The available discussions on the history of Arabo-Islamic philological studies propose two fundamental suggestions, namely, that the studies emerged in the period immediately following the proclamation of Islam in Arabia in the sixth century CE, and that foreign elements, specifically Hellenic and, less prominently, Indian models, may have supplied Arabic philological studies with an analytical framework.

The present study intends to show that the history of Arabic grammar, the core and kernel of Arabic philology, is of an earlier date than has hitherto being argued, and that the so-called foreign imprints on Arabic grammar may not, after all, be more than intellectual speculations of questionable validity.

In one of the literary sessions at the ‘Ukaz fair, an annual gathering of tribes from various parts of Arabia in the pre-Islamic period,1 al-Nabighah al-Dhubyanî (d. ca. 18 B.H./C E 604) is reported to have served as a judge, to whom contesting poets from different tribes read their compositions for his assessment. Among the poets was Hassan ibn Thabit (d. 64/674), whose composition provoked a critical response in purely grammatical terms. Al-Nabighah questioned him over the use of the plural form indicative of a small number ‘jam‘ al-‘qillah, rather than the form indicative of a large number jam‘ al-kathrah in a theme such as fakhr (boast), in which ludicrous hyperbole was presumably recognised as an effective artistic device.2

If this anecdote is accepted as a factual representation of a historical event, it would be appropriate to argue that the evolution of Arabic grammar could be traced to about half a century earlier than is hitherto proposed in existing discussions on the subject. That the incident to which the anecdote relates occurred in a purely literary setting strongly suggests that artistic considerations may have anticipated other factors commonly associated with the evolution of Arabic grammar. This incident, though isolated, is nevertheless significant. However, its implications cannot be extended too far, given the absence of any similar recorded situations in pre-Islamic literary tradition.
from which stronger inferences could be drawn. These we must look for in
the period following the proclamation of Islam.

Following the influx of people of different nationalities into Islam
and the establishment of new settlements outside Arabia, there arose the
need to safeguard Arabic language from corruption. According to Ibn Sal-
lâm al-Jumâhi (d. 230/845), poor mastery of the language was exhibited in
the new settlements even by the faithful of pure Arab descent, as a result
of the inevitable interaction between the new non-Arab converts and their
Arab conquerors. The potential harmful effect of such a development on
the language of the faith caused concern and promoted the need for a formal
delineation of some of the basic grammatical categories of the accepted
idiom, to help consolidate the full integration of new converts.

We may add in parentheses that the problem of incorrect usage was
not unknown even in the early days of Islam, but not on such a wide scale.
For, instance, the Prophet of Islam is reported to have asked his Companions
to provide guidance to a man who made a grammatical mistake in his speech.
Similarly, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (d. 23/644) ordered a state secretary to be
flogged and his stipend stopped, for committing what was viewed as a crass
grammatical error in official correspondence. Nevertheless, for a preponder-
ant occurrence of ungrammatical usage, we have to look in the period of
expansion of the Islamic empire.

According to Abû'l-Ṭayyib al-Lughawi (d. 351/962), the strongest
manifestation of fahn (solecism) was the wrong use of i'râb, that is, desinen-
tial vowels. The truth of this suggestion is supported by the large number
of reports illustrating this anomaly, the variety in their settings and dramatis
personae notwithstanding. It is not the intention, however, to proffer any
of these reports as decisive evidence for the events leading to the first attempt
to formulate the categories of Arabic grammar. Nevertheless, whether in
the case of Abû'l-Aswad's daughter using a wrong vowel on fi'il ta'ajjub
(verb of wonder), or of someone misreading the Qur'ân, or even that of
the unnamed orphan reporting his father's death in an ungrammatical sen-
tence, it is Abû 'l-Aswad al-Du'âli (d. 69/689) who is the central figure
around whom all such stories are woven and to whom the precursory role
in the evolution of Arabic grammar is attributed, with due acknowledgement
of the advisory role of ‘Ali Ibn Abî Ṭâlib (d. 40/661), the fourth Caliph of
Islam. The variety of these reports does not greatly weigh against their
being seen as the impulse that led to the emergence of Arabic grammar,
nor does it reduce them to mere legende, a combination of such diverse,
but by no means contradictory, situations could well have supplied the moti-
vation for the first steps towards introducing some fundamental categories
into philological speculation.
But whatever pioneering role is attributed to Ḥabīb al-Aswad, it cannot be reasonably expected to go beyond the level of crude generalizations, lacking in every analytical dimension, although some medieval authorities like Ibn al-Anbārī (d. 577/1181) would have us believe that Ḥabīb al-Aswad did establish a technical categorization of a sort, at the instance of ‘Alī, but to suggest that this kind of effort took place at such an early period is, to say the least, specious.

