**Al-Ḥajjāj’s Rhetoric of Intimidation and Humiliation**

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**Abstract**

This article discusses the strategy of intimidation and humiliation in Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafῑ's most famous speech delivered in the city of Kufa in Iraq in the 7th  century. The linguistic devices used by al-Ḥajjāj are analyzed by applying the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This approach reveals his rhetoric of intimidation, humiliation, and emotional manipulation, reflecting Al-Ḥajjāj’s intention to act with extreme cruelty against the Kufa rebels. In this speech, he strove to normalize and legitimize violence against the rebels, for example, by likening the inhabitants of Kufa to animals, thereby framing the beheading and slaughtering of them as normal, in the way that animal slaughter is perceived as normal behavior.

**Keywords**:Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafῑ, linguistic devices, CDA approach, metaphors, intertextuality, repetition

1. **Introduction**

Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafῑ' was born in the city of Taif near Mecca in 661 and died in 714 in the city of West Ashur in Iraq. He served as governor of Iraq for 20 years during the Umayyad period (662-750) under the rule of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik. Indeed, he became one of the most renowned Muslim governors in history, famous for his powerful determination and pronounced cruelty. Al-Ḥajjāj led the Umayyad army that confronted the rebels in Mecca who were united around Ibn Al-Zabir, who claimed to be the legal caliph. Ibn al-Zabir's fortification in Mecca and around the Kaaba caused great discomfort and distress within the Umayyad government due to the religious sanctity of the city and its religious buildings. Despite the prohibition against damaging the city’s religious buildings, the need to suppress the revolt quickly caused Al-Ḥajjāj to damage even the holy places where the rebels were entrenched, including the Kaaba. Although Al-Ḥajjāj managed to suppress the revolt and return the region to Umayyad rule, his attack on the Kaaba led to protests by many Muslims who viewed him as a non-religious figure. However, his success in suppressing the uprising persuaded Caliph 'Abd al-Malik to appoint him as the governor of Iraq, which was known as a hotbed of uprisings spurred by the economic and political problems in the region. Al-Ḥajjāj was appointed governor of Iraq instead of the caliph’s brother, Bishar Ibn Marwan, thus starting a tradition in the Umayyad dynasty of appointing professional governors instead of family members.

This article demonstrates how the linguistic devices that Al-Ḥajjāj used in his famous speech in Kufa– in fact, his most famous speech – reflect the rhetoric of intimidation and humiliation, and how he employed emotional manipulation to normalize and legitimize the violence against these rebels. The rhetorical devices used in the speech are examined according to the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to shed light on how Al-Ḥajjāj engaged in emotional manipulation to deter rebel forces and preserve his power as the governor of Iraq.

## 3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary approach that is used in discourse analysis. Focused on how social and political power is created and maintained through language, it seeks to expose discursive biases and manipulations that serve political interests and advance controversial ideological positions. It also highlights the methods or stratagems through which the discourse produces or maintains an unequal balance of power in a society (Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 361). CDA aims to expose the linguistic, cultural, and historical roots that support the practices – the modes of action – that preserve the balance of power (Hart 2010: 13–4; Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 361; Meyer 2001: 15; Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 32; Scott 2023: 1–2; van Dijk 2001: 352; Wodak 2001a: 10).

While analyzing texts and ‘linguistic events’ requires some analytical method, it is a principle of CDA that it is neither based on, nor prefers, a single theory or a uniform analytical method. Instead, CDA offers a kind of toolbox for the researcher, a list of linguistic and textual characteristics that can be examined when one wishes to analyze a text critically (Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 366; Wodak 2001b: 64).[[1]](#footnote-1)

## 3.2 Conceptual metaphor theory

**3.2.1 Conceptual metaphor in political discourse**

The phenomenon known as “metaphor” or “figurative language,” whereby people speak or think of one object or entity in terms of another, has long preoccupied humans. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, literary scholars have focused on creative figurative language expressed in literature and poetry. In the last three decades—largely influenced by the theory of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff 1991; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; 1999)—many scholars have focused on the study of metaphor in human cognition (Kupferberg 2016). Conceptual metaphor theory defines metaphors as structures stored in the human brain that influence the formation of figurative language in everyday discourse, literature, and poetry. According to this theory, the metaphors that appear in various types of discourse are evidence of cognitive structures within the human mind.

According to cognitive linguistics, metaphor is an essential core of human thought and creativity. Since the language of politics is characterized by metaphorical themes, metaphors are a powerful tool for uncovering the essence of political thought. Metaphorical expressions nourish our worldview and shape our thinking and, in turn, our actual behavior (Koller 2012: 25; Lakoff & Johnson 1980: Mio 1997: 117–126).

