literatures were challenged to respond Arab pride in the beauty and the richness of Arabic, which are evident in al-Hariri's *Maqamah*; one cannot, however, infer from their response that these minority authors themselves used this mannered Arabic style when it came to the composition of their original *Maqamah*. In order to understand more fully the work composed in these minority languages, it is extremely important to understand the attitude of the non-Arab authors toward the characteristic style of the Arabic*Maqamah*.

The Persian author, Hamid al-Din, apparently did not set out from the start to imitate al-Hariri's style. Hamid al-Din's Persian style resembles the Arabic style of al-Hamadhani, which is simpler than that of al-Hariri. The model that he established for himself was the style of Sahl u Mumtani, that is, easy to understand, but difficult to imitate.[32] He was careful not to introduce difficult Persian and Arabic words into his *Maqamah*. One of his stylistic characteristics is, as Hamid al-Din himself admits, to mix Arabic with Persian. As Bahar points out, a verb often comes at the beginning of a sentence, as in Arabic *maqamat.* According to Persian grammar, it is of course more natural for a verb to come at the end of a sentence. One can also observe that Hamid al-din introduces complete Arabic sentences into his *maqamats,* even when he has no reason to do so.[33] It is true that *Maqamat -iHamidi* was not a successful as *Gulistan-i-Sa'di,* which is considered to be the most representative example of the style of Sahl u Mumtani'. At any rate, one can observe here that Hamid al-Din was clearly won over by the charm of the genre of the Arabic *maqamah,* but at the same time dissociated himself from the linguistic aspect, which is so conspicuous in al-Hariri's work.

A similar situation holds with regards to the Hebrew *maqamah*. The style of the Hebrew *maqamah*is of course known as the '*shibbuts style'[34],* which relies on biblical quotations, sometimes with an alteration of the source's meaning. There is scant trace of the difficult, of the difficult, artificial language alluded to above; on the contrary, the Hebrew *maqamah*is characterized by its clear biblical language. The question is raised as to why the Jewish authors of *maqamah* departed from common practice in precisely this fashion. One could argue that the Hebrew *Maqamat* do not really make use of the authentic style of the Arabic *maqamah:* as the Hebrew vocabulary was extremely limited, the Jewish author who would write in Hebrew vocabulary was extremely limited, the Jewish author who would write in Hebrew had no recourse but to return to the biblical vocabulary. One needs to keep in mind, however, that the Syriac author, as we will observe below, was able to compose in the characteristically difficult *maqamah*style, employing rare words or neologisms, in spite of the fact that the Syriac language had already fallen out of use as a spoken language.[35] It would seem that in order to explain the phenomenon of the relative clarity of the Hebrew *maqamah*we need to take into account the tradition of early Hebrew literature.

The early Eretz-Yisraelipiyyut is known for itswidespread use of neologisms. Towards the turn of the millennium there took place a change in the literary and aesthetic tastes of eastern and western Jews alike. MenahemZulay has demonstrated clearly the concept of purity of style in the work of Sa'adiaGaon in the East and of the Hebrew poets in Spain.[36] Avraham ibn Ezra's critique of the difficult and antiquated Qalliri style is particularly relevant here. Perhaps it is possible to understand the reluctance on the part of the authors of Hebrew *Maqamah* to compose in the characteristically florid and difficult style not as an inability owing to the limitations of Hebrew itself but, rather, as part of the general rejection of the early paytanic style, which to a certain extent is reminiscent of the style of the Arabic *Maqamah*. Al-Harizi's criticism of the Hebrew poets in France is instructive in this regard. According to him, there poems are difficult to understand because of their artificial language; they require commentary, and sometimes their commentary requires further commentary.[37] Although al-Harizi himself promised, as mentioned above, that he

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[30]See Les séances de Hariri, ed. S. de Sacy, vol. 1, p. 20.

[31]Naoya Katsumata, The Style of the *Maqama*: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, in *Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*. Vol. 5:2, p. 127.

[32]See Bahar, SabkShinasi, vol. 2, p. 343.

[33] A good reason to do so would be, for example, to quote from the Quran. See Bahar, SaabkShinasi, vol. 2, pp. 334-5

[34] See *MahberotItiel,* ed. Y. Peretz, Tel Aviv 1951, pp. 24-7

[35] So, for example, in Payne Smith's extensive lexicon (R. Payne Smith, Thesaurus Syriacus, I-II, Oxford 1879-1898) we find many such neologisms in which the only quoted use is from 'Abdisho's*maqama*.

[36]See M. Zulay, *The Liturgical Poetry of Sa'adyaGaon and his School*, Jerusalem 1964.

[37]See Tahkemoni, ed. Toporowsky, pp. 188, 190-191.