In fact, a more systematic approach to the formal delineation of grammatical categories, using the materials provided by the Qurʿān and the pre-Islamic literary corpus (both already used as sources for other scholarly pursuits), had to await for a more auspicious time, to be precise, that of the generation that followed the disciples of Ḥabīb al-Aswad, as we intend to show later.

It has already been said that Ḥabīb al-Aswad’s contribution could not be reasonably expected to be more than the establishment of broad guidelines, given that Arabic grammar emerged as a reaction to a specific situation. However, these guidelines were to be developed by his disciples, notable among whom were Naṣr ibn ‘Āṣim (d. 89/708), ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Hurmuz (d. 117/734), Yahyā ibn Yaʿmar (d. 129/749), ‘Anbasat al-Fīl, (d. 132/752), and Maymūn al-Aqrān (d. 135/755). It is worth noting that Ḥabīb al-Aswad had other disciples, too (though they are rarely noticed in existing studies), who played a significant role in developing the general principles adumbrated by him. The efforts of these disciples have been undervalued or ignored either because their renown derived from disciplines other than grammar, or because of their involvement in non-intellectual pursuits, which overshadowed their activities in philological speculation. For example, Qatādah ibn Diʿāmah al-Sadūsī (d. 117/734), though a philologist, achieved fame on account of his excellence in ʿilm al-ansāb (genealogical studies) and fiqh (jurisprudence). And in the case of Abū’l Ḥarb’s son, Ḥabīb al-Ḥarb ‘Aṭāʾ, though he too played a remarkable role in expanding the scope of the broad outlines created by his father, his political function as a margrave under al-Hajjāj seems to have worked against the recognition of his intellectual activities.

Coming now to the specific developments introduced after Abū’l-Aswad, we may briefly state that Naṣr ibn ‘Āṣim merely completed the task of standardizing the orthography of the Qurʿān begun by his teacher. It may be asked whether this had anything to do with grammar. The fact is that until a much later stage, no distinction was made between pure philological speculation and scriptural studies, both were covered by the term qirāʿat (reading traditions), it being assumed that the primary motivation for scholarly efforts in philological studies was the need to preserve the prestige of
the Qurʾān by ensuring its proper recitation. This view continued to hold sway for a long time, even after the movement towards the technical classification of aspects of grammar began to emerge, albeit in a not wholly methodical fashion. The following report illustrates the point.

At one time, al-Ḥajjāj (d. 957/14) sought to know whether he ever committed any grammatical error while reading from the pulpit. Ibn Yaʿmar observed that the governor often misread a Qurʾānic verse in such a way that the predicate, which should have been in the naṣb (accusative), was recited in the rafʿ (nominative). The use of the terms rafʿ and naṣb, probably for the first time, illustrates the beginnings of a movement towards describing specific categories in purely technical terms. It was not, however, effectively sustained during this period, and had not crystallised into a coherent model of characterization from which similar categories could be established. This may be due to the fact that Arabic grammar had yet to be severed from the yoke of qirṭāṭ. It was not until the following generation that Arabic grammar emerged as an independent field of study, thus creating a distinctive class of specialists in either nahw, or qirṭāṭ, in contradistinction to the existing tradition in which both disciplines were not rarely represented in one person.

The distinctive line of demarcation between purely grammatical aspects and studies relating to the reading of the Qurʾān started to emerge around the beginning of the second/eighth century, and its manifestation was first reflected by the generation of ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Ishāq (d. 129/746) and Abū ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿAllā (d. 154/771). These two scholars represented the trend which saw qirṭāṭ and nahw evolving into independent but not unrelated fields of study, for both still derived the Shawkālīd (loci probantes) used in analysing their various aspects from the same sources, that is, the Qurʾān and the classical literature.

A serious conflict was inevitable, however, as some Qurʾānic usages were seemingly at variance with the familiar idiom (qiyāṣ al-ʿArabiyyah). Whereas the scholar of qirṭāṭ would interpret these unfamiliar usages as authentic idioms upon which analogous usages could be created, the grammarian felt otherwise, arguing that any representation of the living idiom, be it scriptural or literary, should be explicable in terms of empirical rules, derivable from the routine use of the language. The controversy worked in favour of the nascent autonomy of Arabic grammar which could now develop its own categories and aspects in a more coherent fashion, independent of Qurʾānic studies, and it is in this sense that Ibn Abī Ishāq is regarded as the first to liberate Arabic grammar through the use of analytical standards.