In parallel to the interest in conceptual metaphor that has arisen since the 1990s, numerous scholars have examined the role of various figurative language constructs applying discourse analysis of various texts, including natural interactive discourse and media discourse. These studies have made it possible to explore hidden aspects of language for the first time (Kupferberg & Green 2005; 2008; Weizman 2008).

This study follows Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in taking a conceptual approach to the study of metaphor. Their work sought to reveal the metaphorical nature of human thought through examining common metaphors, the use of which is habitual and agreed upon. Their findings demonstrate that the use of metaphorical language reflects how humans perceive reality. Metaphors frame our world, and without them we are unable to think (Livnat 2004, Part B: 368).

According to conceptual metaphor theory, metaphors are cognitive structures (that is, structures stored in the human brain) that allow humans to understand conceptual domains of greater complexity than those found in everyday experience, by considering them in terms of other, simpler, conceptual domains. The encounter between the two conceptual domains is a cognitive process in which humans understand the initial domain—the target domain—in terms of the second, or source domain. For example, the metaphor ‘life is a journey’ [all metaphors should be small caps life is a journey ]is a conceptual metaphor that has been studied in many languages. The target domain is life and the source domain used to conceptualize it is that of ‘a journey’ (Kupferberg 2016: 20-21). While the target domain is accessed via the source domain, the reverse is not true. For example, when we say “life is a container” we conceptualize the concept of ‘life’ through the concept of the container, but we do not conceptualize the concept of the container through the concept of life. In cognitive semantics, the conceptualization of the target domain through the source domain is known as mapping and refers to the mapping of the target domain through the source domain. The term mapping implies that there is no single metaphorical connection between the two domains, but rather a system of connections or interrelationships between them (Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 121).[[2]](#footnote-2)

Lakoff (1991) also argues that metaphors not only reflect our view of reality but also influence it. In January 1991, in the wake of the First Gulf War, he analyzed the U.S. administration’s political discourse and showed how the Bush Administration used metaphors to justify going to war. In so doing, he demonstrated how metaphor analysis can be critical in exposing discourse manipulations and normally hidden ideologies (Baider & Kopytowska 2017; Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 368–369; Kopytowska 2010).

Conceptual metaphor theory emphasizes that metaphors are an encounter between the two domains, and explores the transition from the abstract to the tangible domain. It is not concerned with a single borrowing of a particular word from domain to domain, but rather with a significant interrelationship between the two domains that manifests itself through a series of metaphorical expressions. Such an interrelationship is not rooted in a coincidental similarity between two objects from different domains but in the conceptualization of one domain through the other (Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 120).

In a study of metaphor in Israeli political discourse, Dalia Gavriely-Nuri (2009: 169–193; 2011: 93) shows how metaphor is used to help to portray war as a normal part of life. Such war-normalizing metaphors aim to naturalize and legitimize the use of military power by creating a systematic analogy between war and objects that are far from the battlefield.[[3]](#footnote-3) For example, the metaphoric phrase “Golda’s Kitchen” was the popular nickname for the most intimate circle of Prime Minister Golda Meir’s advisers. This metaphor conceals a secretive and undemocratic decision-making process, even in security matters and other central issues. In essence, the ‘kitchen’ metaphor hides what was often, in fact, a ‘war room’ where Israel’s most urgent security matters were decided.

If we combine this with the lens of critical discourse analysis, we can see that the use of this particular metaphor helps to depict war as a normal, mundane, and unsurprising state, as expected and reasonable as medicine or business. In this way, the metaphor masks the true, terrible, and violent nature of war. Such patterns of discourse, repeated time and again (by politicians, military leaders, academics, journalists, and internet commentators), help the public become accustomed to this abnormal situation. Similarly, these metaphors help leaders convince the public of the rationality and necessity of war. (Livnat 2014, vol. 2: 369)

Tony Blair defended his decision to send British soldiers to the Second Gulf War in 2003, by using metaphors of progress—the successful attainment of goals (in the future)—as opposed to metaphors of regression, which reflect the failure to reach goals (in the past). These metaphors mirror the choices faced by the UK’s Labour Party and its leader, Blair, and thus establish the expected party policy: always go forward. Blair was willing to accept nothing but progress, and presented himself as a strong and reliable leader who would not be swayed by difficulty or criticism (Semino 2008). The metaphoric description of a particular problem or situation reflects the speaker’s perceptions of it and establishes his or her preferred solution.

