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THE CRITICS ON THE HISTORY OF ARABIC GRAMMAR¹

*Solehah Yaacob*²

Abstract

This study aims to critically examine Ignaz Goldziher's allegations on the beginnings of Arabic linguistics. According to him, the Arabic short vowel symbols did not originate in the Arab world but were adopted from the Levant. The same he assumed in regard to the three different parts of speech, namely name (ism), verb (fi'il), and particle (harf), which allegedly presupposed the knowledge of Aristotle's De Interpretations falsely attributed to 'Ali (Karramallahu wajhah)³. Goldziher explained this connection with the scholastic disputes occurring between the different theological schools in the first century AH, with special reference to the dogmatic differences between the Murji'ah and the Qadariyyah sects. Theological debates on various doctrines were held at the same time by Eastern Christians based on the teachings of John of Damascus. In the eyes of Goldziher, these debates – based on the assumption that since they occurred in the same century – they had to be related, and furthermore, St. John of Damascus must have borrowed his ideas from Aristotle. Since no Arabic sources speak of this connection, he raises his own suspicions, namely that Muslim sources refused to admit the borrowing of ideas from the Christians. This study serves the purpose of investigating his allegations in regard to the origin of Arabic grammar and syntax and of deciding the extent of his scholarly bias. The researcher adopts a theoretical and analytical approach based on linguistic studies. In order to arrive at a balanced

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² niknajah@iiium.edu.my

³ Ignaz Goldziher, *History of Grammar Among the Arabs*, Volume 73, (The John Benjamin Publishing Company: Netherlands, 1994), 8.

judgment with regard to this conflict, the linguistic corpus, as well as the historical background of transmission is being analyzed.

Introduction

In 1868, Ignaz Goldziher obtained a grant from Eotvos Baron Jozthe, the Hungarian minister of Education and Culture for the purpose of analyzing Arabic manuscripts. He obtained his doctorate in Leipzig in 1870, followed by intense studies on his own which allowed him to attain a thorough knowledge of Arabic manuscripts. He earned a reputation of being the most learned expert in the field of Arabic sources⁴. Being a student of the renowned orientalist H.L. Fleischer⁵, Goldziher was drawn to the study of Arabic linguistics. As he himself recollected: ‘I was lured more by the historical than the factual (positivist) side’⁶. This explicit interest of his in the historical aspect of literature remained one of the characteristics of his scholarly enquiry throughout his life. One of the prime topics of his research focused on investigating the origins of Arabic grammar. He published research on a number of important Arabic manuscripts in this field, such as *Al-Muzhīr* by as-Suyūṭī, *Al-’alfāz* by Ibn as-Sikkīt, *Al-Inṣāf Fī Masā’ila al-Khilāf* etc⁷. Goldziher was one of the most influential Orientalists of his time, and his views were authoritative in the field. A common phenomenon of Orientalism is that everything in Muslim science, religion and culture had to have its source in Western civilization and was not original or valid in its own right. Goldziher thus asserted in this manner that a critical examination of the works of Abū Aswād ad-Du’alī (d. 688 CE) revealed the latter’s role as the founder of Arabic grammar, and not – as Muslim tradition claimed – ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib (*karrama ‘lahuwajhah*) who gave the first impulse to grammar as a science. Goldziher did not stop there but further asserted that the

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Solehah Yaacob, ‘Refuting the alleged transmission of Greek thinking concepts into Arabic grammar’, *Journal of Islam in Asia*, No.1, June 2011, Intl. Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur.

⁶ Goldziher, *History of Grammar Among the Arabs*, Volume 73, 45.

⁷ Ibid. 1994, xiii-xiv

differentiation of the three parts of speech did not (could not?) originate in the Hijāz⁸. Assuming that the Arab world was incapable of actual intellectual creativity and originality, he concluded that the origin of Arabic grammar had to have come from outside. The rules of Arabic grammar – presumably also those documented in the Holy Qur'an – had to have received help from external influences⁹.

The '*e silentio*' theory

The Orientalist Renan postulated that the fully preserved original text of the Qurān constituted the focal point and basis of all subsequent study of the rules of the correct Arabic grammar and syntax. It was the Arabic Qurān which inspired the works of the first Arab grammarians. According to Renan, neither the use of grammatical terms nor the formulated rules show even the slightest trace of a foreign influence. He stated 'finally, concerning all the other sciences, the Arabs themselves overtly confess what they owe of them to the Greeks whereby they are convinced that their grammar is a privilege kept by God for them and one of the surest signs of the superiority they consider to be theirs over other nation'¹⁰.

Golziher criticized Renan's conclusions and argued:

The question is not whether grammar a particular grammatical system, had been taken over, or not the Arabs arrived at their basic linguistic concepts on the grounds of which each nation contemplates the character of its language, analyses the parts of sentences and words and derives the correct usage from the data in form of rules in the absence of any foreign influence or in short are there any factors in the awakening of a grammatical awareness among the Arabs that do not originate in the life of the Arab people and their mind?¹¹

What Golziher was saying is that Arabic grammar had been influenced not only by Greek grammar, but also by Greek thinking.

⁸ Ibid. 1994, 3.

⁹ Ibid. 1994, 4.

¹⁰ Ignaz Golziher, *History of Arabic Grammar*, 5.

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

The Arabs had allegedly adopted Greek terms of linguistic concepts, the character of language, analysis of the parts of sentence, and grammatical rules from the Greek. He assumed that these linguistic concepts were not directly adopted from the Greeks, but via Syraic, which was spoken in the Levant. Goldziher referred to his colleague Noldēke, who had already linked Arabic with Syraic¹². The usage of Arabic short vowels had been introduced by AbūAswād ad-Duali:

إِذَا رَأَيْتَنِي قَدْ فَتَحْتُ فَمِّي بِالْحَرْفِ فَأَنْقُطْ نُقْطَةً فَوْقَهُ عَلَى أَعْلَاهُ، فَإِنْ
صَمَّمْتُ فَمِّي فَأَنْقُطْ نُقْطَةً بَيْنَ يَدَيْ الْحَرْفِ، وَإِنْ كَسَّرْتُ فَاجْعَلِ
النُّقْطَةَ تَحْتِ، فَإِنْ أَتْبَعْتُ شَيْئًا مِنْ ذَلِكَ عَنْهُ فَاجْعَلِ مَكَانَ النُّقْطَةِ
نُقْطَتَيْنِ " ¹³ .

(If you saw me that I opened my mouth with a letter, then put a full stop symbol on the top of it. If I closed my mouth, there was a full stop symbol between the letter. If I run-down, kindly make the full stop symbol below. If I followed something after, the articulation letters shared then kindly make double full stop symbol)

If we accept Goldziher's views, we still need to explain the means of linguistic transmission between Baṣra¹⁴ and the Levant. There is no doubt that the Christian world and the Muslim world met in Damascus, where John of Damascus had taught. However, Orientalists assumed the existence of a silent connection between the Christian and the Muslim world in the form of a direct (and strangely one-sided) transmission of knowledge from the West to the East. Historical sources do not suggest a relationship or exchange between 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib (*karrama 'llahuwajjah*) and John of Damascus. However, Goldziher did, solely based on the fact that Islam did not prohibit such an exchange in matters other than faith, as stated in the Qur'an:

¹² Ibid., 7.