The new spirit is best illustrated by many of the highly entertaining but equally informative reports involving poets and philologists of the time.
Once present at the court of Biliil ibn Abi Burdah (d. 1267/444), the governor-judge of Basrah, were the poet-laureate al-Farazdaq, ‘Anbasah, Ibn Abi Ishâq, and Abû ‘Amr ibn al-‘Alâ’, among other courtiers. In the qasîdah, read to the governor by al-Farazdaq, occurred the following line:

\[
\text{tirikâ nujûm al-layl wa 'l-shams āyyatun ziḥâm banât al-Ḥârith ibn 'Ubâd}
\]

‘It makes you see the evening stars in daylight.

Clustering of the daughters of Ḥârith, the son of ‘Ubâd.’

‘Anbasah is reported to have declared as ungrammatical, the use of the feminine verb, \text{turika}, with the masculine noun, \text{ziḥâm}. Rejecting ‘Anbasah’s observation, Ibn Abî Ishâq argued that the word \text{ziḥâm} could, in fact, function either as a verbal noun, \text{masdâf}, which would thus require a verb that agrees with it in gender, or as a plural form of the feminine noun \text{zahmat}, which would reasonably make the use of a feminine verb grammatical; and in the latter sense, al-Farazdaq’s usage would be appropriate.\textsuperscript{23}

One significant point can be deduced from the foregoing anecdote: the new generation of philologists were no longer content with the mere application of formal categories in their description of various syntactic functions, a practice which had held sway during the previous generation. Rather, they were inclined to explore tenaciously all the possible variables which could be used as the standards for the formalization of rules that would ultimately achieve catholic application. It may also be remarked that the principle of \text{ta’wil} (interpretation): the hallmark of Qur’ânic exegesis, now began to be employed in explaining usages that exhibited grammatical ambiguity, as was illustrated in the preceding paragraph.

Furthermore, the scope of scholarly speculation relating to Arabic grammar started to crystallize into a coherent model of discourse through the use of familiar illustrations and logical extrapolations. Also, a greater flexibility was demonstrated by this generation of grammarians in the choice of materials for theoretical abstraction, and the principle of \text{ittisâ’ al-lughah} (elasticity of the language), which recognizes transdialectal variations, was placed in a wider context, although not at the expense of the fundamental rules to which all manifestations of the living idiom should conform.

It must be remarked, however, that non-scientific criteria began to creep into the standards employed by this generation of grammarians. Abû ‘Amr ibn al-‘Alâ’, who often demonstrated his philo-Arab sentiments, regularly attempted to rationalize usages of questionable accuracy, especially when such were employed by artists of pure Arab tongue. For example, when Ibn Abî Ishâq found fault with al-Farazdaq over a particular expression,
Abū 'Amr was quick to uphold its acceptability, though conceding that the usage was unique in its own right and should not be taken as a precedent. On the other hand, however, grammarians of non-Arab stock like Ibn Abī Ishāq and 'Isā ibn 'Umar (d. 149/766) were known to be always ready to illustrate ungrammatical usages from the works of purely Arab authorship, presumably to demonstrate that native speakers were, after all, not infallible. For instance, Ibn 'Umar is reported to have been very critical of al-Nābighah al-Dhubyānī over a particular usage, although the usage in question was in fact acceptable.

Another example of a non-scientific criterion employed by the grammarians of this period is seen in the judgement of Abū 'Amr in favour of the governor Bilāl ibn Abī Burdah with whom Ibn Abī Ishāq had disagreed over the reading of a Qur'ānic verse. But once outside the court, Abū 'Amr confessed to Ibn Abī Ishāq that the governor was in fact wrong, except that it would have been unwise of him to judge otherwise in the governor's court.

The foregoing examples illustrate how did extraneous factors, namely, ethnic and political sentiments, infiltrate the emerging formal classification of grammatical aspects and categories. Nevertheless, these factors did not appreciably affect the operation of analytical tools and formal abstractions, since the circumstances surrounding the controversial or unpopular models, which the grammarian might wish to formalize, were too well known, thus making the exclusion of such models from the mainstream of formal scientific deductions more defensible.