In this context, the rhetorical power of metaphors of movement, widely encountered in political discourse, is worth mentioning. One example is the metaphor (Charteris-Black 2005: 54–152; Musolff 2004: 30) that depicts the European common currency (the euro) as a train that must progress at the same speed and in the same direction with all its cars in order to avoid derailment.[[4]](#footnote-4) This metaphor reflects a specific perspective that urges European governments to adopt a uniform monetary policy and act in complete economic harmony in order to ensure the success of the European Monetary Union). Musolff presents examples of manipulative rhetorical baggage evoked by metaphors. The metaphors that he discusses express hostility toward the language of immigrants in Britain, such as the description of roads in British cities as streets in Bombay or Karachi (Musolff 2019: 257–266) and Coronation Street as having been relocated from Britain to Pakistan.

In brief, this paper uses conceptual metaphor theory to explore the source domains employed by Arafat to conceptualize various political issues and—in the main—the Israelis, but also the Palestinians.

**4. Methodology**

We chose Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafῑ's most famous speech delivered in the city of Kufa in Iraq in the 7th  century in order to demonstrate how the linguistic devices that Al-Ḥajjāj used in this speech reflect the rhetoric of intimidation and humiliation, and how he employed emotional manipulation to normalize and legitimize the violence against these rebels.

The rhetorical devices used in the speech are examined according to the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to shed light on how Al-Ḥajjāj engaged in emotional manipulation to deter rebel forces and preserve his power as the governor of Iraq.

A collection and sorting methodology was used: after collecting the linguistic devices. We then attempted to show how each linguistic device contributes to the delivery of Al-Ḥajjāj’s messages. All the linguistic devices collected were translated from Arabic into English by a native English-speaking translator and editor. The collection of linguistic devices constructs showed that there are single-word devices and devices that consist of a sequence of words. For example, The collection of metaphorical constructs showed that there are single-word metaphors and metaphors that consist of a sequence of words. The metaphorical constructs were analyzed in several stages—in the first stage, the metaphorical constructs were associated with source domains. In the second stage, an examination was performed to show how these source domains conceptualize the Kufa rebels. In the third stage, an attempt was made to identify any source domains that merited particular attention, and conclusions were drawn accordingly.

# **4. Findings**

It can be seen that all the rhetorical devices in Al- Ḥajjāj’s speech to the Kufa rebels in Iraq reflect the rhetoric of deterrence and humiliation, with the clear purpose of engaging in emotional manipulations that reflect his intention to act with extraordinary cruelty against the coercive rebels who are considered a particularly resistant group. Al-Ḥajjāj endeavors to normalize the violence against these rebels and give it legitimacy; for example, he likens the inhabitants of Kufa to animals, i.e., he frames them as animals, and therefore beheading and slaughtering them is normal, as slaughtering animals is perceived as normal behavior. Al-Ḥajjāj quotes from the Qur'an describing villagers upon whom God imposed fear and hunger, as they did not appreciate the grace of God. By comparing the residents of Kufa to the villagers who did not appreciate God’s grace, Al- Ḥajjāj normalizes the use of excessive force against them and makes it a legitimate act, as there is a Qur’anic reference that clarifies how to treat people who do not appreciate the grace of their superiors.

**4.1 The use of metaphors**

**4.1.1 Metaphors from the domain of the desert environment**

Al-Ḥajjāj’s use of metaphors was influenced by the desert environment in which the Iraqi people lived and worked, primarily in agriculture and animal husbandry. Al-Ḥajjāj frequently drew metaphors from these surroundings, and referred to mountains, types of wood from which arrows were made, and so on, because the Iraqi people were familiar with this environment and were able to understand the message behind such metaphors.

1. “Long live Allah; people of Iraq, I see haughty and rebellious looks, and stiff necks, and **heads that are ripe,** andit is time **for picking them** (decapitation). I am the one who will decapitate you”.

The residents of Kufa are like fruits that have ripened and rotted, so the time has come to pluck off their heads, as we harvest ripe fruit. Just as leaving overripe fruit without picking it can harm the wholesome fruits, so hesitation and delay in the oppression of these residents can complicate the situation and intensify their revolt against the authorities to the point of complete loss of control.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The word “heads” can also be expanded to serve as a metaphor from the realm of animals, since al- Ḥajjāj likens the inhabitants of Kufa to animals, thereby framing the beheading and slaughtering of them as normal, in the same way that animal slaughter is perceived as normal behavior. By using this metaphor, al-Ḥajjāj engages in emotional manipulation to make his opponents realize that the use of cruelty and violence against them is a normal matter, just as animal slaughter is perceived as normal.

