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On the whole, the style of the official amanuensis and the Court historians of the late Abbasid period belongs to the same genre.

The best examples of Arabic historical prose, both in regard to form and content, are the private memoirs of personal experiences of war and peace like the Kitāb al-Tārikh of Wāsir ibn Mūqīḏ (d. 584/1188–90), and the accounts of travels. In the latter class of works one finds not only observation and effective narration but also the author’s own appraisal of personalities and events in the light of history and contemporary society. Generally, the style is simple and natural and even where art is displayed, as in the case of Ibn Juhayr (d. 614/1217–18), it is not overplayed at the expense of the content. Al-Qāṣālīn al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl forms a class by itself—^an autobiographical account of mental conflict and spiritual quest written with such simplicity and naturalness as defy all art.

Influence on the West.—Looking in retrospect over the entire field of Arabic prose and poetry, the general reader will not fail to be struck particularly with a few features which stand out prominently. First, there is the perfect symmetry, so characteristic of all Muslim art, the unaltering rhythm, and the regular rhyme which at once give the general impression of order, system, and exquisiteness in the construction of the verse. Secondly, there is the entire scheme of romantic love as embodied in the tradition of the ghazal. It is not fully appreciated, especially among the Muslims who take it as a matter of course, how much the Islamic outlook on woman and sex relationship has to do with the sentimental romantic love. Love as an art can only flourish in a society where the company of woman is sublimated into a virtue. A further condition for the growth of romanticism is the recognition of certain ethical rules for courtship, a certain dualization of restraint. Such restraint is only symbolic of a for the independent will of a separate individuality (best exemplified in the economic rights of women in Islam) coupled with a tenderly appreciation—so different from lustful exploitation—of the frailty and delicacy of the feminine constitutional and sentimental make-up. In the blind fervour of the extremist revolt against the denial of human rights to women in the West, this last basis of all chivalry and romance is much liable to be forgotten. Anyway, it was these two features—the exquisite form and the romantic content—of the Andalusian poetry which impressed the troubadours of Provence so deeply. Needless to say that lyrical poetry of romantic love had a special development in Spain so as to become unique even in Arabic. In the same way the strophic verse blossomed in Spain as nowhere else. The tradition, however, goes back to the Unayyid ghazal with Islam intervening between it and the Frankish idealism of the ḥaqqiyah.

Turning to prose, one finds Arabic offering, at its best, aphorisms, apologies, popular fables characterized by the spirit of adventure, and picaresque romance (μαιστάκα). Actually, these were the very curiosities which achieved a ready success in medieval Europe through oral transmission and book
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of those neophytes in the use of the Arabic tongue excited the laughter of the younger folk in Arab households; it also shocked the elders as it amounted to inadvertent profanity and distortion of the Qur'ānic verses.1 The corruptive effects on the new generation of the Arabs—the townsfolk among them—were no less disconcerting; the daily usages marked a sharp decline from the Qur'ānic idiom. Thus, there is little doubt that about the middle of the first century of the Hijrah the Muslims were squarely face to face with their foremost literary problem, viz., the need for the preservation of the Qur'ān. The Arabs needed reinforcing their own natural way of speech with a discipline of conscious effort; they were also eager, in keeping with the true spirit of Islam, to pass on to the myriads of non-Arabs, who daily swelled the ranks of the faithful, not only the religion and the practices of Islam but also the language as a key to a first-hand knowledge of its primary source or sources.2 Actually, however, only a few of the Arabs concerned themselves with those branches of studies which involved the use of the method of gjjira, i.e., analogy and deduction.3 Such creative intellectual activity was notably a feature of the non-Arab inhabitants of Iraq, which province occupied a unique position in the incipient literary life of Islam. It is worthwhile recalling that the province had been the cradle of ancient civilizations and the nursery of cultural currents from the Hellespont, including those relayed from the important academy as Jumshīd-ḵān; hence, the mental attitudes of its inhabitants bore the stamp of philosophical and scientific discipline. Still more remarkable was the spirit motivating the political relationship of these “intellectuals” with their proud and unlettered masters, the Arabs, and their peculiar religious and cultural propensities toward Islam and the Arabic language. In contrast with Syria and Egypt, it will be seen that the ʿajamīs of Iraq were from the very beginning determined to assert their own individuality, albeit within the pale of Islam and on the ground of Arabs’ own devotion to the Arabic language. Even the Shūbqāyim movement, the outburst of an outraged sense of superiority of the Persians over the Arabs, involved no renunciation from loyalty to the language of the Qur’ān. It was a clear parallel to early Ṣafarism, which was calculated to work out the political ascendency of the Persians but only under the supreme and authoritarian overlordship of the House of the Arabian Prophet. Baqrah and Kūfah, the two cemeteries of the Arabs, provided ideal conditions for fruitful contact between the Arabs and the non-Arabs. Of particular importance was the proximity of the two towns to the northern Arabian desert, long regarded as the preserve of the linguistic