Although his legendary ingenuity is recognised in the scholarly tradition, the claim that al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad (d. 175/791) was the real founder of Arabic grammar can hardly be accepted, in the light of the developments discussed above. His analyses and deductions, though revolutionary and extraordinarily articulate, have their roots in the existing model of discourse which had been developed, albeit in a loose analytical pattern, during the periods that preceded him. To Naṣr ibn 'Āṣim, for example, is attributed a work on 'arabiyyah, the protonomenclature for Arabic grammar, while Ibn Abī Ishāq is credited with Kitāb al-hamz, which is equally a pioneering work on an aspect of Arabic grammar. Also, Abu Ja'far al-Ru'āsī, a contemporary of al-Khalīl and the patriarch of the Kufah school of grammar is also credited with a work entitled al-Fāyṣal, which is described by Tha'lab (d. 291/903) as a popular work among the Kufans. It has also been suggested, even if unproven, that the work was in fact known to al-Khalīl himself. A work on singulars and plurals, al-fam' wa'l-ıfrād is another title attributed to al-Ru'āsī. In other words, it is reasonable to argue that some documentary material of a sort on Arabic grammar was in fact available at the time of al-Khalīl.
Nevertheless, if the materials transmitted by Sibawayh (d. 188/804) in his monumental and so far the earliest, available work on Arabic grammar are anything to go by, then, al-Khalîl would undeniably qualify to be regarded as the creative mind that injected the pattern of grammatical analysis with a sustained logical framework in a fashion hitherto unknown. But if the ascription of a two-verse piece to al-Khalîl is correct, there may be grounds for suggesting that he could have been inspired by al-Jâmî' and al-Ikmâl, both works of grammar by his teacher Ibn ‘Umar.34 This notwithstanding, he is to be credited with providing Arabic grammar with a scientific approach, as is evidenced by the materials related on his authority by Sibawayh.

Broadly speaking, we can identify three distinct levels at which the contribution of al-Khalîl to Arabic grammar is reflected.

(i) A more extensive and systematic use of analytical deduction (ta‘lîl) not only for single words, as was hitherto the case, but also for complete sentences.35

(ii) Better use of extrapolations and analogy, with copious illustrations from routine speech and creative models.36

(iii) The use of ta‘wil in interpreting simple and complex lexical items as well as in explaining the etiology of such materials.37

In a nutshell, the contribution of al-Khalîl, as reflected in Sibawayh, is the remarkable culmination of efforts which began some four generations earlier. That he was an Arab while Sibawayh was a Persian did not in any way make Arabic grammar vulnerable to infection by Persian models, as Brãunlich would like to suggest.38 A similar suggestion which one may wish to discount, there being no concrete evidence to warrant its acceptance, is that which argues that Arabic grammar was exposed to foreign models, and Hellenic models specifically, which it was able to utilise through the intermediary of Syriac.39 Although the Arabic grammarian cannot be said to be unaware of Greek intellectual thought, especially after the translation movement that reached its climax in the ‘Abbâsid period, the fact is that Arabic grammar as we now have it, exhibits no obvious relationship in terms of categories and models of discourse with any foreign model, Greek in particular. Moreover, if we take the experience of al-Khalîl as a case study, any suggestion of foreign elements influencing Arabic grammar from an early stage becomes, to say the least, untenable. For example, it took him not less than a full month to understand the import of a letter said to have been written to him in Greek40, which makes it an unlikely possibility that he could have ventured into a technical area such as Greek grammar, the translation of whose topics was not yet available, and even when it might have been available at a later date, the unfamiliar pattern of analysis and deduction precluded any interest on the part of native grammarian, for whose consumption the translation was not meant in the first place. In other
words, Arabic grammar can be said to be a genuinely authochtonous discipline which developed out of religious and linguistic necessities.

In the foregoing, I have tried to show that the evolution of Arabic grammar has some root in the pre-Islamic tradition, although it was only after Islam that it developed in a more logical fashion. Also, the fact that non-Arab thinkers like the Persians and Armenians contributed to its efflorescence cannot be denied, but it is doubtless a generous assessment to propose that they were the creative minds who, after embracing the Islamic faith, felt a strong need to read Arabic correctly and therefore made the pioneering attempt in this study. The facts, supported by internal and circumstantial evidence, show Abū l-Aswād al-Du‘ālī to be the proto-grammatician, and al-Khaṭīb ibn ʿAḥmad the terminus a quo, both being of pure Arab descent. That there is no evidence of a foreign imprint in the substance and classification of Arabic grammatical categories and aspects is another point that has been argued. If there are identical categorizations between Arabic and Greek models, or any other classical tradition for that matter, this can not be interpreted as evidence of influence, but rather, of sheer coincidence (waqʿ al-ḥāfir ʿalā l-ḥāfir).

