

Development of Arabic Morphology in the Arabic Linguistic Tradition: A Historical Study

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Abstract

The place of Arabic morphology in the linguistic history of the Arabs has not been given much attention in the historical study of Arabic linguistics and modern linguistics in general although its origins and development help shed an important light on its role in the formative years of the Arabic linguistic tradition. With the use of both primary and secondary sources, this paper brings to light the history and development of Arabic morphology. It focuses on its transformation from a subset of syntax into an autonomous scientific theory and the significant contributions of the Arab grammarians to this development. The study shows that it passed through three important stages of development within which all the fundamental morphological components were established culminating into a separate field of study with the final actualization of its formal structures. The study of Arabic grammar originally began with a religious need to protect the Qur'ān from grammatical mistakes which eventually led to a detailed linguistic study of the Arabic language. It consisted of syntax, morphology and phonology under the general rubric *'ilm al-naḥw*. But Arabic morphology eventually transformed into a completely developed autonomous linguistic phenomenon known as *'ilm al-ṣarf* or *'ilm al-taṣrīf*, (the science of morphology).

Introduction

Arabic morphology known today as *'ilm al-ṣarf* or *'ilm al-taṣrīf*, (the science of morphology) was initially not an independent scientific discipline in the Arabic linguistic tradition. It was studied as part of syntax under the general rubric *'ilm al-naḥw* and according to Suleiman, grammar in general was viewed as a coherent totality within which two major portions, morphology and syntax were recognized.¹ But it eventually developed into a separate field with many grammarians specializing in its study and it became a recognized branch in Arabic linguistics worthy of study. Its relevance as a crucial discipline in the language was stressed by Abū al-Faṭḥ 'Uthmān b. Jinnī (d. 393/1002). He stated that the study of *al-taṣrīf* is a great necessity for all Arabs because it is the method of the *'Arabiyyah*.² He further pointed out that it is essential in the Arabic language to first acquire

¹ Suleiman (1999a: 32).

² Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* I, 2.

an in-depth knowledge of morphology before pursuing the study of syntax since the former describes the fixed nature or traits of words and the latter, the changes in the case endings.³ However, before Arabic morphology finally matured into a separate field of study and acquired the term *‘ilm al-ṣarf* or *‘ilm al-taṣrīf*, it passed through various phases and innovations. This progress will be discussed within the broad historical development of Arabic grammar since it evolved out of it.

Historical Development

The period in which Arab scholars began to show interests in issues related to morphology can be linked to the time in which steps were taken to preserve the sacrosanct text of the Qur’ān. This period marked the first stage in the development of Arabic morphology. During the Islamic conquest and the spread of Islam beyond the Arabian Peninsula, there was an urgent need to establish an authoritative text of the Qur’ān and to prevent faulty use of the language by the growing number of the non-Arabic speaking Muslim converts.⁴ However, the Qur’ānic text available during that period had no vowels and lacked diacritic marks exposing it to ambiguous interpretations and faulty reading.⁵ This changed by the end of the 7th century to the beginning of the 8th century with the introduction of diacritical marks for the vowels and the establishment of a single authorized text of the Qur’ān.⁶ It was also during this period that grammarians informally discussed and debated on syntactic and morphophonological issues in the Qur’ānic text which was usually in a question and answer form.⁷ With the establishment of the Qur’ān they now focused on general linguistic issues which were principally on morphology (*taṣrīf*).⁸ During this early stage, grammarians like ‘Isā Ibn ‘Umar Al-Thaqafī (d. 146/763 or 127/744), Abū ‘Amr Ibn Al-‘Alā (d. 154/770) and Abū Al-Khaṭṭab Al-Kabīr were believed to have contributed to the growth of morphology as they committed a great part of their professional activities to its study, especially in the areas of diminutives and derived adjectives.⁹ These grammarians were mentioned by ‘Amr Ibn ‘Uthmān Ibn

³ Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* I, 4.

⁴ Carter (1990: 119).

⁵ Law (1990: 826).

⁶ Carter (2006: 183; 1990: 119).

⁷ Bernards (2001: 31).

⁸ Versteegh (1984: 232-234).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 230-31.