1 This is amply borne out by the different versions of what prompted abu al-Awas al-Du‘ali to turn to grammar.
2 It is noteworthy that abu al-Awas al-Du‘ali, who showed himself genuinely anxious to help the non-Arabs learn Arabic and Islam, did so in spite of his jealously of their prosperity and influence. There was not the slightest trace of any tendency among the Arabs to sit Brahman-like over the treasures of religious knowledge.
3 This applies equally to grammar and to al-ʿarāʾi in the realm of Fiqh.

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norm, and the market-place of al-Mirbad—on the outskirts of Basra—was not less a close-by rendezvous of the ʿarāʾi (Beduin Arabs of the desert) and the literati until the former, becoming aware of the demand, themselves came to offer their linguistic materials to the šūr of Iraq and western Persia.

According to the classical tradition, it was abu al-Awas (Zālim b. ʿAmr) al-Du‘ali (or al-Dili), a poet, warrior, and teacher (died in 80/688–89 at the age of 85), who took the first step to stem the tide of growing laxity and error in the use of the Arabic tongue. He was an active partisan of ʿAli in politics and actually fought against Muʿawiyyah at Siffin. It is, therefore, no surprise that he should take pride in claiming that the rudiments of Arabic grammar were confided to him by ʿAli. This assertion can safely be dismissed as only an instance of the too frequent attempt to trace all learning to ʿAli, the “Gate-way of the City of Knowledge.” It is also true that abu al-Awas himself cannot be credited with having worked out the fundamentals of Arabic grammar as such.4 But it is reasonably certain that he did institute something which, to later historians of the development of grammar, appeared to be the genesis of it. Let us examine what it actually was. Till the time with which we are concerned, the Arabic script, originally taken over from the Syriac-Nabatean writing, remained without a system of ʿarāʾi, i.e., vowel-marks. Nor was there any established practice as to ʿiyām, i.e., diacritical marks, to distinguish letters of similar shape. Of course, there was no urgent need for either so long as the main dependence was on memory and writing was regarded as a mere casual help.5 In the context of the new demands made by the change in the social pattern, the alert and acute mind of abu al-Awas realized the inadequacy of the written consonantal letter to evoke the correct unmarked vowel, which had ceased to come natural as of yore. He, therefore, must have been the first to conceive the idea of introducing some further aid to make the people “know and observe correct speech.” It appears that at first the innovation was opposed by Ziyūd b. Abīhi, the Governor of Basra, with whose son abu al-Awas might have discussed it. After some time, however, all conceded that it was absolutely needed and abu al-Awas went forward to lay down the following system:

(i) the vowel “a,” the pronunciation of which needs a full upward opening (fathāk) of the mouth, to be marked with a dot above a letter.

(ii) the vowel “i,” the pronunciation of which needs a little downward movement (kaṣrah) of the mouth, to be marked with a dot below the letter.

4 Encyclopaedia of Islam, “Abu al-Awas.”
5 In the Islamic literary tradition, the written book long continued to serve merely as an aide memoria—a copy of what was preserved in memory and not vice versa.

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(iii) the vowel "a", the pronunciation of which needs a rounded closing (dammah) of the lips, to be marked with a dot in front of the letter. This system of dots is to be seen in one of the oldest copies of the Qur'an dated 77/996, now preserved in the National Library at Cairo. The text on parchment is in black, while the vowel-dots are in red, in accordance with the usual practice. It has been noted that a similar system of dots was in use in the writing of Syriac, and, though Abu al-Awād's contacts with the Syriacs are not expressly alluded to, it stands more than probable that having realized the urgency he turned round and took the cue from his compatriots of the Syrian Christian Church.