¹³ Abu Tayṭb al-Lughawī (d.351h), *Al-Marātib al-Nahwiyyah*, ed. Muhammad Abū al-Faql Ibrahim, (Cairo: Maktabah Nahḍah, 1955), 35.

¹⁴ The place where Abu Aswād became hakim or judge.

(قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ، لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ، وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ، وَلَا
 أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ، وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ، لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ)¹⁵

“O disbelievers in Allah, I worship not that which you worship, Nor will you worship that which I worship, And I shall not worship that which you are worshipping, Nor will you worship that which I worship, To you be your religion, and to me my religion”.

Orientalist claims went so far as to suggest an external influence to the text of the Qurān itself. Qur’anic revelation influenced Muslim ideas and concepts in history, science, literature and language, and continues to do so until today. The verses¹⁶

(أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا
 كَثِيرًا)

Do they not then consider the Qur'an carefully? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much contradictions.

are considered timeless statements as valid today as they were valid at the time of their revelation, over 1400 years ago. As to any external influence, the concept of *qiyās* was already practiced in the first century AH, when most Qurān readers used reason to derive new legal judgments. Abū Ishāq al-Haḍrāmī asked Farazdaq to follow the analogical system:

مُسْتَقْبَلِينَ شِمَالِ الشَّامِ - تَضْرِبُنَا * بِحَاصِبِ كَنْدِيفِ الْفُطْنِ مَنْشُورِ
 عَلَيَّ عَمَائِمِنَا يُلْقَى وَأَرْحَلِنَا * عَلَيَّ زَاحِفِ تُرْجِي، مَخْطَرَارِ¹⁷

(The future of North Sham - hit us * with cotton cane crumbles)

¹⁵ Surat Al-Kāfirūn: 1-6.
¹⁶ Surat An-Nissā’:82.
¹⁷ As-Sīrāfī (d.368h), *Al-Akhhbār an-Nahwīyīna al-Basriyīna*, ed. Muhammad Ibrāhīm al-Bana, (Cairo: Dār al-‘Itīṣām, 1985), 44.

(On our turbans we cast and departed * on the creeping camel)

Here, he corrected the final vocalization based on the qiyās already known amongst Arabists. The word ‘مُجَاهِرٌ’ is considered normative style because it belongs to the sentence of *المستأنفة*.¹⁸

In this case, not only Renan supported the originality of Arabic grammar and its principles, Noam Chomsky, a famous linguistic theoretician, attests that each language has its own unique history and development. The claim that a language was based directly upon another should be reexamined, because all separate human intelligences are (by fact of their nature) familiar with the universal, yet develop their own particulars¹⁹. Language, or its linguistic corpus existent in the human mind, cannot be limited or simply exchanged with another. Therefore, the individual experiences of a linguistic community are reflected in the design and character of a language. The creation or design of language is not a static exercise, and one grammatical system cannot be simply exchanged with another²⁰.

Another indicator for the originality of Arabic grammar²¹ is based on the mass translations into Arabic, which began during the Abbasid caliphate. The transfer and subsequent assimilation of knowledge occurred only after the Arabic language, syntax and grammar were firmly established, and not before. Goldziher’s claim that Greek already actively influenced Arabic language, at a time when Arabia was completely isolated from the main centers of civilization, cannot be upheld in earnest.

When looking at the Arabic linguistic corpus, we can establish that it had always been free from any external and foreign influences, as asserted by Ibn ‘Abbas:

أَوَّلُ مَنْ تَكَلَّمَ بِالْعَرَبِيَّةِ الْمُحَضَّةِ وَأَمَّا عَرَبِيَّتُهُ فَحَطَّانٍ وَجَمِيرٍ فَكَانَتْ قَبْلَ

¹⁸ It is considered to be an earlier sentence.

¹⁹ As proven by Chomsky, see *Syntactic Structure*, *Syntactic Structure*, (The Hague: MoutonTrad., 1971), 19; *Aspect of the theory*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), 4.

²⁰ Chomsky, *Aspect of the Theory*, 64.

²¹ See S. Yaacob, ‘The Connection Between Ma’ani Nahwi in Arabic and the Idea of Modistae in Latin: Historical linguistic analysis’, *International Journal of Humanities*, Melbourne, Australia: Common Ground, 2008.

إِسْمَاعِيلَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ²².

(The first who speak pure Arabic was Al-Arabiyyah al-Mahḍah otherwise the Arabic Qahtan and Himyar was before Ismail peace be upon him)

Arabic as a complete and fully developed language which already existed before the arrival of Prophet Ishmael (a.s.), and was used by the tribe Qahtān and Himyār. Arabic was the language spoken by a tribal led by called Jurhum²³ who married the daughter of Irām, Sām's son after Noah's(a.s.) flood, and through his offspring Arabic became the language of a great nation²⁴. The offspring of Ishmael (a.s.) arrived and spread the use of Arabic²⁵. Arabic was an original language with its unique system of grammar, which was already developed thousand years before the rise of Greece. In order to faithfully reflect the transmission process of Arabic we have to concentrate on early manuscripts. Sibawāyḥ states on this point:

"هَذَا بَابُ مَجَارِي أَوَاحِرِ الْكَلِمِ مِنَ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ وَهِيَ تَجْرِي عَلَى ثَمَانِيَّةٍ مَجَارٍ: عَلَى النَّصْبِ، وَالجُرِّ وَالرَّفْعِ وَالْجُزْمِ وَالْفَتْحِ وَالْكَسْرِ وَالضَّمِّ وَالْوَقْفِ. وَهَذِهِ الْمَجَارِي الثَّمَانِيَّةُ يَجْمَعُهُنَّ فِي اللَّفْظِ أَرْبَعَةٌ أُضْرِبُ: فَالنَّصْبُ وَالْفَتْحُ فِي اللَّفْظِ ضَرْبٌ وَاحِدٌ، وَالْجُرِّ وَالْكَسْرُ فِيهِ ضَرْبٌ وَاحِدٌ، وَكَذَلِكَ الرَّفْعُ وَالضَّمُّ وَالْجُزْمُ وَالْوَقْفُ. وَإِنَّمَا ذَكَرْتُ ثَمَانِيَّةَ مَجَارٍ لِأَفْرَقَ بَيْنَ مَا يَدْخُلُهُ ضَرْبٌ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْأَرْبَعَةِ لِمَا يُجَدِّثُ فِيهِ الْعَامِلُ - وَلَيْسَ شَيْءٌ مِنْهَا إِلَّا وَهُوَ يُزْوَلُ عَنْهُ - وَبَيْنَ مَا يُبْنَى عَلَيْهِ الْحَرْفُ بِنَاءً لَا يُزْوَلُ عَنْهُ لِغَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَحَدَتْ ذَلِكَ فِيهِ مِنَ الْعَوَامِلِ، الَّتِي لِكُلِّ عَامِلٍ مِنْهَا ضَرْبٌ مِنَ اللَّفْظِ فِي

²² Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Muzhir*, ed. Fuad 'Alī Mansūr, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1998), 1/29, 'They were nine tribes of Arabs from the birth of Airam, daughter of Sam bin Noah: 'Ad, Thamud, Umaimun, Ubailun, TusmJudais, Imliq, Jurhum and Wabar.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1/29.