1. “The Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, who is generous and Allah should prolong his days, threw the **waste of his arrows** (from his arrow holster) before him, and bit the arrows one by one to check their quality, and found me to be the **most bitter and powerful arrow,** and he sent me to you and threw me at you”.

The act of scattering the arrows for the purpose of choosing the most durable is a metaphor for the caliph’s deep thought and extraordinary meticulousness in choosing Al-Ḥajjāj to rule over Kufa. Al-Ḥajjāj, with his charismatic personality, leadership, and extraordinary cruelty is perceived to be the most bitter and determined.

The most bitter and powerful arrow is a metaphor for al-Ḥajjāj 's extraordinary ruthlessness determination and aggression. The caliph’s choice of this arrow from among the rejected waste unequivocally indicates a voluntary and conscious choice to suppress the revolt of the inhabitants of Kufa against the authorities, after all previous attempts to subdue them have come to naught.

1. “I am a well-known and famous person, experienced, bold, adventurous, and brave, who **reveals**[[6]](#footnote-6) **things** . [The intention is to expose his opponents’ plots]. I am not afraid to walk on narrow, dangerous and winding roads up the mountain”. [These paths serve as a springboard for him to face his opponents]”.

Just as the dawn reveals the light and removes the darkness of the night, so too Al-Ḥajjāj dispersed the fog surrounding the Kufa rebels and became well acquainted with their treacherous nature and their tendency to rebel against the authorities. Al-Ḥajjāj is well aware that all his predecessors’ attempts to suppress the rebels were in vain, so he will use extraordinary violence and brutality, unparalleled in the past.

1. “I am a well-known and famous person, experienced, daring, adventurous, brave and exposing opponents’ plots. I am not afraid to walk on **narrow, dangerous and winding roads up the mountain**”**.**

These paths serve as a starting point for him in facing his opponents. Marching along narrow, dangerous and winding mountain roads is a metaphor for al-Ḥajjāj's ability to successfully tackle particularly arduous and difficult tasks. Only special, virtuous individuals are capable of doing such deeds.

1. “The strings of the bow used in war are as strong as the **leg of the young male camel**, and even more so”.

The phrase “leg of the young male camel” is used as a metaphor for the need to act harshly in the face of coercive rebels and to use particularly severe weapons against them.

1. “Long live Allah; the people of Iraq. I am not among those who tests their patience and animates them, as is they who will **whip a camel** to test its temper and patience. Nor am I one of those who examines their power and determination to wage battles as they **feel figs** to test their ripeness”.

Whipping the camel and feeling the figs are metaphors for the rebels’ attempts to test al-Ḥajjāj’s patience and provoke him. This would be utterly foolish, because he intends to treat the rebels with a policy of no tolerance and forbearance, and with cruelty far beyond the bounds of logic.

1. “ I swear as I live by Allah, that I will **peel you as one peels the bark off a branch, and bind you as one binds the branches of the thorny trees and beat them with a** stick so that **the leaves fall off for the animals to eat**”.

The action of peeling the bark off the branch is a metaphor for the action of stripping the skin from the body. In essence, al-Ḥajjāj intends to strip the skin off the rebels of Kufa as a butcher strips the skin off of animals.

 The branches of thorny trees are a metaphor for the inhabitants of Kufa, as they are a group of people who are difficult to deal with. The leaves falling from the thorny branches is a metaphor for bringing the inhabitants of Kufa into line. Binding the branches of the thorny trees and beating them with a stick until the leaves that serve as food for animals fall off them is a metaphor for the ruthless violence that al-Ḥajjāj intends to use against the rebels. These rebels are thorny branches, meaning a particularly difficult core group, therefore dealing with them requires merciless and monstrous force.

Al-Ḥajjāj treats the Kufa rebels as foreigners, and they are radically different from the rest of Iraq because of their repeated attempts and their determination to rebel against the authorities and not accept their rule. As such, they resemble camels that do not belong to the caravan. Just as the foreign camels are beaten cruelly to make them flee from the caravan, so must the rebels of Kufa be treated.

1. “Iraqi people! You are the inhabitants of a village that was safe and peaceful and you made an abundant livelihood from all sides. But you did not properly appreciate the grace of God, so God torments you because of your deeds, and clothes you in the **garments of hunger and fear**”.