It is also possible, as some reports make out, that Abu al-Awād went a step further to propound some broad distinctions in the main parts of a sentence such as the subject and the predicate. On the whole, however, his contribution was merely to focus attention on the usage of vowel-endings as the distinctive characteristic of Arabic. Hence, observation of vowel-endings was designated al-'Arabīyāt, i.e., the art of speech in the correct and characteristic Arabic way. The use of vowel-endings itself was known as al-'Arabī, i.e., rendering into the proper Arabic way. The al-'Arabīyāt was undoubtedly an embryonic form of Arabic grammar.

The emphasis on al-'Arabīyāt grew in proportion to the need for saving the Qur'ān from being consigned to antiquity. So far the method used was more tepid, i.e., putting the particulars in the mouth of the pupil. Only the necessary terms and signs for indicating the different vowels in speech and writing had been devised. As yet there was no fa'il or reasoning on the basis of general principles governing the incidence of the fa'il. But certainly the fa'il was under intense and searching observation, from which it was not far to collecting a number of analogous examples and inducting from them some rules for general guidance. This was the beginning of the discovery.

The Persian equivalent of the Greek alphabet was the Arabic alphabet. The Greek alphabet was used in the translation of Greek texts into Arabic, and this practice continued into the Middle Ages. The Arabic alphabet was later adapted for use in writing Arabic, and it is still in use today.

The Chinese invention of the printing press and the development of paper in the second millennium CE made it possible for the Arabic language to spread and become the dominant language of the Islamic world. The Arabic language was used for the transmission of knowledge, including the translation of Greek texts into Arabic.

The Arabic language has a rich history and has influenced many other languages. It is the language of the Quran and has played a significant role in the history of the Islamic world. The Arabic language is still in use today and has a vibrant literary and scientific tradition.
The reading "Siḥyāth" is not supported by comparison with "Nītawwāl," which latter is in no doubt because of its occurrence in the rhymed verse. Yidu b. Ḥakīkūn, Wafqīṣ, "Irṭabīk b. Muḥammad b. 'Arifin." 13

14 What distinguished the Fiqh of Abu Ḥanīfa was exactly the same: the probing into the "efficient cause" (fʿilah) governing a number of given instances and then applying the same to unforeseen circumstances. The people of the Hijja were extremely chary of such reasoning and it is no more chance that they came to be notorious for their ignorance of grammar. It is remarkable that the opponents of Abu Ḥanīfa, who wanted to run down his school of Fiqh, thought it necessary to bear the impress of Heilinism. Nevertheless, it remains a mere conjecture that the early Muslims took over anything specific from Greek sources in grammar, in the same way as it is a mere wishful thought that Fiqh is indebted to anything specific in the Roman Law. 15

The corners of Arabic grammar is the correlation of the šīrā of the different parts of a sentence based on the theory of an 'ādāl, i.e., an efficient cause supposedly resident in one of the parts and governing the whole. The earliest trace of it is perhaps in the Kitāb al-Aʿdāmil of al-Khalīl—"a work known to us only by its title. But there is no reason to suppose that al-Khalīl did not act in any way from the general line pursued thence by 'Iṣa b. ʿUmar and others. Unless, therefore, this 'ādāl theory is proved to have been formulated on a familiar pattern, the indebtedness of Arabic grammarians to any external source will remain highly problematic.

There is, however, yet another development of Arabic grammar which is clearly and directly traceable to Greek influence. The most notable and lasting effect of the assimilation of Greek logic and philosophy in the 'Abbasid period was a general tendency to remodel into logically defined systems almost all the nascent branches of learning, which until then lacked a rigid order. So far as Arabic grammar is concerned, this development took place when a Muʿtazilite Mutakallim and a sahabi were combined in the person of Abu al-Hasan 'Ali b. Isā al-Rummānī (d. 284/994). Actually, the process must have started with the Kufan grammarian, al-Farrāʾ (d. 207/822), who was also a Muʿtazile. Under the patronage of al-Māmūn he produced the Kitāb al-Hadiʿ, which must have been the first attempt, so to say, to "philosophize" Arabic grammar. However, the process reached its culmination in al-Rummānī so as to justify his being credited with that highly conventional logical reasoning which has since formed such a notable feature of Arabic grammar. This new development is simply borne out by a saying that out of the three contemporaries the words of al-Ṣafī (Abu Saʿīd al-Hasan b. 'Abd Allah) were thoroughly understood without a teacher, those of Abu 'Ali (al-Hasan b. Ahmad) al-Ṣafī (a) were only partly so, whereas those of al-Rummānī were not intelligible at all.14 Even Abu 'Ali al-Farisi, who, according to the above testimony, was himself partly affected by the innovation, is reputed to have commented that if Nābi be what was expounded by al-Rummānī, then he had nothing to do with it, and vice versa. Undoubtedly, al-Rummānī did not bring out a new system of grammar, he only applied the methods and the jargon of Aristotelian logic to the adumbration of those nebulous conceptions which, in the simple language of the old tradition as represented by al-Ṣafī, were easily comprehended by the average student. There was a similar