²⁴ See the critique of the traditions relating to Jurhum and his offspring in the book of the Dutch scholar Dozy 1864:146 and ff. (in the chapter: 'De tweedeGorhoem'). see Golziher, *History of Grammar Among the Arabs*, 45.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

الحَرْفِ، وَذَلِكَ الحَرْفُ حَرْفُ الإِعْرَابِ²⁶

(Classical Arabic had eight cases: accusative (*nasab*), genitive (*jar*), nominative (*raf'*), apocopate (*jazm*), a-vowel (*fath*), i-vowel (*kasr*), u-vowel (*dam*) and zero-vowel (*waqf*). Sibawayh divided the endings of the eight cases into four pairs: the accusative and a-vowel, the genitive and i-vowel, the nominative and u-vowel, and lastly the apocopate and zero-vowel. A word which receives different pairs because it is produced by a governor, its ending is not permanent and will be changed based on its position and use in the sentence. This system can be called the process of governing or the concept of *al-'amil*. Shawqī Ḍaif believed this kind of rule was unique to Arabic grammar²⁷ and a sufficient proof of its originality. The introduction of short-vowel signs in written language has to be considered a separate development and does not interfere with the original syntax).

Goldziher falsely claims that these additional signs were adopted from *zeqāfā* and *rebased* in Syriac²⁸, and who misleads his readers when he concludes that 'Arabs did not develop the most basic concepts of grammar from their own genius but was taken over from the Syrian'. Syrian vowel signs did undergo several stages and followed different paths of development²⁹, but the terms *zeqāfā* and *rebase* are only used in Syriac. Arabic grammar was not based on these additional scriptural signs but on the vowel endings, which were unique and solely the creation of the Arab intellect. A change of any of these short vowels changes the meaning of a sentence and is of utmost importance. For example, in the Qur'anic verse:

²⁶ Sibawayh, *Al-Kitāb*, (Beirut : Dārul al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1999), 1/41.

²⁷ Shawqī Ḍaif, *al-Madāris an-Nahwiyyah*, (Cairo: Dār al-M'ārif, 1995), 20.

²⁸ When he referred to the works of the French scholar Abbe` Martin (1869,1872, 427-451). See Ignaz Goldziher, *History of Grammar Among the Arabs*, 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6

(أَنَّ اللَّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ وَرَسُولُهُ)³⁰

(And a declaration from Allah and His Messenger to mankind on the greatest day (the 10th of Dhul-Hijjah - the 12th month of Islamic calendar) that Allah is free from (all) obligations to the Mushrikun and so is His Messenger)

If the letter "ل" in "ورَسُولُهُ" was read with an i-vowel "ورسوله" ending, the meaning would change completely. This incorrect reading changes the meaning of the verse and case, the Prophet would be included in the group of addressed idolaters, while in fact he is addressed as being on the side of God. Yet knowledgeable Qur'anic reciters did infact read variants of vowel endings and did so if the changed meaning was acceptable and in accordance with Islamic precepts, one example of variant readings occurs in the verse (السَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا)³¹ The vocal on the first two words of this verse could be read in the nominative case (بالرَّفْعِ), while another group of reciters preferred an a-vowel ending (بالنَّصْبِ) reading السَّارِقِ وَالسَّارِقَةَ in accusative position³². Other examples are:

، (فَقَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ شُرَكَائِهِمْ)³⁴ (إِنَّ هَذَا لَسَاحِرٌ)³³

(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئُونَ)³⁵

(وَالْمُقِيمِينَ الصَّلَاةَ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ)³⁶. Whatever variants are preferred which change the very meaning of a verse or a part of it, the rule is that positive meaning has to be produced. Suyūfī explains as follows:

(وَقَدْ أَطْبَقَ النَّاسُ عَلَى الْاِحْتِجَاجِ بِالْقِرَاءَاتِ الشَّاذَّةِ فِي الْعَرَبِيَّةِ إِذَا لَمْ تُخَالَفَ قِيَاماً مَعْرُوفاً بِلَوْ خَالَفَتْهُ يُجْتَنَبُ بِهَا)³⁷

³⁰ Surat Al-Taubah: 3.

³¹ Surat Al-Ma'idah: 38.

³² Shawqī Ḍaif, *al-Madāris an-nahwīyah*, based on the *qirā'ah* of IbnKhālawayh, also called *shāz* (singular), *shawāz* (plural), 24.

³³ SuratTaha: 63.

³⁴ Surat Al-An'am: 137.

³⁵ Al-Baqarah: 62.

³⁶ An-Nisa: 162.

³⁷ As-Suyūfī, *Al-Iktirāh*, 24.

(People have applied to invoke abnormal readings in Arabic if they do not violate known values, but even if they violate them, they invoke them)

Golziher wrongly assumed that no grammatical concepts could be formed before the use of vowel signs because there was hardly a grammatical function in the Arabic language which was not connected to the vowel of the words. He asserts that ‘this people started inventing signs for the vowels at a given time’. What he actually asserts is that the Arabs were aware of the importance of these short vowel endings and the meaning they purported, and thus introduced written signs to prevent the reading of possible variants which would alter the intended meaning. However, Goldziher concludes that ‘the nation whose example they followed in their writing system was the most immediate factor in the awakening of a grammatical awareness’³⁸, and at this point his argument falters. Syraic grammar and syntax did not influence Arabic language, but Syraic had developed a system of additional signs Arab grammarians and linguists found useful and worthy of adoption. Abū al-Aswād asked his students to use additional symbols to signify the opening and closing of his mouth³⁹. The *sukun* sign called نَقْطُ الإِعْجَام and other additional signs used in the Qurān (u-vowel, a-vowel, i-vowel and zero-vowel) called نَقْطُ الإِعْرَاب were introduced in the second century A.H. by the Qur’an reciters (*qurrā`*)⁴⁰. In the same century, AbūIshāq al-Haḍrāmī introduced the terminology of *qiyās* when he tried to explain some of the versed *shawādh* by al-Farazdaq:

وعَضُّ زَمَانٍ يَابِنِ مَرْوَانَ لَمْ يَدْعُ * مِنْ الْمَالِ إِلَّا مُسْحَتًا أَوْ مُجْرَفًا⁴¹

(And the time of the son of Marwan did not call * of money only wiped or swept away)

The word مُجْرَفًا in reading nominative case is incorrect, rather it

³⁸ Ignaz Goldziher, *History of Grammar among the Arabs*, 6 .

³⁹ See p. 3 of the article.

⁴⁰ Shawqī Ḍaif, *Al-Madāris al-Nahwīyah*, pp. 16 & 17.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 23

should be read in accusative case by example مُجْرَفًا for the reason of conjunction to the word before it.

In conclusion we can say that Goldziher's claim of a 'silent' transmission of foreign grammar and assimilation into Arabic grammar is false. Muslim grammarians did not conceal any existent foreign origin of the Arabic language. Nor did they mention any foreign influence because it never existed.