Qanbar Abū Bishr Sībawayh (d. 177/793) in his *Kitāb* and considered to be his teachers.¹⁰ According to Versteegh, these early grammarians who preceded Sībawayh were deeply involved in linguistic problems and although they did not publish any works on the structure of Arabic as did Sībawayh they were engaged in the study of “the Arabic language as a phenomenon worthy of linguistic study and systematization.”¹¹ He describes them as technical experts in grammar who were not only concerned with defending the Qur’ān but also with morphological issues.¹² Versteegh’s observation points out an important step in the development of Arabic morphology and the study of Arabic grammar in general. It shows that grammarians began to gradually move away from the religious influence focusing more on its linguistic study and application. This new approach to the linguistic study of the language was fully realized in the era of Al-Khalīl Abū ‘Abd Al-Raḥmān Al-Farāhīdī Ibn Aḥmad (d. 175/791-2) and his student Sībawayh in the middle of the 2nd/8th century in Baṣrah.

The second phase in the development of Arabic morphology was ushered in by the two visionary grammarians, Al-Khalīl and Sībawayh, who are credited with the systematization of Arabic grammar. Their immense contribution to the establishment of the fundamental composition of Arabic morphology cannot be overemphasized. Using the Qur’ān, a corpus of poetic texts from Bedouin informants who were considered correct speakers of *al-‘Arabiyyah*, they gave insight into the structure of the language by critically observing the collected data.¹³ The most important key to the morphological framework of the language was determined when Al-Khalīl invented a method of analyzing Arabic words based on their roots and formulated morphological patterns out of which he established his first Arabic dictionary, *Kitāb al-‘Ayn*.¹⁴ In the introductory part of this dictionary, he first of all arranged the inventory of Arabic words and went on to discuss the organs of speech and the production of sounds, and then divided the words into classes.¹⁵ He gathered that the word structure was made up of the root and the augment and words could be divided into the bare form (*mujarrad*) and the augmented form

¹⁰ Versteegh (1984: 230-31).

¹¹ Versteegh (1999: 9).

¹² Versteegh (1993: 37).

¹³ Fischer (2006: 403).

¹⁴ Madhany (2006: Vol. 2:455); Fischer (2006: 402); Sara (2006: 168).

¹⁵ Arbuthnot (1986: 46).

(*mazīd*).¹⁶ He again determined that the speech of the Arabs was made up of four types of root: the biliteral, the trilateral, quadrilateral and quinqueliteral.¹⁷ The nouns and the verbs were not less than three and not more than five radicals for native Arabic verbs and any root that was more than that was either made up or was a borrowed lexical item.¹⁸ According to Shawqī Ḍayf, this has been the backbone to the analysis of the Arabic language ever since.¹⁹ Another significant contribution that Al-Khalīl made to the growth of Arabic morphology was the invention of the remarkable morphological scale (*mīzān al-ṣarf*).²⁰ Ḍayf indicates that this scale has a close similarity to the scale he made for the prosodic meters confirming that he indeed was the originator.²¹ He adopted the /Fa‘aLa/ pattern for the bare trilateral in the prosodic meter, added *lām* for the quadrilateral like /Fa‘aLaL/ for /جعفر - *Ja‘far*/ ‘proper name’ and two *lāms* for the quinqueliteral bare form as in /سفرجل - *safarjal*/ ‘quince’ with the *wazn* /Fa‘aLLaL/.²² The scale was meant to facilitate the identification of the letters of augmentation (*zāwā’id*) which he classified as ten: /‘alif, y, w, m, t, n, s, h, l/, and the glottal stop.²³ Although Al-Khalīl did not focus his work purposely on Arabic morphology, his lexicographical work opened the door to the understanding of the morphological structure of the language leading to further studies in it. Ḍayf confirms that Al-Khalīl’s contributions gave a great impetus to the development of Arabic morphology.²⁴ Mehiri describes him as one “gifted with undeniable powers of synthesis and a remarkable capacity to marshal and give form to facts.”²⁵

After Al-Khalīl, Sībawayh expanded on his innovation by presenting an in-depth description of the morphological structure of the Arabic language in his famous *al-Kitāb*, the first extant grammatical work in the Arabic linguistic tradition. Carter points out that Sībawayh made use of a lot of Al-Khalīl’s information which served as an abundant

¹⁶ Arbuthnot (1986: 46).

¹⁷ Al-Farāhīdī, *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* I, 48.

¹⁸ Al-Khalīl, *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* I, 49; Sara (2006:168); Ḍayf (1968: 35); Haywood (1960: 25).

¹⁹ Ḍayf (1968: 35).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

²² *Ibid.*, 35.