The inhabitants of Kufa did not appreciate the grace of God; therefore, fear and hunger clung to them like garments. Clothing prevents a person from being naked, prevents humiliation, and preserves dignity, but the actions of the residents of Kufa changes their attire to that of hunger, fear, and humiliation. The residents of Kufa will be punished with an iron fist, due to their repeated attempts to rebel against the authorities.

**Table 1:** **Source domain** **and** **target domains**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source domain: Desert Environment** | **Target domain** |
| Ripened fruit, ready to be picked | Rebels of Kufa who need to be dealt with without delay lest they are strengthened and more rebels follow them |
| Animals | Heads |
| Scattering arrows and biting them | The deep and serious thinking invested in choosing al-Ḥajjāj |
| The bitterest and strongest arrow | The rebels of Kufa are like animals, and therefore beheading and slaughtering them is a legitimate act |
| The meaning of *galā* | Al-Ḥajjāj’s incredible ability to uncover plots |
| Narrow, dangerous and winding roads up in the mountains | Al-Ḥajjāj’s amazing ability to handle complex tasks successfully |
| Leg of the young male camel | For acting harshly in the face of the rebels of Kufa, particularly cruel weapons must be used against them |
| Whipping camels and feeling figs | The foolish attempt of the residents of Kufa to force provoke al-Ḥajjāj’s and test his patience |
| Peeling bark from branches | Removing the skin of rebels and resorting to violence that characterizes the violence perpetrated on animals |
| Tying branches of thorny trees and beating them with a stick | Exercising monstrous force against the rebels of Kufa, i.e., against the difficult core group, who resemble thorny plants |
| Beating foreign camels that do not belong to the caravan | Exercising brutal force against the various rebel forces in the Kufa, who are different from the other residents of Iraq and require special treatment |
| Branches of thorny trees | Residents of Kufa, who are constantly trying to rebel against the authorities |
| Leaves falling from thorny branches | Straightening out the residents of Kufa to deter them from rebelling against the authorities again |
| Garments of fear and hunger | Al-Ḥajjāj’s cruel treatment of the residents of Kufa |

**Describing future actions as if they are occurring or already occurred, to emphasize that they are certain to happen**

Al-Ḥajjāj’s describes future actions as if they were currently happening or as if they had already taken place. This is done to force the rebels to take his words seriously, as if his intentions and statements of steps to be taken in the future are already completed facts. Al-Ḥajjāj’s describes these future actions in the present and past tense as if he were a witness to their existence:

1. “Long live Allah; people of Iraq, I see haughty and rebellious looks, and stiff necks, and heads that are ripe**,** and the time is ripefor picking them (decapitation). I am the one who will decapitate you. Long live Allah as I watch the **blood spouting from between the turbans and the beards**”.

Al-Ḥajjāj’s imagines blood flowing between the people’s turbans and beards. He describes the situation as if seeing it in front of his eyes. This manipulative description is intended to intimidate the residents of Kufa in an attempt to force them to comply with the authorities and cease their attempts at rebellion against them.

1. “Iraqi people! You are like the inhabitants of a village that was safe and peaceful and you made an abundant livelihood from all sides. But you did not properly appreciate the grace of God, so God **torments** you because of your deeds, and **clothes** you in the garments of hunger and fear”.

Al-Ḥajjāj’s imagines a situation in which God has already tormented the inhabitants of Kufa and imposed hunger and fear on them because they have not properly appreciated God’s grace. The implication is that these residents did not appreciate the kindness of the Iraqi authorities who did good to them, and the residents did not miss a single opportunity to rebel against the authorities. Therefore, al-Ḥajjāj’s knows how to repay them as they deserve.

**4.2 Lexical choices**

Every discourse involves a choice of words. For example, a person who has committed an act of terror can be called a terrorist or a freedom fighter. Each lexical choice indicates the speaker’s overt or covert position. It also affects how the recipients understand and perceive the world (Livnat 2014: 366). The choice of words is related to the connotations that the word evokes and its emotional value; for example, the words “left lying” in the following sentence are charged with an emotional connotation, which affects the way readers perceive the events: “No one was standing next to the small body. It was **left lying** there alone, until the doctors arrived”, (*Maariv*, February 5, 1999). Critical discourse analysis can also reveal such lexical choices as manipulative choices, aimed at making the reader perceive the events in a certain way (Livnat 2014: 366).