'Analogists' and 'Anomalists'

Goldziher claimed that Baṣra and Kufa were the two cities which permanently rivaled each other:

Just as they differ in character and political tendency, the two towns also differ in their treatment of the sciences, the opposition of the Baṣran and Kufan schools is spoken of in all fields, they oppose each other in historical questions and in the science of traditions, differences between them are mentioned even concerning their dialects, but the most intense opposition between them concerns linguistic, and especially grammatical questions.⁴²

To refute his view, the researcher addresses evidence from the linguistic corpus only where it focuses on grammatical questions. In principle, Baṣra and Kufah do provide evidence over two differing linguistic and grammatical approaches. The school of Basra was generally more philosophically inclined when formulating the system of Arabic grammar, while the school of Kufah based its rules on evidence found in classical texts. Although Basra applied more analogy, this does not mean that Basran scholars did not also refer to the already existent linguistic corpus in the classical texts⁴³. Abū Aswād al-Du'alī, Nasīr bin 'Asīm, Abū Ishāq al-Haḍrāmī, 'Isā bin 'Umar al-Thaqafī, Abū'Amrū Ibn al-'Alā' and Yunūs bin Habīb⁴⁴ provided numerous quotes from classical Arabic literature. However,

⁴² Ignaz Goldziher, *History of Grammar Among the Arabs*, 33

⁴³ Called *as-Samā'i*.

⁴⁴ Shawqī Daif, *Al-Madāris an-Nahwīyah*, 18-19.

Başran grammarians did introduce more theoretical concepts into Arabic grammatical theory, as illustrated by Ibn Salām:

(وَكَانَ لِأَهْلِ الْبَصْرَةِ فِي الْعَرَبِيَّةِ قُدْمَةٌ وَبِالنَّحْوِ وَلُغَاتِ الْعَرَبِ وَالْعَرَبِ
عِنَايَةٌ)⁴⁵

(The people of Basrah in Arabic were preceded of grammar, language of the Arabs and the strange attention of language usage) and supported by Ibn Nadīm⁴⁶:

" إِمَّا قَدَّمْنَا الْبَصْرِيِّينَ أَوَّلًا، لِأَنَّ عِلْمَ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ عَنْهُمْ أُخِذَ "

(But we gave the first priority to Basra people, because the knowledge of Arabia from them was taken)

Both of the statements show that scholars from Başra were the ones who advanced linguistic theory. They traveled to the deserts in Najd, Hijāz and Tihamah to collect material which was pure and untouched by foreign elements⁴⁷. According to Shawqī Ḍaif⁴⁸, the earliest school in Başra was led by the *qura`* since the time of Abū Aswād al-Du`alī, the first authority on Arabic grammar (*naḥw*), and often consulted by ‘Ali Ibn Abī Talib⁴⁹ (*karrama ‘llauwajjah*) " أنخ " Khalīl, one of the famous Basran grammarians, looked for *Samā`* to build the concept of *qiyās* and procure pristine and undiluted linguistic material by travelling through the Hijāz, Najd or Tihamah⁵⁰.

Kufa split from the Basran school after an argument between Sibawāyh and Kisā`ī over the question of the *Zanbūriah*⁵¹. The differences of views in regard to a grammar system continued until the arrival of Farā`, who based most of his analysis on analogy. Many historians of linguistics assert that he was influenced by Başran

⁴⁵ Ibn Salām (d.231h), *Tabaqāt Fa Haula al-Shu`ara`*, ed. Maḥmud Muḥammad Shākīr, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma`arif, 1973), 12.

⁴⁶ Ibn Nadīm, *Al-Fihrist*, (Tunis: Dār al-Ma`arif, 1994), 102.

⁴⁷ Shawqī Ḍaif, *Al-Madāris al-Nahwīyah*, 18.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 13 – 22.

⁴⁹ Ibid.,13.

⁵⁰ Al-Qifṭī, *Anbāh al-Ruwah ‘Alā Anbāh an-Nuhāh*, ed. Muhammad Abū Faḍl, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 2005), 1/344-355.

⁵¹ Shawqī Ḍaif, *Al-Madāris al-Nahwīyah*, 174 .

scholars, but this claim has been refuted by Shawqī Ḍaif⁵², who argued that Farā was a scholar in his own right and original in his thought. Indeed, if looking at the sources Sibawāyḥ referred to in his *Kitāb*, we have to confirm that some of them were from Kufah⁵³. There is no doubt that a healthy exchange of ideas did occur between the scholars of Kufah and Basra, for Farā` (considered the leader of the Kufan school) had at the Sibawāy`'s *Kitāb*⁵⁴ under his pillow when he died⁵⁵. Thus, to suggest that Baṣra was completely free from Kufan ideas is incorrect. The analogists' system of grammar needs to be verified using the anomaly approach, such as Sibawāyḥ and *Jumhūr an-Nuḥat* allowing the use of the system of *samā`* in the question of 'state' (*hāl*)⁵⁶. Both agreed that the word *زَيْدٌ طَلَعَ بَعْتَهُ* in *بَعْتَهُ* was a gerund describing manner. In another case, they accepted the *qirā`āhshādhah* in *فَبَدَّلِكَ فَلْتَفْرَحُوا*⁵⁷ because the Baṣran school allowed the system in these verses, based on *qiyās* in the verse *(وَلَنْحَمِلَ خَطَايَاكُمْ)*⁵⁸. This means that the Baṣran scholars used analogy. A number of propagators of anomaly accepted the use of analogy in some cases, for example with reference to *tawkīd*, *أُجْمِعَ*, *أُصْعَ*, *أُبْنَعَ* and *أُبْنَعَانِ* which became dual *أُجْمَعَانِ*, *أُبْصَعَانِ* and *أُبْنَعَانِ* as ar-Raḍī stated in his *Sharḥ al-Kāfīyah*:

" وَقَدْ أَجَارَ الْكُوْفِيُّونَ وَالْأَخْفَشِيُّونَ لِئُمْنِي الْمَذَكَّرِ أَجْمَعَانِ أُكْتَعَانِ أُبْصَعَانِ
أُبْنَعَانِ، وَلِئُمْنِي الْمؤنثِ جَمْعَاوَانِ، كَتْنَعَاوَانِ، بَصْنَعَاوَانِ، بَنْتَعَاوَانِ وَهُوَ غَيْرُ
مَسْمُوعٍ " ⁵⁹

(The Kufiyun and Al-Akhfash allowed of two male genders such as *Ajma`āni*, *Akta`āni*, *Abṣ`āni* *Abta`āni* and two female genders such as *Jam`āwāni*, *Kat`awāni*,

⁵² Ibid., 192 – 195.

⁵³ Sibawayh, *Al-Kitāb*, 1/38, 92, 119, 122, 134, 149, 201, 228,241, 341, 2/58, 65, 141, 156, 173,265, 265, 275,3/24, 105, 127, 171,178, 529, 349, 429, 4/6, 102, 198, 203,266, 592.

⁵⁴ The major reference of the Basran School.

⁵⁵ Abu Tayīb al-Lughawī, *Al-Marātīb al-Nahwīyah*, p. 87.

⁵⁶ Ibn `Aqīl, *Sharḥ Ibn `Aqīl*, vol. 1. Dārul al-Fikr: Beirut, 1998, 1/500.

⁵⁷ Surat Yūnūs: 58.

⁵⁸ Surat Al-Ankabūt: 12.

⁵⁹ Ibn Hājib, *Kitāb al-Kāfīyah Fī an-Nahwī*, Sharḥ Al-Rāḍī, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyah, 1986, 1/334.