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transformation in Arabic rhetorics too. Further, it will be noted that by this time the Arabs had acquired some familiarity with Greek grammar, which warranted their indulging in a comparison of its merits with those of Arabic grammar. But the latter was considered to have already possessed a separate entity with a different development.

While the general trend at Baṣra was to go ahead with the formulation of general rules, there also developed a reaction against the scant attention paid to the singularities of actual usage, which, however, came to the fore only when Abu Ja'far (Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Khāṣṣ) took it over as the basis of the rival school of Kuṭaf founded by him in the later half of the second/eighth century. The Ḳiftāns would assiduously collect such instances as violated the general rules of the Baṣraans and would treat them not as exceptions but as the basis of another general rule opposed to that of the Baṣraans. This school achieved a meteoric rise in importance under the favour of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs. Two of its very influential representatives at the Court were (a) al-Ḵisāʾī, another brother of Imām al-Baṣrī, and (b) al-Ḥarrānī, the former tutor to ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd Allāh an-Ṭāhir, who was designated as ʿAbd Allāh at-Taṣṣāwa in the realm of al-ʿAṣāfī. Ultimately, however, Baghkid proved a veritable crucible for the gradual fusion of the two schools through interchanges. From the end of the ninth century onwards these flourished at the metropolitan scholars who were free from prejudice for or against any particular town or tribe and were actuated by sheer academic interest and reasonableness.

Just one more development may be noted. Abu ʿAlī al-Fārābī, who has been mentioned above, had an illustrious pupil called ʿUjjama (d. 302/912), the son of a Greek slave, regarded as the last of the philosophers-graμmarians. But Ibn ʿAṭīa did not help in clothing the ʿāsim theory with the armoury of logic; rather he submitted the ʿāsim theory itself to the scrutiny of reason. The result was a wounding attack on the false notion that one particular word in a sentence governed the whole. The hint dropped by ibn ʿAṭīa was picked up in far distant Spain by “ibn Māḏal”, the Ḳāirutī Qādis of Cordova, who in his al-Raḍī ṣala al-Nafṣī attempted something in grammar akin to al-Ṭabarī’s Tahājjud in philosophy. However, his attack, though not lacking in flashes of brilliance, remained a cry in wildness as no alternative formulation of Arabic grammar on a basis other than the ʿāsim theory was ever achieved, far less accepted. To sum up, the inspiration for Arabic grammar came from religion; the need for it was created by the encompassing within Islam of the Arabs and the non-Arabs. The methods of observation and induction yielded the discovery of the main body of “laws” in the working of language; the only snag was that the laws of language are not so uniform and immutable as the laws of nature. The older school of grammarians at Baṣra suffered from an immature pedantry which was aggravated by the desire of the non-Arabs among them to outdo the Arabs. At a very early time ʿĪbā b. ʿUmar had the temerity to boast in the presence of the Arab philologists, abu ʿAmr b. ʿAlī, that he (“ʿĪbā b. ʿUmar”) was a greater master of Arabic than Maʿṣūdī. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, the progenitor of the Arab! And both ʿĪbā b. ʿUmar and abu ʿAmr b. ʿAlī exhibited a tendency to prefer such readings of the Qurʾān as, in their opinion, were more consonance with the general rules of grammar. This authoritarianism on the part of the “wisdom of the school seeking to improve upon the facts” (Noldeke) was checked by the rise of the rival school of Kuṭaf. Rather the latter erred on the other extreme; it is said of al-Kisāʾīyy that in his arid search for the unusual and the exceptional he would not pause to test the reliability of his sources. None the less, a relieving feature of the situation was that dogmatism always felt compelled to bow before actual usage, as typically exemplified in the contest between ʿIṣwāwī and al-Kisāʾīyy at the Court of Hārūn-al-Raṣūl. Ultimately, Baghkid provided the necessary atmosphere for the gradual shedding of prejudices and the engagement of all in a joint effort to erect a common edifice large enough to accommodate the conflicting viewpoints on most, if not all, of the established usage. The final success was visited by sporadic attempts at putting possible constructions on actual usage. This tendency was irrespective of the very start by ʿĪbā b. ʿUmar, but it reappeared prominently later on and is justly parodied by abu al-ʿAlī al-Maʿṣūrī in his Risālāt al-Ṯālūt. The instruments of Aristotelian logic helped to hammer out the crystalline of enunciation and adumbration. Finally, there was an attempt to rebuild the entire system on a simpler basis other than the ʿāsim theory, which, however, did not fructify. On the whole, the Arabic grammar remains a magnificent achievement—religious in spirit,
linguistic in material, scientific in methods, and logical in form—which has been eminently successful in preserving the Qur'an and keeping its idiom unchanged yet alive throughout the centuries.