Al-Ḥajjāj’s rhetoric of intimidation and humiliation rests on a choice of words that reflect excessive physical violence and humiliation. Al- Ḥajjāj is not interested in conveying hidden messages in his speech; rather, every word in his speech expresses an overt, sharp, and unambiguous position. A significant portion of al-Ḥajjāj’s lexical choices reflect violence perpetrated against animals, with the aim of framing the rebels of Kufa as animals. Such framing gives legitimacy to resorting to violence against them. The following are examples of al-Ḥajjāj’s lexical choices:

1. Heads

The word “heads” as an animal metonymy reflects al-Ḥajjāj’s overt position on the measures he intends to take against the Kufa rebels. This position is clear from the first sentence in al-Ḥajjāj’s speech: “I see heads that have ripened[[7]](#footnote-7) and it is time to pick them”. Al-Ḥajjāj conveys an overt message through a loaded word with particularly humiliating and threatening emotional connotations, thereby influencing how these rebels will relate to the consequences of their actions.

1. Pick them

The phrase “pick them” in the sentence “I see heads that have ripened and it is time to pick them” reflects the urgency in dealing with the rebels of Kufa, as any delay may intensify the power of these rebels. The rebels are likened to ripe fruit, and any delay in picking them will lead to decay and waste. Therefore, excessive violence against the rebels is legitimate. Al-Ḥajjāj relied on this word to sharpen the message: there will zero tolerance and no patience for the rebels, as explained earlier.

1. Spouting blood

The phrase “spouting blood” reflects extraordinary aggressiveness and makes the listener think of animal slaughter, in order to infuse a deterrence into the hearts of the inhabitants: “Long live Allah, as if I were looking at the blood spouting between the turbans and the beards”.

1. Peeling the bark from a branch

The act of peeling off the bark of the branch refers to stripping the skin from the rebels of Kufa and resorting to violence that characterizes the violence perpetrated on animals: “I swear as I live by Allah, that I will peel your skin as they peel off the bark of the branch”.

1. Binding thorny branches and hitting them with a stick

The residents of Kufa are a difficult group, like the branches of thorny sage plants. The shedding of the leaves from the thorny sage branches reflects the straightening out of the inhabitants of Kufa, meaning al-Ḥajjāj will not let go of them and will continue to use brutal violence against them until he straightens them out: “I swear as I live by Allah that I will bind you as you tie the thorny sage branches and beat them with a stick so that the leaves will fall off and the animals can eat from them”.

1. Beating foreign camels

Residents of Kufa with their rebellious behavior against the authorities are like foreign camels that do not belong to the caravan. Just as people use violence against foreign camels, al-Ḥajjāj vows to use such violence against the Kufa rebels. Comparing these rebels to foreign camels gives legitimacy to treating them as animals and normalizes such behavior: “I swear, as I live by Allah, that I will beat you like the plagues of foreign camels that do not belong to the camel caravan”.

**4.3** **Oaths and threatening language**

Throughout al-Ḥajjāj’s speech, one can notice the language of oaths and threats accompanied by verbs in the first person. This language is directed towards the residents of Kufa. The language of oaths and threats is completely at odds with the language of reconciliation and dialogue. Al-Ḥajjāj is familiar with the style of the Kufa rebels and their history, which is filled with attempts to revolt against the authorities. He is convinced that any strategy of inclusion and dialogue will shatter or break down in the face of the rebels of Kufa, so the language of oaths and threats is prevalent throughout this speech and indicates the actions that al-Ḥajjāj intends to carry out against these rebels.

As has been noted, al-Ḥajjāj's speech is full of oaths. This language of oath and threats sheds light on his state of mind at the time of the speech, the degree of excitement that dominated him during the speech, and his determination to dispel the fog and doubts of the residents of Kufa about the policies that al-Ḥajjāj will adopt against them. The examples given here primarily emphasize the language of oaths and threats taken by al-Ḥajjāj and do not need to be repeated.

**4.4 Syntactic-rhetorical repetition**

Gvura and Levi (2016) deal with syntactic-rhetorical repetition in the speeches of then-Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid. They recall the words of many scholars who have dealt with this subject of political speech. Landau (1988: 53) notes that political speech is replete with various kinds of syntactic-rhetorical repetitions. She describes syntactic repetition in repetitive sentences or repetitive elements in various forms. By using parallel syntactic structures, it is possible to bring ideas together effectively and create a special rhetorical style. Syntactic-rhetorical repetition is manifest in the parallel between whole sentences and in the parallel between phrases, combinations of words, and single words. Abadi (1980: 142) calls syntactic repetition ‘the cycle’, noting that it is one of the means of formulating one unit of discourse from beginning to end.