would append a commentary to the difficult terms in his *Maqamah*, he was a loyal student of the Andalusian school and his style was characterized above all by biblical purism, and differed greatly from the acrobatic linguistic aesthetic of al-Hariri.
In the light of the foregoing, al-Harizi, of course, also composed a *maqamah*of his own in Arabic.[38] One would have expected to see there a clear demonstration of the Arabic *Maqamah* style – the ornate style characteristic of al-Hariri – but this is not the case. Apparently his Arabic was not that of Arabic *Maqamah*.[39] Here, too, the question is raised: is the absence of the characteristic *Maqamah* style in al-Harizi's Arabic *Maqamah* an indication of his inability to control this high, difficult style, or does it reflect a rejection of this style?
In as much as this style is concerned, 'Abdisho' is the most successful writer among the non-Arabs who imitated the difficult style of the Arabic *Maqamah*. His Syriac language is full of neologism and wordplay. The genre of the *Maqamah*, which is known for its ornate style and frequent wordplay, suited 'Abdisho' not simply because it allowed him to demonstrate the superiority of Syriac, but also because it served as a vehicle for the promulgation of religious and moral teachings (at which Syriac excelled), just as it did for al-Zamakhshari. 'Abdisho' lists the various ornamental figures employed in his *Maqamah*, among them his various type of wordplay, and all this in order to praise God and to preach in a manner that would encourage his people to return to their faith. In accordance with 'Abdisho's intention, his *Maqamah* is dense with verbal ornamentation; it employs a rich and difficult vocabulary, and considerable formal play with language, so much so that the author apparently felt that one of the distinguishing characteristics of the *Maqamah*, rhymed prose, was not particularly suited to his purpose. In order to render his *Maqamah* more acrobatic and impressive, he chose to compose all 50 of his *Maqamah* in metre, without passages of rhymed prose.[40]This practice stands in stark contrast to the commonly held assumption among scholars that a work that is not written in rhymed prose cannot be considered a *Maqamah*.[41] It is evident that 'Abdisho' considered his work a *Maqamah*. It would seem that this is an instance scholar where the establishment of genre according to modern criteria alone has prevented scholars from understanding the author's intention.[42]

6. Status of Maqamah in the Modern Period
It was at this modern time, that the popularity of the *Maqamah* began to wane. Although, one or two of the protagonists of this period produced collections of *maqamat,* it ceased to function as a leading literary genre. It was not just that the archaic language and style employed in the *Maqamah* had begun to lose favour, but there is also evidence to suggest that the upper classes had become increasingly dependent on European culture and had begun to associate the *Maqamah* genre with didacticism more suited to traditional merchant culture[43].
The *Maqamah* merits a mention here not only because it probably provided one of the main impetuses for a thorough review of the direction of the Arabic language at that time, but even in its style, which was slavishly imitative of that of the great masters like al-Hariri and al-Hamadhani from the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D., it was perceived as a significant initial step on the path of enlightenment. Nasif al-Yaziji's collection of maqamat entitled *Majma' al-Bahrayn*, for instance, may well have failed because of its lack of originality in presentation[44], but its importance as a symbol of the new Arab nationalistic awareness cannot be overestimated[45]. It should not be forgotten either that al-Yaziji was concerned in many of his writings with underlying the purity of the language, particularly by removing neologisms borrowed from foreign languages[46]. In general his works seem to have provided the impetus for much of the debate on the proposed reforms in the Arabic language.

7. Conclusion
Finally, it is important to understand the different ways in which these three non-Arab authors, Hamid al-Din, al-Harizi and 'Abdisho', approach the religious significance of the Arabic language. It appears that these exists a difference of some sort between the Persian author, on one hand, and the Hebrew and Syriac authors on the other. It is possible that the Arabs' belief in the superiority of the Arabic language did not bother Hamid al-Din greatly because, after all, this was the holy language for him as well. Maqamat-I Hamidi were written in the middle of the 12th century, and the Persian *shu'ubiyyah* movement had already disappeared from the East two centuries earlier. It is true that the *shu'ubiyyah* movement was enjoying a renewal in Spain duringcentury, but this time it was Berbers and Slavs who were supporting the movement.[47]In fact, al-Hamadhani- the father of

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[38]S.M. Stern, A New Description by Judah al-Harizi of His Tour to Iraq', Sefunot, Annual for Research on the Jewish Communities in the East, 8 (1964), pp. 147-56.
[39]But J. Sadan values al-Harizi as an Arabic poet as well. See Sadan, Judah alharizi as a Cultural Junction'
[40], Naoya Katsumata, 'The Style of the Maqama: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac', in *Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures.* Vol. 5:2, p. 125
[41]See for instance, Huss, Critical Editions of 'MinhatYehudah', EzratHanashim', and 'EinMishpat', p.29, n. 32.
[42]Naoya Katsumata, The Style of the Maqama: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, in Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures. Vol. 5:2, p. 125.
[43]For this assessment, see Gran 1979, pp. 157-158.
[44]Peres, 1934-5, p.240.
[45]Daghir (1956, II; 752) emphasizes the importance of al-Yaziji as one of the founders of the inchoate phase of the Arab nationalist movement and the revival of the linguistics heritage. It is also significant that Ra'if Khuri wrote an article in the journal al-Makshuf (nos. 436-7) entitled " The Awakening of the Arab consciousness in the *Maqamat* of al-Yaziji.
[46]See Haywood 1971: p.52.
[47]H.T. Norris, Shu'ubiyyah in Arabic Literature', in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, 'Abbasid Belles-Lettres, eds, J. Ashtiany, T.M. Johnstone, J.D. Latham, R.B. Serjeant and G. Rex Smith, Cambridge 1990, pp. 31–47.

the genre, along with Anushirwan b. Khalid, who suggested that al-Hariri tries his hand at *maqamat*[48] - and al-Zamakhshari were of Persian origin, although they were great admirers and champions of Arabic. Al-Hamadhani, as is well known, opposed the *shu'ubiyyah* movement. The aim of Hamid al-Din was, to all intents and purposes, to enrich the Persian language by making ample use of Arabic words and mixing them Persian words. This Persian author had to apologize for having written a *Maqamah* in Persian, not in Arabic. The Hebrew and Syriac authors, on the other hand, had to apologize for not having written in their own national languages.[49]

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[48] A. Maree, *The Influence of Al-Hariri's Maqamaton The Tahkemoni*, M.A. Thesis, Ramat Gan, 1986, p. 31.
[49] Naoya Katsumata, The Style of the Maqama: Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, in *Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures.* Vol. 5:2, p. 130.