Also, if Arabic grammar owes a debt to any intellectual enterprise at all in terms of classes and pattern of discourse, this must be sought in Qurʾān-oriented studies from which it emerged in the first place.

NOTES AND REFERENCES


The argument here is that the C.F. al-Anb-., that the Ibn Ibn Al-MarrobSnt. He said: Iba...
not be interpreted as analogy and cause in this particular context; what they signify is the use of available standards in an analytical fashion. Cf. Nabia Abbot, Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri III (Chicago, 1972), pp. 25 ff.


26. For example, see, al-Marzubânî, al-Muwashshah, p. 50; Ibn Sallâm, Fuhûl al-Shu'ârâ' pp. 15-16; al-Zubaydy, Ṭabaqat, pp. 40-41. The verse criticised is: Fabîtu ka annî sâwarhi d'allatun, Min al-rauqsh fi anyâdah 'l-summ nãqî'.


27. Abû Muslim, "Majâlis Abî Muslim", Dâr al-kutub Cairo, MS 77 Addâb SH, fols. 132-133. Cf. 'Abd al-Rahmân ibn Ishâq al-Zajjâj, Majâlis al-Ulama', ed. 'Abd al-Salâm Muhammad Hûrûn (Cairo, 1962), pp. 13 ff. Abû 'Amr may have taken due heed of the experience of Ibn Ya'mar, who was exiled to Khurâsân for daring to point out the mistake of al-Hajjâj, the awe-inspiring governor of 'Irâq. See, above, note 20.


29. For example, see, Brockelmann, Geschichte, Supplementband I, 159.


31. See, Yâqût, Ishrâd, VI, 480; Jâlîl al-Dîn al-Suyûtî, Bughyat al-wu'ât (Cairo, 1908), p. 33.


36. Ibid., II, 42.

37. Ibid., I, 241.


OBITUARY

MUHAMMAD NAEEM

Professor Mazharuddin Siddiqi (1914-1991)

Professor Mazharuddin Siddiqi died on September 22, 1991.

He was born in November 1914 at Fatehpur in district Barabanki, U.P., India. He did his B.A. in 1935 from Madras University. Later he joined the services of Hyderabad State and was working as Assistant Secretary in the political secretariat at the time of leaving for Pakistan in 1949.

He was appointed a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore in 1950. He went to Canada and did his M.A. from McGill University in 1953 (the thesis, "Image of the West in Iqbal" has been published by Bazm-i Iqbal Lahore). He also attended Harvard International Seminar, and Islamic Colloquium at Princeton in the same year. The Institute of Islamic Culture published seven of his books—Women in Islam, Development of Islamic State and Society, Islam and Theocracy, Islam aur Madhâhib-i 'Ālam (Islam and World Religions), Islâm Kā Naẓari'ah-i Ta’rikh (Islamic Concept of History), Islâm Kā Ma’âshī Naẓari'ah (Economic Theory of Islam), and Islâm Kā Naẓari'ah-i Akhlâq (Ethical Theory of Islam).

In 1956, he joined Sind University as Reader and Chairman of the Department of Muslim History. He joined Islamic Research Institute at Karachi as Reader in 1960, was made a Professor in 1975 and left the Institute (Islamabad) in 1984.

During his stay at the Institute, he wrote several research articles and books. The Institute published three of his books: The Quranic Concept of History (65), Concept of Muslim Culture in Iqbal (70), Modern Reformist Thought in the Muslim World (82), and a translation of Kemal Faruqi’s book Ijma and the Gate of Ijtihad (Ijmā‘ aur Bāb-i Ijtihād) (65).

He took over as the Editor of Islamic Studies in 1979 and near the end of his stay, was made Chief Editor.
He continued to write after leaving the Institute, one of his last books is *Sufism* (Karachi, Islamic Research Academy).

His other books include *Marxism or Islam*, *Din-i-Fiṭrat* (The Natural Religion), and *Islām main Ḥaythiyyat-i Niswān* (Status of Women in Islam).

May his soul rest in eternal peace!