Baş'awāni, *Bat'āwāni* and all those things are not anomaly)

Another case is their acceptance of the accusative case in *fi'ilmuḍāri'* such as لِيَكُونَ also mentioned by ar-Raḍī⁶⁰:

... وَالْكُوفِيُّونَ يَجُوزُونَ النَّصْبَ فِي مِثْلِهِ قِيَاسًا

(Otherwise the Kufah grammarians make it optional accusative of an analogical approach likely)

Goldziher added at this point the following statement: 'I would like to highlight one which provides in itself a very ample source for the study of the theoretical tendencies of the two schools, this is the book of Ibn al-Anbārī entitled *Al-Inṣāf Fī Masā'ili al-Khilāf Bayna Naḥwiyyīna al-Baṣrīyīna wal-Kūfiyyīna*⁶¹. Later on he explains that 'the two above-mentioned schools are distinguished by almost the same criteria that divide the analogists from the anomalists in the field of classical grammar'⁶². Thus, Golziher has contradicted his earlier assertion.

Ibn al-Anbārī's work consists of 121 problems which need to be revised, and their content thoroughly analyzed. According to the studies of Gotthold Weil⁶³, the rival theory between Basra and Kufah has to be dismissed because of a lack of evidence that a full-fledged Kufan school actually existed. He argues that Ibn al-Anbārī did not propagate Kufan thought, because the latter agreed only in four of his 121 problems with Kufan scholars⁶⁴. It is thus more likely that Kufa looked to Basra for answers and orientation; the two schools were not on an equal footing, and thus could not have been rivals.

Sa'īd Jāsim al-Zubayr⁶⁵ highlighted the importance of using

⁶⁰ Ibid. final chapter on *nawāṣib al-muḍāri'*.

⁶¹ Ignaz Goldziher, *History of Grammar Among the Arabs*, 34.

⁶² Ibid., 35.

⁶³ The first editor of *Al-Insāf fī Masā'ili al-Khilāf Bayna Naḥwiyyīna al-Baṣrīyīna wal Kūfiyyīna* and the first orientalist who doubted the existence of the School of Kūfah; see Shawqī Ḍaif, *al-Madāris al-Naḥwiyyah*, 155.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 155

⁶⁵ Sa'īd Jāsim al-Zubayr, *al-qiyāsfī an-Naḥwi al-'Arabī – Nash'atuhuwa*

qiyās and *samā`* in Arabic grammar for the Baṣran and Kufan school by quoting questions raised by al-Suyūṭī⁶⁶:

" هَلْ صَحِيحٌ مَا قِيلَ عَنِ الْبَصْرِيِّينَ أَنَّهُمْ أَصَحُّ قِيَاسًا مِنَ الْكُوفِيِّينَ؟ وَمَا حَقِيقَةُ مَوْقِفِهِمَا؟ وَهَلْ سَلِمَ لِهَذَا كِلَا الْمُنْهَجَيْنِ؟ "

(Is it true that what is said about the Basrians is that they are healthier than the Kufis? What is their position? Did both approaches be given to them?)

Shaykh Tantāwī⁶⁷ also stressed the positive aspect of the differing modes of approach of both schools.

Goldziher on the other hand stubbornly persisted in claiming that:

"The Baṣran school represents analogy which likes to treat everything by the same standard, while the Kufan school represents the prerogative of individuality in grammar, and allows the regulation and arrangement of grammar not only according to the forms that remain on the highroad of regularity but also those forms which are used according to the individual will of poets⁶⁸. "

He continues: "What, quiet wrongly, used to be called grammarians' `exceptions` are called by Arab grammarians al-Shāz (plur. as-Shawāz) or properly speaking that is a form not conforming to grammatical analogy (*al-qiyās*), but which appears in ancient poetry⁶⁹. "

In response to the above mentioned allegations made by Goldziher, we ought to investigate how far the acceptance of analogy (*qiyās*) went in the Baṣrans school. This has been illustrated by al-Akhfash al-Awṣāt, who noted that Sibawāyh accepted most of the

Tatawwuruḥu, ('Ammān :Dār al-Shurūq, 1997), 48.

⁶⁶ Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Iktirāḥ Fī Uṣūl an-Nahwī*, 201.

⁶⁷ M.al-Tantāwī, *Nash'atu al-Nahwī wa Tārikh Ashhūr al-Nuhāh*, (Beirut:'Alim al-Kutub, 1997), 89.

⁶⁸ Ignaz Goldziher, *History of Grammar Among The Arabs*, 35.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

*qirā'āt shādha*⁷⁰ in his *qiyās* as he said⁷¹ :

الْقِرَاءَةُ لَا تُخَالِفُ، لِأَنَّهَا سِنَةٌ

(Reading does not violate, because it is a year)

Let us examine some of the cases of analogy (*qiyās*) and anomaly (*samā'*) and *qirā'ātshādha*. Grammatical anomalies were found in the classical Arab poem كَائِنٌ مَّقْعَدُ الْقَائِلَةِ هُوَ مِنِّي مَقْعَدُ الْقَائِلَةِ means كَائِنٌ مَّقْعَدُ الْقَائِلَةِ. In case the *'āmil* is not from the same root of circumstantial patient مَقْعُولٌ كَائِنٌ, by analogy there should be added the particle of *jār* فِي meaning كَائِنٌ فِي مَقْعَدِ الْقَائِلَةِ⁷² which makes this a case of anomaly. Ibn Malik hinted at another case of anomaly⁷³.

لَكَ الْعِزُّ إِنْ مَوْلَاكَ عَزَّ، وَإِنْ يَهُنُّ * فَأَنْتَ لَدَى مُجْبُوحةِ الْهَوْنِ كَائِنٌ

(You are the glory of your king, and if you win * you have the grace of God)

The case study here is the existence of كَائِنٌ which cannot be regarded as a standard for forming the system of *qiyās*. Golziher quoted at this point Suyūṭī's opinion⁷⁴:

One of the most well known differences between the two grammatical schools is related to these *Shawāz*, when the unimaginative Baṣran grammarian comes across *Shāz*, he holds his ground and asserts that such an exceptional form should remain what it is, that is, an exception which cannot be regarded as a standard for forming other words.⁷⁵

Arab grammarians accepted the *samā'* used by Kufan scholars in order to support *qiyās*, such as in instances like أَصْبَحَ meaning 'to become smaller' not in the function of a verb but of a gerund, as

⁷⁰ Within the Kufan school, this reading variant was accepted.

⁷¹ Shawqī Daif, *Al-Madāris al-Nahwīyah*, 80.

⁷² Ibn 'Aqīl, (d.769h) *Sharh Ibn 'Aqīl*, (Dārul al-Fikr: Beirut, 1998), 1/459.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1/167.

⁷⁴ Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muḥḥir Fī 'Ulūm al-Lughah Wa Anwā'uhā*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1998), 1/114.