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The preservation of the Qur'an involved the institution of such disciplines as would effectively safeguard not only the authentic rendering of the text but also the warranted understanding of its import against error, corruption, or ignorance overtaking those for whom it was "plain Arabic" at the time. The former purpose was achieved through 'al-`Arabīyāt, which later on developed into a full-fledged science under the name of al-Nahw. The next concern was naturally the meaning conveyed by the text. In the beginning, there could have been little difficulty about it in the same way as about the vocalization of the text which was just a matter of natural spirit.

However, with the lapse of time and the changes in the social pattern, uncertainties began to creep in around words and expressions which had gradually assumed an air of rarity. Obviously, the way to clearing such doubts and uncertainties was to search for the occurrence of those words and expressions in the speech of the Arabs elsewhere. In doing so, care had to be taken that the citations should faithfully reflect the idiom of the time of the Prophet during which the Qur'an was revealed. That is to say, either the citations should belong to the period contemporaneous with, or immediately antecedent to, the Qur'an or be collated from the current usage of those whose social pattern had continued unchanged and who, therefore, could be relied upon to have preserved the idiom from that time uncorrupted and untainted by extraneous influences. Consequently, a zealous hunt was to be set to collect and preserve as much of pre-Islamic poetry, proverbs, and orations as could be salvaged from the memories of the people together with the current idiom of the Arab, i.e., the people of the desert impervious to influences from outside. The method of collection was identical with that of the collection of the Hadith.

The end of the first/seventh century witnessed the rise of a band of scholars specially noted for their profundity in the field of al-Fiqh (Arabic usage)

11 In the words of Abu `Ubaidah introducing his Musnah al-Qur'ān: "The Qur'an was revealed in clear Arabic language and those who heard it recited by the Prophet had no need of asking for its meaning. . . ."

12 Cf. the saying attributed to ibn `Abbas: When you be in doubt about any rare expression of the Qur'an, seek it in poetry. Al-Suyuti, al-Mughir, ed. Muhammad Ahmad Jad al-Ma`ad and others, Cairo, II, p. 92. It was in consideration of this that linguistic studies were regarded as an obligation on a person with the obligation of prayer; cf. the verses (ibid. j., Ibm al-Gazzâlî, 'Al-`Arif, Edinburgh, p. 3) went so far as to declare that anyone who deserts the poetry of the Arabs is a sinner, and the one who runs down their language is an infidel (kafir).

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with its ancillary branches of al-`Arabīyāt (poetry), al-mughīr (the historical annals), al-`aqūs (accounts of tribal wars), and al-nahw (grammatical rules). The most prominent name among these scholars is that of Abu `Amr b. al-`Askarī (70/688-154/770), an Arab nobleman of Basrah and an associate of `Isa b. `Umar. His collection of Arabic philology, when piled up, touched the ceiling of his room. He set fire to this vast collection when he was overwhelmed by a fit of asceticism towards the end of his life. Yet he continued to be the primary source of knowledge for the next generation.

While the process of collecting the vocabulary and the illustrations of its diverse uses was still going on, the genius of al-Khallīl, whom we have mentioned before, burst with the idea of arranging and fitting the vocabulary into the orderly scheme of a lexicon. Actually, al-Khallīl is known as the author of the first Arabic lexicon called the Kāmil al-`Arab, but the authorship is a bit disputed. This much, however, is certain that even if the actual compilation was not exclusively or partially the work of al-Khallīl, the idea of a lexicon and the scheme thereof were first conceived by him. Let us now examine what the scheme is like.