²³ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁵ Mehiri (2003: 39).

source for morphological data.²⁶ Sībawayh's dependence on Al-Khalīl coupled with the study of morphology by preceding grammarians as mentioned by Versteegh above, reveal that historically, the study of Arabic morphology did not begin with Sībawayh as indicated by some modern linguists.²⁷ Notwithstanding, Sībawayh made valuable use of the data at hand with which he was able to lay down the rules of Arabic morphology detailing its every aspect. Sībawayh described the concept of morphology as what the Arabs formed of nouns, adjectives, and verbs that are sound and weak and the formation of weak forms not constructed by the Arabs but modeled after forms used by them through *qiyās* and this is what the grammarians call *taṣrīf* and *f* 'l.²⁸ Sībawayh's interpretation of morphology implies a productive, analogical process of coining new words based on the usage of the Arabs.²⁹ The notation /F-'-L/ indicates the morphological pattern or template upon which words can be formed,³⁰ for example, the forming of /كتب - *kataba*/ 'to write' using the measure or form /Fa'aLa/. The important input of Sībawayh and his teacher Al-Khalīl created a solid foundation for its further growth. An important trend that also aided significantly in the development process was the general method that the grammarians used during this period to instruct their students on the rules and methods of morphology. It was usually based on a question and answer format between them and their students. They would ask their students to form new words based on an existing pattern. For instance, a student would be asked to derive a new word from /ضرب - *ḍarb*/ 'beating' similar to the form /جُلْجُل - *juḷjuḷ*/ 'little bell, jingle'.³¹ The students would then use the scale /Fu'LuL/ to be able to derive /ضرب - *ḍurbub*/'. They would change the *fathah* on the *ḍād* to *ḍammah* and add an additional /bā'/ to conform to the measuring scale.³² Students were also sometimes asked to use trilateral weak roots with /wāw/ or /yā'/ to form new words analogous to existing Arabic strong words. The new form had to take the same structure and features as the sound form, for example, form for me *ghazā* 'to make a raid'

²⁶ Carter (1990: 121; 2004: 27); Dayf (1968: 33-34).

²⁷ Owens (2000: 67).

²⁸ Sībawayh, *al-Kitāb* IV, 242; cf. Akesson (2006: 118); cf. Al-Ḥadīthī (2003: 19); Sakhnini (1984: 25).

²⁹ Cf. Akesson (2001: 28).

³⁰ Hindāwī (1989: 18).

³¹ Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* III, 274-5.

³² *Ibid.*, III, 274-5.

like *ja'farin* 'proper name'.³³ Questions beginning with *'ibni lī...*(form for me...), *'ibni min...*(form from...), *kayfa tabnī...*(how do you form...), *kayfa taṣūghu* (how do you coin...) were a very prevalent style of teaching morphology among the grammarians.³⁴ According to Fleisch, this approach which was known as *masā'il al-tamrīn* (training questions), was intended mainly for the students to be able to have command over the formation of sound and weak forms (إعلال) *'i'lāl* (weak) and (إدغام) *'idghām* (assimilation).³⁵ These exercises were also meant for students to easily identify the *wazn* (measure, form or pattern) of existing words, how to form words analogous to any given pattern and determine the augments (*al-ziyādāh*) as well.³⁶ The grammarians were using analogy to generate hypothetical data in order “to inculcate in the learners a conscious knowledge of the patterns of the language.”³⁷ As Fleisch points out, the earlier grammarians saw the understanding and application of morphology as entrenched in drills and practice (*al-riyāḍah wa-al-tadarrub*) “practice and habituation”.³⁸ Arabic morphology remained more descriptive than theoretical and subsumed under *naḥw*.

The third and final stage in the historical development of Arabic morphology began in the 3rd/9th century. This period witnessed a proliferation of literary and scientific studies in which grammarians began to specialize in various disciplines resulting in new advancements in the study of Arabic morphology.³⁹ It was transformed from a sub-field into a specialized and independent field of study in the Arabic linguistic tradition. Grammarians had begun to look at morphology as a subject distinct from grammar. It became known as *'ilm al-taṣrīf* or *'ilm al-ṣarf*, ‘the science of the way forms of words circulate.’⁴⁰ The contributions of Abū ‘Uthmān Al-Māzinī (d. 249/863), a Baṣran grammarian in this era are worth mentioning. He is generally regarded as the first to have written on morphology as an independent subject.⁴¹ His work is known through the commentary of Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif*. Dayf stresses that Al-Māzinī’s interest in *naḥw* (syntax) was nothing compared to his interest in morphology,

³³ Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* III, 294-5.

³⁴ Ibid., III, 274-5; cf. Fleisch (1974 : 295).

³⁵ Ibid., 294; Hindawi (1989: 18); Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* III, 276; cf. Fleisch (1974: 296; 2002: 1).