⁷⁵ Ignaz Goldzihar, *History of Grammar Among the Arabs*, 35.

explained by Khalīl ⁷⁶ :

اللَّفْظُ لَمْ يَكُنْ يَنْبَغِي أَنْ يَكُونَ فِي الْقِيَاسِ لِأَنَّ الْفِعْلَ لَا يُخَفَّرُ... وَلَكِنَّهُمْ
حَفَرُوا هَذَا

(The pronunciation of *Lam* letter should not have been in the analogy because the act does not degrade ... but they did)

The manner (*hāl*) in gerund form has also been accepted by Mubarrid who gives the example of ⁷⁷جَاءَ زَيْدٌ بَعْتَهُ the keyword being بعته as a gerund in anomaly⁷⁸. He gives the explanation which has been discussed previously:

وَمِنْ الْمَصْدَرِ مَا يَقَعُ فِي مَوْضِعِ الْحَالِ، فَيَسُدُّ مَسَدَّهُ، فَيَكُونُ حَالًا، لِأَنَّهُ
قَدْ نَابَ عَنْ اسْمِ الْفَاعِلِ، وَأَعْنِي عِنَاءَهُ وَذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ قَاتَاهُ صَبْرًا... فَهَذَا
يَدُلُّ عَلَى مَا يَرِدُ مِمَّا يُشَاكِلُهَا، وَيَجْرِي مَعَ كُلِّ صَنْفٍ مِنْهَا⁷⁹

(From the type of gerund which is stated in *Fayasudduhu MasadahĒ*, is the circumstantial clause was acceptable because it was replace the constituent of noun it is immediately, because he has a name for the actor, ... This indicates what is contained)

Here is indicated that the Baṣran school accepted an abnormal (*shāz*) form based on the precedent ⁸⁰فَبِذَلِكَ فَلْتَفَرِّحُوا where the existence of لاُمُ الْأَمْرِ before the pronoun is analogous to the Qur'anic وَتُنْحِمِلِ and فَعَالٌ and فَاعِلٌ as *qiyas*⁸¹. Al-Mubarrid accepted the morphology

⁷⁶ Sibawayh, *al-Kitāb*, 3/477-478.

⁷⁷ Ibn 'Aqīl, *Sharh Ibn 'Aqīl*, 1/500.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 1/500.

⁷⁹ Al-Mubarrid. *Al-Muqtaḍab* (ed. Hassan Hamad), Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiah, 1999, 3/234; al-Ashmūnī, *Sharhu al-Ashmūnī 'Alā alfiyah Ibn .Mālik*, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabiyah, 1918), 1/245.

⁸⁰ Surat Yūnūs: 58.

⁸¹ Surat Al-Ankabūt: 12.

(It is not true what was said about the doctrine of the Basran grammarians is a standard of analogy, and the Kufan grammarians doctrine that it is purely audible)

This idea is supported by Maḥdī al-Makhzūmī⁹⁰ who asserts that the Kufan school not only distinguished itself through the application of anomaly but also through the intellectual aptitude of its grammarians. Farā`, for example, based his grammatical principles on philosophical ones and did not hesitate to formulate his own ideas on invisible ‘*awāmil*, sometimes refuting anomaly and using *qiyās* when he thought it appropriate⁹¹.

Despite all textual evidence to the contrary, Golziher persisted in his theory of the two rivaling schools by referring to a completely separate field of scholarly enquiry, namely that of Islamic jurisdiction. He alleges as follows: ‘On the basis of what I expounded in another study about the school of Abū Hanīfa, the great jurist, it can very easily be understood why this imam felt attracted to the Kufan school of grammar⁹². His study of Abū Hanīfah’s legal thought consisted of a very general comparison with that of its Baṣran counterpart, such as their differing views in regard to ‘sale’ البَيْع which Goldziher only discussed preliminarily and without including a thorough study of the general principles of jurisdiction (*usūl*) or any detailed studies of more complex issues.⁹³ The fact that Kufan scholars were generally found more enthusiastic and industrious in the transmission of classical poetry than their Baṣran colleagues is irrelevant at this point. The issue here is whether the Kufan system could be utilized by future generations of scholars who referred to the transmitted poems as precedents which thus furnished them with more examples for analogy and in the process extend grammatical knowledge. It is unquestioned that analogy also needed to be accompanied by anomalies such as in⁹⁴ the following:

⁹⁰ Maḥdī al-Makhzūmī, *Madrasat al-Kūfah*, 394.

⁹¹ Shawqī Ḍaif, *Al-Madāris al-Nahwiyyah*, 157.

⁹² Ignaz Golziher 1877a, 23-33, and 1963-64, 95-105 and 1967-73, 388-399 see Golziher, *History of Grammar Among the Arabs*, 45.

⁹³ Shawqī Ḍaif, *Al-Madāris Al-Nahwiyyah*, 21.

⁹⁴ Ibn ‘Aqīl, *Sharh Ibn ‘Aqīl* 1/383.

تَرُودُثُ مِنْ لَيْلَى بِتَكْلِيمِ سَاعَةٍ * فَمَا زَادَ إِلَّا ضِعْفَ مَا بِي كَلَامِهَا

(I was provided with an hour of Laila * What increased only twice as much as her words)

The case study here is *إِلَّا ضِعْفَ*. Analogically it was permissible to allow the precedent of *mafūlun bih mahsūran* rather than *كَلَامِهَا* as a *fā'il* or agent.

The evidence of opposing or differing views on grammar produced in Baṣra and Kufa does by no means necessitate the assumption that both schools were actively engaged in an intellectual battle with each other. Different methodologies and approaches did not develop isolated from each other but alongside each other. Different grammatical theories developed by Kufan and Baṣran grammarians did indeed complement and not rival each other.

The Influence of Philosophical Theology on Arabic Linguistics

In order to provide a firm grasp of Goldziher's views on Arabic linguistics, we need to discuss its link with philosophical theology. He begins his exposition with "Arabic Linguistic philosophy showed the greatest concern about the very same philosophical question that formed the basic problem of Greek linguistic philosophy: whether language came into being through *wahyu* or convention⁹⁵". Goldziher thus questions the originality of Qur'anic revelation and presupposes – in good Orientalist manner – the influence of ancient Greek thought. Since Greek philosophy flourished in the fourth century BCE⁹⁶, and the Qur'an was revealed in the seventh century CE, a thousand years later⁹⁷, its content had to be the product of cultural transmission from the allegedly superior culture (namely Greek culture) to an allegedly inferior culture (Arab culture). It is needless to mention that Goldziher based his assumptions on prejudice and not

⁹⁵ Ignaz Goldziher, *History of Grammar Among The Arabs*, 39.

⁹⁶ National Geographic Society, *Ancient Greece*, (National Geography Maps, Washington D.C. : USA, 1999), 8.

⁹⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, Cairo: Dār al-Fajr Lil Turath, 1/34.

on documented findings.

There is the possibility that Greek tradition did indeed exert an influence on theological thought at a later stage, such as in the case of the *Mu'tazilites*, who put an almost exclusive stress on logic. However, Greek philosophy only became relevant to Islamic philosophy after the transmission of Hellenistic tradition during the translation movement under the 'Abbasids. At this time, Syriac served as intermediary transmission device between the Greek and Arabic languages⁹⁸, beginning with the two famous Christian translators Hunayn Ibn Ishāk and Yaḥya Ibn Bitrīk. Evidently, Damascus was a Hellenistic center during the third, fourth and fifth centuries CE⁹⁹, where Greek had become the official language of the court and administrative offices.

Goldziher confidently alleged that:

it was all the more of vital importance for Arabic linguistic philosophy because this question had theological significance as well..... such as closely bound up with the interpretation of a Quranic sentence in the following passage *وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا*¹⁰⁰ in Muslim science the question of *wahyu* or convention means nothing else than the explanation of this Quranic passage. While the basic question started from the Quran and shows the application of one or the other Greek school of linguistic philosophy, depending on whether the arguments follow the Quran letter by letter or rationalize its meaning¹⁰¹.