Al-Khallīl starts with (a) reducing all words to their roots, i.e., the radical letters (al-asfāl) which form an immutable kernel in contradistinction to those that are added (al-anadāl) in the course of derivation and inflexion. Next (b) he classifies the roots according to the number of letters comprised in them: 2, 3, 4, and 5. Each class of words is then arranged in a separate part and even within each class special treatment under distinctive heading is resorted to in the case of words containing one or more of the vowels, double letters, or a [a and o].

The above framework is in line with al-Khallīl's attempt at a computation of Arabic vocabulary, which is a further proof of his originality. This quest he pursued on the same structural basis in a mathematical way. By multiplying the 28 letters of the alphabet by 37 (28 minus 1, to drop out double letters) he got 756 forms of the biliteral (there being no unilaterals in Arabic). Dividing this number by 2, he had 378 combinations irrespective of the order of the two letters. Taking these biliteral forms as one unit and adding a third letter to them, he worked out the number of trilateral forms and so on. It will be observed that the above method yielded the theoretically possible combinations of letters, all of which are not in actual use (musta`nul). Consequently, al-Khallīl had to mention each and every possible combination and indicate if any specific forms were unused (musta`mal). A further peculiarity, which made reference so difficult and cumbersome, was that in the arrangement of the lexicon he concerned himself merely with combinations of letters and mentioned all the forms yielded by a change of order of the letters under one and the same heading. For example, under MY one will find both MY and its reverse (musta`mal), YFM. But in the above framework, intrinsically scientific but practically unwieldy, the order was according to the opening letter of the alphabet in the
words. But the order of the alphabet observed by al-Khattal was not free from novelty, the grouping was accorded to the part of the mouth, from the dawn until the noon, the lips, the tongue, the teeth, and the throat. The position of the letters in writing, was the one in common use even at that distant date, though the Arabs were also familiar with the order according to the abjad system, which was originally taken over from the Syriac and Hebrew along with the art of writing. The phonetic-physiological system of al-Khattal was neither common at the time nor did it achieve popularity afterwards. But any significance which its similarity to that of Sanskrit might suggest is blotted down by due consideration of the fact that in all probability it developed independently out of the practice of the recitation of the Qur'an. With the emphasis on recitation it was not and never was the phonetics should receive special attention and that there was a grouping of letters in that basis. Actually, evidence is not wanting that the linguists did engage themselves in such a study; there were some differences however the Basrans and the Kufans as to the order of the alphabet on the basis of phonetics. Moreover, al-Khattal also paid some regard to the frequency of the letters in use; otherwise 'ain would not have come first in order. 28

No doubt, the general lexicon of al-Khattal represented an idea much in advance of his time; for during the first century or so no one dared imitate, far less improve upon, his scheme. In the meantime, however, much valuable work was done in the form of small tracts comprising words, synonyms, and cognates with their fine shades of meaning grouped around particular subjects. Typical of such subjects are: al-dal (the camel), al-ma'n (the rain), al-sif (the weapons), and the like. Similarly, special features of the Arabic usage were also singled out for monographic treatment: (a) al-maghdib, (b) al-maghrb, (c) al-idhāb, (d) al-zawijj, (e) al-muqaddas. Some philologists wrote running commentaries (concerned mostly with the meaning of selected words and phrases supported with illuminations from other sources) on the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet under such captions as: Gharib al-Quran, Gharib al-Hadith, Majid al-Qur'an, Ma'asi al-Qur'an, etc. The veterans in this field were two Arabs and two non-Arabs, one of the latter being from the distant province of Sind. 29

28 It was in that original source that numerical values were assigned to the letters in that order, which is still adhered to in Arabic and other Islamic languages for purposes of chronograms. The assertion by later Arab philologists that abjad, e.g., were the names of the inventors of the art of writing (al-Suyuti, esp., II, p. 342) should be taken merely as a reflection of the old borrowing.


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beginning of a process of subjecting to criticism and sifting out the useful and the dependable from the large mass of material left behind by the early scholars, who were concerned with collecting and recording whatever they came across. At the time when the mistakes were being corrected, an attempt was also made to supply the omissions in the works of the earlier authors. These, in short, are the new features noticeable in the lexicographical productions of the fourth/tenth century. Particularly notable in this respect is the Fathakirr, whose author, Abu Mansur Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Azhari (d. 370/980), a pupil of Ibn Duraid, was urged to wanderlost in the desert for the collection of al-Tājī. Incidentally, he fell a captive into the hands of a Bedouin tribe; this provided him with the desired opportunity. Equally important is al-Maṣūṣ of al-Ṣāḥib b. ‘AbdAllah, who died in 386/996.