**4.4.1 Repetition**

Repetition of words and use of synonyms establishes and reinforces the message, since a message that is repeated over and over becomes fixed in the mind of the recipient:

1. “Indeed, long live Allah, I will bear the evil with its heavy weight, I will act like it and I will repay it with its reward”.
2. “Long live Allah, the people of Iraq, I see haughty and rebellious looks, and stiff necks, and heads that are ripe and it is time for picking them. I am the one who will decapitate you”.
3. “The war girds its loins, then strengthens your spirit. The war has strengthened you, so gird your loins as well”.
4. “The Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, who is generous and Allah should prolong his days, threw the waste of his arrows (from his arrow holster) before him, and bit the arrows one by one to check their quality, and found me to be the most bitter and powerful arrow, and he sent me to you and threw me at you”.
5. “Long live Allah; I do not say anything that I do not intend to do, and I do not intend to do anything unless I commit to do it, and I evaluate my actions in advance so that I will keep my word”.
6. “Long live Allah; the people of Iraq. I am not one of those people who tests their patience and are energized as it is customary to whip a camel to test its temper and patience. Nor am I one of those who examines their power and determination to wage battles as they feel figs to test their ripeness”.

**4.5 Intertextuality**

 A speaker whose goal is to persuade may rely on elements from literature, religion, and folklore, such as poems, proverbs, fables, holy texts, and myths that are accepted in the society and culture. These elements are passed down from generation to generation. According to Aristotle, they may be divided into two categories (Spiegel 1994: 73):

1. Things that are taken for granted, self-evident, and do not need to be proven true, such as laws, contracts, and holy texts. These are called arguments outside the art of rhetoric.
2. Cognitive or emotional arguments aimed at proving things that are not obvious, such as proverbs, fables, and myths.

In Arab rhetoric, these means of persuasion are divided into these two categories (Darshan 2000: 109):

1. Quoted verses from the Koran or Hadith
2. Quotes from poems, prose, proverbs

According to Al-Hamui, the integrated quote maintains the structure, the order of its words, and its original meaning as interpreted in the Qur'an, but it need not retain the exact Qur'anic pattern. Thus, it can add or omit a word or letter; change the order of the words in the sentence, etc. However, even a Qur'anic quote may have its original meaning altered, and the author may add another lesson that he seeks to convey to the listener or reader. An author who quotes verses relies on the reader’s familiarity with the cultural tradition from which he is quoting. If the reader is not familiar with the cultural tradition, he cannot fully understand it, and will feel a certain degree of alienation. As is well known, in Arab culture, the Qur'an is a model for the Arabic language. Its language and style are attributed to God and offer the opportunity to emulate him. The verses are considered to be divine truth, sanctified with the seal of Allah, and endowed with power of truths that do not need proof. Therefore, one can understand the speaker's attempt to harness the verses to his needs and exploit their influence on his target audience (Darshan 2000: 110).

When quoting from these historic sources, the quoted text transports the reader into the ancient historical situation. The reader must make a comparison with the original text that is referred to, which enriches and deepens the contemporary text.

According to Landau, there are various reasons for quoting from external sources, such as scriptures, within a speech (Landau 1993: 50–51; Landau 1988: 182–185):

1. Reinforcement of the speaker's statements: proof from the sources to justify his opinion or action; or refuting an opponent's words or condemning the opponent for an act related to the quote.
2. Stylish adornment alone: beautification with flowery phrases. These are often common quotations in the speaker's language, which he embellishes his words with consciously or unconsciously. They are devoid of the rhetorical value of persuasion.
3. Manipulation: the speaker removes the verse from its original context through a symbolic interpretation to adapt it to the expression of new ideas on topical issues. For example, Darshan (2000: 110) cites Bengio’s remarks illustrating the manipulative use of quotes from outside sources. Bengio (1956: 246) claims that Saddam Hussein quoted verses from the ‘al-Anfal’ tradition[[8]](#footnote-8) to justify the killing of Kurds with chemical weapons in a campaign known as the ‘al-Anfal’.
4. Architectural use: a verse builds an idea. Each new idea in a speech is advanced through a new verse or, another structure is built in which several verses are brought together into one idea.

**4.5.1 Qur’anic quotes**

23. “Iraqi people! You are the inhabitants of a village that was safe and peaceful and you made an abundant livelihood from all sides. But you did not properly appreciate the grace of God, so God torments you because of your deeds, and clothes you in the garments of hunger and fear” (*Surah An-Nahl*, verse 112).

Al-Ḥajjāj quotes from the Qur'an to describe the residents who did not appreciate the grace of God, and upon whom God therefore imposed fear and hunger. By comparing residents of Kufa to villagers who did not appreciate God’s grace, al-Ḥajjāj normalizes the use of excessive force against them and makes it a most legitimate behavior, as there is a Qur’anic reference that clarifies how to treat people who do not appreciate the grace of their superiors.