He added that “the basic question of Greek linguistic philosophy was turned into a dogmatic and theological question in Muslim literature on which the opinions of Muslim linguist diverge according to the

⁹⁸ Ahmād Amīn, *Ḍuḥā al-Islām*, Cairo: Lujnah al-Ta'līf wal Tarjamah, 1978 v.1., 313, Mahdī al-Makhzūmī, *al-Khalīl Ahmad al-Farāhidī, 'Imāluhū wa manhajuhu*, Beirut: Dārar-Rāid al-'Arabī, 1986, 68.

⁹⁹ William Wright, 'Syriac Literature' *The New Encyclopaedia of Britannica*, (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., vol 2, 1998), 470.

¹⁰⁰ Ignaz Goldziher, *History of Grammar Among the Arabs*, 39.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

particular dogmatic school they follow”¹⁰². Goldziher attempted to create a direct link between the Mu’tazilite school of thought and their theological influence on Arabic language and its development by stating that “...The Mu’tazilite school adduces other, more metaphysical arguments to support its assertion, but these are much more deeply related to subtleties of Muslim theology than we could try to summarize here. Suffice it to say that they conclude from all these arguments that language is a product of *iṣṭilāḥ* or *tawāḍuʿ* i.e: convention and not *wahyu* or *ilhām*, i.e divine revelation or inspiration”.¹⁰³

In order to evaluate the originality of Arabic language we need to look into the two differing intellectual streams in Islamic thought: that of textual dogmatism expounded by the ‘orthodox’ scholars and that of the rationalists. In fact, both groups presented their own corpus of evidence to prove the originality of Arabic language. Muslim linguists who adhered to the orthodox school argued that the only authoritative source for Arabic language was the Qur’anic text. On the other hand, the rationalist school claimed that the Arabic language was a result of cultural convention, meaning that classical Arabic poetry constituted the authoritative source¹⁰⁴. Among the proponents of the Qur’an as source were grammarians¹⁰⁵ such as al-Qazwīnī, al-Fārisī, al-Akhfash and Abū Hasan al-Ash’arī¹⁰⁶ who defended their opinion that all languages ultimately derived from the language of Prophet Adām (a.s) as a result of divine inspiration¹⁰⁷. Firstly, there was the tradition by Ibn ‘Abbās which stated that "Allah taught Adam (a.s.) the names of all things. These names included words like ‘earth’,

¹⁰² Ibid., 40.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 43.

¹⁰⁴ Jewish philosophy also defended the idea that language came into existence not by evolving out of human convention (*habit*) but inspired by divine revelation. See Halevi, *Kuzari* 11.8. [Instead., it seems to be at 11.67-68]. Duran *Ma’ase*. See Ignaz Goldziher, *History of Grammar Among The Arabs*, 1994, 42.

¹⁰⁵ Plato and Aristotle were supporters of this group.

¹⁰⁶ Sālah Rāwā, *Fiqh al-Lughah wa Khasa’is al-Arabiyyah wa Tara’iq Numūwiha*, (Cairo: Dār al-Hānī, 1993), 46.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 34 "أي أن الله وُفِّق وألهم وُلِّقن، وعَلَّمَ آدم كل ما يتعلق بالله كتقطيع الأصوات وبين الكلمات ووضعها بإزاء معانيها" الدالة عليها

`mountain`, `camel`, `donkey`, `river` [etc.],¹⁰⁸. This was supported by Mujāhid, who also wrote that "Allah taught all names to Adam"¹⁰⁹.

Another group supported the assumption that Allah taught all the names of creatures but in all the different languages, such as Arabic, Persian, Syraic, Hebrew, Latin etc. Adam and his sons spoke all those languages until they were scattered throughout the Earth, and linguistic groups developed separately from then onwards¹¹⁰. As for evidence found in the scriptures, the Torah states that "God said "It is not good if we create human beings without something with whose help they could communicate and help each other"". Consequently, God created the earth, animals and birds, and then presented their names to Adam and then Adam replied by saying those names¹¹¹. In the Qurān it was revealed accordingly:

(وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ¹¹²، إِنَّ هِيَ إِلَّا الْأَسْمَاءُ
 سَمِيَّتُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ) also¹¹³
 خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ اللَّسَانِ وَالْوَأْنِ¹¹⁴

(And He taught Adam all the names (of everything), then He showed them to the angels and said, "Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful)

(They are but names which you have named, you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. They follow but a guess and that which they themselves desire, whereas there has surely come to them the Guidance from their Lord!)

(And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 47

¹⁰⁹ Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Muzhīr*, 1/8.

¹¹⁰ IbnJinnī, *al-Khasā'is*, 1/41 .

¹¹¹ *Safar al-Takwīn*, al-Ishāh as-Thānī verses 18-20, see http://st-takla.org/pub_oldtest/Arabic-old-testament-Books/ol-Genesis/sefr-Al-Takween_chapter-02.html

¹¹² Surat Al-Baqarah: 31.

¹¹³ Surat An-Najm: 23.

¹¹⁴ Surat Ar-Rūm: 22.

colours. Verily, in that are indeed signs for men of sound knowledge)

A third group of linguists formed their opinion logic rather than on textual scriptural evidence. They argued that human speech evolved from acts of mental creativity¹¹⁵. Language was inspired and thus proceeded by thought (فِكْرٌ), and was later acquired by convention (habit). Just like infants imitate the sounds produced by their parents, the first man to walk the Earth, Adam, first produced the sounds taught by God¹¹⁶, and then taught his children. The Modernists among them believed that the origin of language needed to be proven through revelation and logic. The understanding of language as a convention or habit was based on IbnJinnī's view; the development of language came from the designation or creation of the terminology of language which constitutes the principle of rational group. Primordial knowledge existent in the human mind thus allowed for the creation of individual words. Ibn Jinni's view on the origin of language differed from the orthodox view. He was willing to consider alternative ideas and incorporate them into his theory. He also divided the conventional process of language development into two stages: firstly, linguists gather and create language by agreeing on specific terms (*Muṣṭalahāt*) and secondly, the tendency of humans to imitate sounds they hear in nature, such as sound the blowing of the wind, the deafening sound of thunder, water flowing in a river, the clapping of horses' hooves and so on¹¹⁷. In support of Ibn Jinnī's view, the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Rushd stated in his commentary on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*¹¹⁸ that language developed through convention. Differences between languages occurred with respect to the specific terms ascribed to given objects which were, just like isolated concepts, neither true nor false. In order to explain the concept of convention, a scholar needed to study the history of a language in and trace the

¹¹⁵ Sayūfī, *al-Muḏhir*, 1/9.

¹¹⁶ Sālah Rāwā, *Fiḡhu al-Lughah Wa Khasā'ish al-Arabiyyah Wa Ṭarā'iq Numuwuḡha*, 42.

¹¹⁷ Ibn Jinnī, *Al-Khasā'ish*, 1/40; al-Suyūfī, *Al-Muḏhir*, 1/10 .

¹¹⁸ See Moshe Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, (State University of New York: New York Press, 1989), 17.

introduction of new terms in the timely sequence and the circumstances under which they occurred.