The culmination of the critical activity of the fourth/tenth century aiming at authenticity and comprehensiveness, was reached in the Ṣūdāh of al-Jahari, Abu Naṣr Imam b. Ḥammād (died about 308/917), a native of Fīrāz who settled down as Nāḏim. The very study of al-Bukhari. It has already been hinted at that the method of collecting al-Tājī was essentially the same as the one applied to the collection of the traditions, only a higher degree of stringency was observed in the case of the latter than in that of the former. This is aptly illustrated by the example of al-Ṣāḥib, who is held to be trustworthy in regard to Ḥadīth, but he risks conjectures in matters pertaining to the Ṣūdāh and even embellishes anecdotes for the sake of amusement. Anyway, it is worthwhile to note that even the mere nomenclature of the Ḥadīth such as the ṣalāḥīṣ and the ṣudd was applied to the Ṣūdāh and the degree of reliability of any particular usage determined accordingly.

In the beginning it was not uncommon even to mention the imām or the chain of narrators and to discuss the personal character and reputation of the transmitters. Thus, a comprehension of the Ṣūdāh was sought to be arrived at in the field of Ṣūdāh parallel to a similar, though much more scrupulously worked out, effort in the field of religious tradition. It has, however, to be noticed that the Ṣūdāh suffered grievously from an unfortunate circumstance: the author was overtaken by a fit of melancholy which rendered him incapable of revising the manuscript. Further, due to the absence of any authentic copy of the text, a good deal of corruption also set in. All this necessitated a re-examination of the work in glosses and commentaries by later writers.

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The work of al-Jahari was still more remarkable in another way. In it the entire vocabulary was integrated (instead of being split up into structural categories) and arranged in alphabetical order with first reference to the last letter and a second reference to its combination with the first. This new scheme at once became popular and was highly appreciated as particularly suited to a language in which the endings of the words had a unique importance for purposes of rhyme (ṣūbḥān and ʿād). Apart from the merits of this integrated scheme, the development and standardization of al-Qaṣīṣ (etymology) at the hands of al-Maṣūṣ (abu ‘Uthmān Bakr b. Muhammad, d. 249/863), Ibn Jinni, and al-Hamānī during the course of the fourth/tenth century removed a good deal of the confusion which marred the works of al-Khallī and Ibn Duraid.

We have now reached a time when the Arabic vocabulary was supposed to have been exhaustively collected and the meanings of words established with reasonable certainty. Henceforth, efforts were directed at collecting the meanings scattered in the previous works either (a) in the form of large comprehensive dictionaries or (b) in concise handy volumes designed for the ordinary student. Naturally, the latter often dispensed with illustrations and citations. The most important works of the former category are:

(1) Al-Maṣūṣ by the blind Spanish scholar, Ibn Sīdāh (abu al-Ḥasan ‘Ali b. Ahmad l, d. 460/1068), was held in great esteem for comprehensiveness and absolute reliability. But perhaps the author did not like innovations; hence he went back to the earliest model of al-Khallī for its arrangement.

(2) Al-ʿUrbā (incomplete) was composed by Rādi al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Ṭabikī, born in Lahore in 570/1174. He settled at Baghānd where he dedicated his work to ibn al-ʿĀqāmi, the minister of al-Mustāṣem, whence he was sent out twice as ambassador of the ’Abdālī Qādī (the Court of Britushi) at Delhi.

(3) The Liṣān al-ʿArāb was compiled by ibn Mukarram/ibn Maṣūr (Jamāl al-Dīn Muhammad), who was born in 600/1201, and died at Cairo in 711/1309. It is expressly based on the works of Ibn Duraid, al-Azhari, al-Jahari, and ibn Sīdāh.

Of the latter category, the work which achieved a high degree of prestige is the Qāṣīṣ of Majd al-Dīn al-Fīrāzābādī (Muhammad b. Yaʿqūb) who died in 818/1413. It draws upon al-Maṣūṣ and al-ʿUrbā.