³⁶ Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* III, 275, 279.

³⁷ Suleiman (1999b: 30-31).

³⁸ Fleisch (2002: 1); Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* III, 275.

³⁹ Al-Ḥadīthī (2003: 22).

⁴⁰ Carter (2006: 183).

⁴¹ Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* III, 288.

making him produce his book, *Kitāb al-taṣrīf*.⁴² And according to Abū 'Uthmān Ibn Bahr *Al-Jāhiz* (d. 255/869), he was one of the three most prominent grammarians of his time, along with Muḥammad Ibn Bashīr Al-Riyāshī (d. 257/871) and Abū Ḥassan Al-Ziyādī (d. 243/857) who were teachers of Muḥammad Ibn Yazīd Al-Mubarrid (d. 284/898).⁴³ Al-Mubarrid also expressed his admiration for him and claimed that he knew no better grammarian after Sībawayh, and that his *Kitāb al-Taṣrīf* is valued as his most important contribution to Arabic grammar.⁴⁴ The importance and status of Al-Māzinī's work is equated with that of Sībawayh's *Kitāb*. For just as *al-Kitāb* is the *aṣl* (source) of all Arabic grammar, so also is the *Kitāb al-Taṣrīf* considered the *aṣl* of Arabic morphology.⁴⁵ However, it must be mentioned that there are some disagreements on who is truly credited with the beginning of the independent study of Arabic morphology. Jalāl Al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) and 'Abd Al-Qāhir Ibn 'Abd Al-Raḥmān Al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078) report that the study of morphology separate from syntax actually surfaced in Kūfah (city located south of Bagdad) at the hands of Mu'ādh Ibn Muslim Al-Harrā' (d. 187/809) who was the first to discuss and clarify morphological issues separate from that of syntax.⁴⁶ He was much interested in morphological forms and drills and was credited with the first use of the morphological notation *F*-*'L* and counted among the most prominent Arabic grammarians of his time.⁴⁷ The Baṣran grammarians were allegedly more inclined towards *naḥw* than *taṣrīf* but Kūfan grammarians who studied from them were more engaged in the study of morphology than in *naḥw*, and it was Mu'ādh who excelled in its study.⁴⁸ This tradition has however been challenged by some modern linguists like Ḍayf who dismisses the opinion that Mu'ādh was the originator of Arabic morphology. Ḍayf believes that this claim is only based on a discussion in which Mu'ādh asked someone to derive an active participle from a given verb.⁴⁹ Other linguists including Al-Ḥadīthī and Nabia Abbot also do not believe he was a leading grammarian in his era.⁵⁰ According to Al-Ḥadīthī, although it is claimed in the

⁴² Ḍayf (1968: 118).

⁴³ Bernards and Ibn Wallād (1997: 23).

⁴⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁵ Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* III, 288; 'Uḍaymah (1999: 14).

⁴⁶ Al-Suyūṭī, *Kitāb al-'iqtirāḥ fī 'ilm uṣūl al-naḥw* 203; Al-Jurjānī, *al-'Umad* 31-32; Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* II, 284; Hilāl (1974: 8); Versteegh (2002: 2); Versteegh (1993: 202); Afaghānī (1970: 42).

⁴⁷ Hilāl (1974: 8); Versteegh (2002: 2); Versteegh (1993: 202).

⁴⁸ Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* III, 284.

⁴⁹ Ḍayf (1968: 154).

⁵⁰ Al-Ḥadīthī (2003: 22); Abbott (1972: 6).

sources that he was passionate and highly enthusiastic about issues on morphology, he never wrote any work on it, albeit he did write on syntax.⁵¹ Moreover, even if he talked about issues on morphology, it does not necessarily mean that he explained the science of morphology or its rules and questions related to it.⁵² It is further claimed that he might not have attained any high level in its study as Sībawayh did.⁵³ Mu‘ādh, it is believed, had many literary works which were never published and the only published one on *naḥw* is lost.⁵⁴ Hindāwī on the other hand, holds the view that the work of Al-Māzinī has been erroneously considered the first work on morphology by modern grammarians only because it is the oldest surviving book.⁵⁵ He states that the first to write only on Arabic morphology among the Baṣrans was Al-Akhfash Al-Awsaṭ (d. 215/830) and among the Kūfans was ‘Alī Ibn Al-Ḥasan Al-Aḥmar (d.194/809).⁵⁶