In agreement with Golziher, Versteegh¹¹⁹ understands the debate over the origin of language being about whether speech originated in revelation or in the accord the Mu'tazilite theologians established in the first half of the ninth century CE under the sympathetic 'Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun. In the tenth century the Mu'tazilites had adopted the term *wad'* to indicate the established character of language. In this period many grammarians were Mu'tazilites, such as Ibn Jinnī, al-Fārisī, al-Zujjāj, Quṭrub and many others. However, the Mu'tazilite theologian 'Abbad Ibn Sulaymān (d. 864) claimed that there was a natural relationship between words and things¹²⁰, which disagreed with Ibn Jinnī, who stated:

وَدَهَبَ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى أَنَّ أَصْلَ اللُّغَاتِ كُلِّهَا إِنَّمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْأَصْوَاتِ
المسوّعات، كدوى الريح، وحنين الرعد، وخير الماد، وشحيج الحمار،
ونعيق الغراب، وصهيل الفرس، ونتريب الظبي، ونحو ذلك، ثم وَلَدَتْ
اللُّغَاتُ عَنْ ذَلِكَ فِيمَا بَعْدَ، وَهَذَا عِنْدِي وَجْهٌ صَالِحٌ، وَمَدَّهَبُ
مُسْتَقْبَلٌ¹²¹

(Some of them said that the origin of all languages is one of the most important voices, such as the wind, the nostalgia of thunder, the good of material, the wringing of the donkey, the crowning of the crow, the crowning of the horse. To me it was true base on the doctrine of the future)

Ibn Fāris tried to persuade his readers not to accept any Mu'tazilite rationalist ideas about man's own initiative in this matter: 'I say, the language of the Arabs is revelation and the evidence for this

¹¹⁹ Kees Versteegh, *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought* 111, (London: Routledge, n.d), 107.

¹²⁰ Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Muzḥir*, 2/47.

¹²¹ Ibn Jinnī, *Al-Khasā'is*, 56.

is the words of God “He taught Adām all the names”¹²². He added the following argument:

The proof for the correctness of our point of view is the unanimous agreement of the scholars about arguments based on the language of the Bedouin, whether they agree or disagree about something and on their poems. If language were really an institution and a convention, they would have no more rights to argue on the basis of their language then we would have to argue on the basis of contemporary speech.¹²³

His view was further supported by Abū Alfīa, who referred to the authority of his predecessor when concluding that all language arose due to convention, the only exemption being the Hebrew language¹²⁴. Goldziher had a point when noting that the concept of revelation or convention in language had not been discussed by Muslim scholars, although the topic was preserved in ancient texts. However, we shall not forget that the era of transmission set on much later, and the linguistic corpus in the hands of Abū Aswād al-Du`alī, Abdar-Rahmān Hurmūz, Naseer Ibn ‘Asim, ‘Anbāsah Fīl, Maymūn al-Aqrān, Abū Ishāq al-Haḍrāmī and Abū ‘Amrū Ibn Alāq contained no mention of these questions. Versteegh concludes that the absence of diachronic thinking in Arabic linguistics was partly responsible for this lack of interest in this matter. Muslim grammarians dealt with a fixed corpus and maintained that the language as they knew it would not change, and thus any hypothetical question as to its origin was of no relevance to them¹²⁵. For the grammarians the issue of the origin of language had never held much attraction, except for Ibn Jinnī who was, according to Versteegh, perhaps driven by his Mu’tazilite views, views which other scholars such as Ibn Fāris warned his readers not to adopt¹²⁶.

¹²² Ibn Fāris (d.390h), *Sāhibī*, ed.Sayyid Ahmad Saqar, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1977), 6.

¹²³ Ibn Fāris, *Sāhibī*, 7.

¹²⁴ Moshe Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulfia*, 13.

¹²⁵ Kees Versteegh, *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought* 111, 113.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

We can conclude at this point that those linguists who believed that language was created through revelation based their arguments on their understanding of the scriptures, and those who applied reasoning relied on the concept of analogy. Golziher concludes his account – certainly not without irony – by offering his readers an alternative theory: ‘I wish to mention an intermediate view between these two theories, according to which only the Arabic language came into being through revelation, while all the other languages are the outcome of convention’¹²⁷.

Conclusion

Ignaz Goldziher’s critique on Arabic linguistics was based mainly on his narrow focus on its historical dimension. One cannot but attest to him a mastery of persuasion in the manner in which he expressed his ideas. Instead of presenting his controversial theories and assumptions in a direct and confrontational manner, he cleverly and very diplomatically clothed them in seemingly innocent and very general statements, such as ‘... the correct usage from the data in form of rules in the absence of any foreign influence or in short are there any factors in the awakening of a grammatical awareness among the Arabs that do not originate in the life of the Arab people and their mind?’ and ‘For clever hair-splitting Arabic grammar used the theories built upon Aristotelian logic’¹²⁸. He very carefully presented his assumptions without directly pointing at his true claim, namely that Arabic linguistics were directly influenced by Greek theory. Although he continuously brought forward the case of analogy and anomaly, he did not go into any detail and presented textual evidence to allow his readers to judge for themselves. On the topic of the influence of theological philosophy (*kalām*) on Arabic grammar, Goldziher only presented selected views and focused his discussion of the origins on convention rather than revelation. Nevertheless, he takes the modern reader by surprise when concluding that Arabic had its origin in divine revelation rather than convention, probably because his own cultural and religious origins

¹²⁷ Ignaz Goldziher, *History of Grammar Among The Arabs*, 43.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

could not betray his sympathies with Jewish philosophers like Abūafia who could not fathom a Hebrew language not intrinsically linked with the Torah, which was after all based on a revealed scripture and not convention.



TRANSLITERATION TABLE

CONSONANTS

Ar=Arabic, Pr=Persian, OT=Ottoman Turkish, Ur=Urdu

Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	
ء	ء	ء	ء	ز	z	z	z	گ	—	g	g	g
ب	ب	ب	ب	ژ	—	—	ʀ	ل	l	l	l	l
پ	پ	پ	پ	ژ	—	zh	j	م	m	m	m	m
ت	ت	ت	ت	س	s	s	s	ن	n	n	n	n
ث	—	—	ṭ	ش	sh	sh	ʃ	ه	h	h	h ¹	h ¹
ث	th	th	th	ص	ṣ	ṣ	ʃ	و	w	v/u	v	v/u
ج	j	j	c	ض	ḏ	ḏ	ḏ	ی	y	y	y	y
چ	—	ch	çh	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ة	-ah	—	—	-a ²
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	ال	al ³	—	—	—
خ	kh	kh	kh	ع	‘	‘	‘	—	—	—	—	—
د	d	d	d	غ	gh	gh	ğh	—	—	—	—	—
ڈ	—	—	d	ف	f	f	f	—	—	—	—	—
ذ	dh	dh	dh	ق	q	q	k	—	—	—	—	—
ر	r	r	r	ك	k	k/g	k/ñ	—	—	—	—	—

¹ – when not final
² – at in construct state
³ – (article) al - or l-

VOWELS

	Arabic and Persian	Urdu	Ottoman Turkish
Long	ا	ā	ā
	آ	Ā	—
	و	ū	ū
	ي	ī	ī
Doubled	ي	īy (final form ī)	īy (final form ī)
	و	uww (final form ū)	uvv
	و	uvv (for Persian)	uvv
Diphthongs	و	au or aw	ev
	ی	ai or ay	ey
Short	ا	a	a or e
	ا	u	u or ū
	ا	i	o or ö
	ا	i	i

URDU ASPIRATED SOUNDS

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. چ jh گ gh

For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.

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