Yet another work which deserves special mention is the Anāṣ al-Balāghah of the well-known Muʿtaṣīlī al-Zamakhshārī (abu al-Qāsim Jār Allah Māhmūd b. Umar, born 487/1097 and died 538/1143). The author was a native of Khwāzām who spent a long time in Makkah and Baghānd. He realized that the mere recording of meanings was an insufficient guide to the practical use of words. He, therefore, would give the occasions and the contexts in which the words were employed. What is still more remarkable is the arrangement of the Anāṣ, which is in the alphabetical order with reference to the first (and then the second and so forth) letter of a word. That is to say, its arrangement

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is exactly the same as has come into vogue in modern times since the impact of Western literary influences.

It is interesting to note that the early trend towards compiling treatises dealing with words grouped around particular subjects did not die with the appearance of the general lexicons; it had an uninterrupted development on parallel lines. The greatest work of this kind is al-Muhkhamat, a treatise on the general lexicon, al-Muhkham, by the Andalusian Ibn Sidah. In al-Muhkhamat, the vocabulary is grouped under subject headings, e.g., the hair, the eye, etc., which are classified into "books" such as that on "human body." Even if the position of al-Muhkham is not wholly unsurpassed, that of al-Muhkhamat is definitely so.

Once the framework of a general lexicon was fixed, the running commentaries on the rare and difficult words in the Qur'an and the Hadith were also brought under that form. Similarly, no time was lost in extending the facility and the benefits of a general dictionary to the other specialized branches such as zoology, botany, biography, geography, bibliography, and finally the encyclopedias (al-mawsil'ah). It may be observed in this connection that interest in language and literature, which the scheme of a lexicon was originally designed to subsist, seldom disappeared in any of the works, however specialized and limited the scope of their treatment. It would, for example, be really odd to conceive of a zoologist or a geographer who was not familiar with the references in the Qur'an and the Hadith or who would be unable to recall poetry, proverbs, and pithy sayings concerning animals or towns. This all-permeating interest in humanities is perhaps the most valuable asset of Islamic culture.

In conclusion, it will be recalled that the early philologists were fully conscious of the sanctity of their task; they showed themselves to be scrupulous in method and honest in purpose. But the scope of the linguistic studies was bound in course of time to extend beyond what was strictly relevant to the Qur'an and the Hadith. As the bounds of the sacred faded into those of the profane, the common failings of vanity, mere guess or conjecture, or even unguarded reliance on genuine misunderstandings, contributed to the interpolation of the spurious. Also, as these studies came to be held in high esteem and patronised with abundant monetary gifts, the veterans in the field were sometimes tempted to window-dress faked rarities in their shop. But the probe into their personal weaknesses, so characteristic of Islamic religious and literary tradition, and the severe tests subsequently applied to their statements served to a large extent to clear the chaff from the grain. On the whole, there is no doubt that a fair degree of reliability was achieved. In the same way it is impossible to claim that the entire vocabulary and usage were exhausted, yet there is no gainsaying the fact that an enormous part of them was actually encompassed. The charge that the Arabic philologists

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concerned themselves too exclusively with the idiom of the Qur'an and showed no interest in contemporary deviations from the same, tautamounts to questioning their objective or purpose, which has been steadily confirmed throughout the ages. In regard to the scheme and the arrangement of a lexicon, the early pioneers proceeded on the basis of a scientific etymological analysis of the structure of the vocabulary. Practical convenience was achieved later in the superbly original plan of al-Jahahir, which remains the one specially suited to the genius of the language. Even the model which has become so popular in modern times is traceable to al-Zamakhshari.

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Chapter LII

ARABIC LITERATURE: THEORIES OF LITERARY CRITICISM

In this account of the Arab contribution to the theories of literary criticism, the term "Arab" is used in a wide sense to include all the Arabic-speaking peoples, and the writers who used Arabic as their cultural medium, regardless of their racial origins.

Literary criticism is also broadly used to cover the whole field of literary appreciation, analysis, judgment, and comparison on the practical as well as the theoretical side. In this broad sense, Bakshah—what concerns itself with the study of the figures of speech and the stylistic aspects of literature in general—may be included under literary criticism, at least of the golden era of the early centuries of Hijrah, although, generally speaking, the relation between the two is a matter of controversy.

The period covered by our treatment is likewise a fairly long one. It extends from the first/seventh century to the present time, and it corresponds to the Islamic era in the history of the Arabs. For, although the Arabs achieved a high measure of perfection in their poetry two centuries before Islam, they did not reach the mature stage of theorising about literature and its excellence until their minds were stirred and stimulated by the call of the new religion that arose in their midst. The fact that the miraculous sign of the religion of Islam came in the form of a "Clear Arabic Book" was destined to play

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