**4.5.2 Quotes from poetry**

“I am a well-known and famous person, an experienced, daring, and brave adventurer who walks on paths winding up the mountains. When I wear the turban, you will know who I am”.[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. “The time has come to drive them hard; then, stubborn Ziam[[10]](#footnote-10) surrounded her tonight with a strong driver, as fast as a fire that consumes the trees.

I am not a herder of camels or sheep, nor a butcher preoccupied with his work”.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**5. Conclusions**

Al-Ḥajjāj endeavors to normalize the violence against the Kufa rebels and give it legitimacy; for example, he likens the inhabitants of Kufa to animals, i.e., he frames them as animals, and therefore beheading and slaughtering them is normal, as slaughtering animals is perceived as normal behavior. Al-Ḥajjāj quotes from the Qur'an describing villagers upon whom God imposed fear and hunger, as they did not appreciate the grace of God. By comparing the residents of Kufa to the villagers who did not appreciate God’s grace, al- Ḥajjāj normalizes the use of excessive force against them and makes it a legitimate act, as there is a Qur’anic reference that clarifies how to treat people who do not appreciate the grace of their superiors.

Al-Ḥajjāj’s choice of metaphors is influenced by the desert environment inhabited by Iraqi people, where they lived mainly from agriculture and animal husbandry. Most of the metaphors in the speech drawn on from this geographical environment. In these metaphors he refers, among other things, to the mountains and the types of trees used to make arrows, because the people of Iraq are familiar with these. These metaphors are manipulative in that they rely on the rhetoric of intimidation, with the aim of influencing the behavior of the rebels of Kufa, with emotionally-laden connotations aimed at changing their behavior and their urge to constantly rebel against the authorities.

Al- Ḥajjāj’s rhetoric of intimidation and humiliation rests on a choice of words reflecting excessive physical violence and shame. Al-Ḥajjāj is not interested in conveying hidden messages in his speech. Every word reflects an overt, sharp and unambiguous position. A significant portion of his lexical choices reflect violence perpetrated against animals, with the aim of framing the rebels of Kufa as animals, giving legitimacy to resort to the violence against them. The linguistic devices that reflect the rhetoric of deterrence and humiliation in al- Ḥajjāj's speech reflect words of direct action, in which the content of the expression directly reflects his intention. The metaphors used in this speech also reflect direct actions; there is a low degree of subtlety in them, and one can easily discern their purpose and the intention behind them.

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1. See, for example, Koller (2012: 19–38), where she presents a working model for analyzing collective identity in discourse, which integrates a socio-cognitive approach as a major strand in CDA. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See also: Shakkour & Mari, 2020: 299-331; Shakkour & Qasim, 2021: 111-126 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See further in Lakoff (1991: 25–32). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This metaphor appeared in *The Independent* (UK) in January 1999. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Rebellion against the authorities is reflected in the spread of lies and gossip, corruption, rejection of the authority of the government, a strong desire to quarrel among the residents themselves, and between the residents and the authorities, and more. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The meaning of the Arabic verb جلا (*galā*) is ‘to reveal’. This verb is used mainly in the context of the dawn that reveals the light of day and removes the darkness. Al-Ḥajjāj calls himself the son of the *galā*, in order to threaten the residents of Kufa and discourage them from forcing al-Ḥajjāj to use his special and extraordinary ability to use plots, discover evil intentions in people and treat them assertively and without delay.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The word “head” as a dual connotation of the head of a fruit plant and the head of an animal. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Sura of the Qur’an. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This stanza of poetry is from the famous poet Suhaim al-Riyahi. Al-Ḥajjāj emphasizes that he is an adventurous man who does not shy away from walking up winding roads high in the mountains. The intention is that he did not shy away from dealing with complex problems and tasks, so the caliph sent him to deal with the residents of Kufa who are considered a hard group. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The name of Al-Ḥajjāj’s mare or female camel. Al- Ḥajjāj coaxes his horse / camel and urges her to prepare for war because this is the time of war. Al-Ḥajjāj describes himself as a strong and fast rider, similar in strength and speed to a fire that consumes the trees. Al-Ḥajjāj emphasizes that he is not a simple shepherd or a butcher preoccupied with his work, but a shrewd, tough and experienced leader who will take care of the rebels of Kufa and straighten them out. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This is a stanza of poetry from the poet Rowayshid al ‘Anbary. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)