All in all, Al-Māzinī’s work goes unchallenged as the earliest extant work on morphology and the most outstanding of the 3rd /9th century. He brought changes in Arabic morphology by putting together for the first time the scattered morphological topics discussed by Sībawayh in his book in a much more organized form with practical thoroughness and mastery.⁵⁷ Ibn Jinnī’s commentary on it, *al-Munṣif* is also regarded as the most important and extant work devoted entirely to the study of morphology.⁵⁸

The study of Arabic morphology progressed and improved throughout the 3rd /9th century and onwards, when the center of linguistic activities moved to the ‘Abbāsīd capital of Baghdad. The Iraqi cities of Baṣrah and Kūfah were also two important intellectual and educational centers of the ‘Abbāsīd empire and the home of prominent grammarians, teachers and scholars.⁵⁹ Intense developments in Islamic sciences continued to take place, culminating in the introduction of some striking new features into Medieval Arabic

⁵¹ Al-Ḥadīthī (2003: 23).

⁵² Ibid., 23.

⁵³ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁴ Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* III, 284.

⁵⁵ Hindāwī (1989: 68).

⁵⁶ Ibid., 68. Other sources cite Abū al-Ḥasan Aḥmad although his work is considered lost. See Fleisch (1974: 297; cf. Akesson (2001: 3-4).

⁵⁷ Ḍayf (1968: 118).

⁵⁸ Al-Ḥadīthī (2003: 24); cf. Sakhnini (1984: 23); Ḍayf (1968: 118).

⁵⁹ Chejne (1969: 41).

grammatical thinking in general.⁶⁰ Sībawayh's book was subject to a lot of analysis and explanations with more than twenty books of commentary on it.⁶¹ In morphology in particular, the theoretical structure continued to acquire a more definite structure as grammarians began to compose elaborate and formal definitions for grammatical terms and notions followed with extensive explanations.⁶² This illuminating approach, according to Peled, was not meant to take the place of any existing term used by the former grammarians, but rather to fill a gap in *al-Kitāb*'s terminology,⁶³ thus pointing to the systematic progress that was taking place in the study of Arabic morphology. For the first time a well-defined and formal representation of morphology could be discerned in the writings of grammarians. Definitions of morphology were made more explicit and some of these definitions pointed further to the non-declensional nature of morphology and its opposition to syntax, thus emphasizing the autonomy of morphology.⁶⁴ *Taṣrīf* was also considered as consisting of two distinct senses: 'amalī, practical and 'ilmī, theoretical.⁶⁵ And it was further divided into two important parts: morphology and morphophonology, which were termed *ma'nawī* and *lafzī* respectively.⁶⁶ The approach of grammarians in this era marked a complete shift from a practical process that dealt mainly with questions and drills to portray a system that encompassed all the theoretical rules and principles of Arabic morphology. In other words, the notion of *taṣrīf* was not only for practical drills as was the case with preceding grammarians but a science in its own right that concerned itself also with theories and methods.⁶⁷ Grammarians also began to pay particular attention to the explanation and justification of morphological forms. It came to be known as the concept of *ta'līl* (causation: providing explanation or rationalization) which is "the method of systematic justification of every vowel and morphological process that underlies the forms that are analyzed."⁶⁸ This approach was based on the assumption that the Arabic language was a perfectly harmonious

⁶⁰ Peled (1999: 61).

⁶¹ 'Awn (1970: 64).

⁶² Peled (1999: 63).

⁶³ Ibid., 62.

⁶⁴ Versteegh (2002: 2).

⁶⁵ Ibn Jinnī, *al-Munṣif* III, 278.

⁶⁶ Ibid., III, 282; Ibn 'Uṣfūr, *al-Mumti'* I, 31; cf. Bohas et al. (1990: 73).

⁶⁷ Fleisch (1974: 297).

⁶⁸ Baalbaki (2008: 57; 2006: 22). Sībawayh and his teacher made use of *ta'līl* without referring to the term. For details, see Suleiman (1999b) and Baalbaki (2008).

system which called for an explanation of an underlying rationale.⁶⁹ Al-Qāsim Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Sa‘īd Mu’addib is one of those grammarians of his time known for his deep interest in the use of *ta‘līl*. His work *Daqā’iq al-Taṣrīf* is regarded as a unique treatise largely devoted to the intricate details of morphology and the *ta‘līl* of the various verbal and nominal patterns and forms.⁷⁰ Others include ‘Abd Al-Raḥmān Ibn Ishāq Al-Zajjājī (d. 337/948) with his *Īdāh* and ‘Abd Al-Raḥmān Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Al-Anbārī’s (d. 577/1181) *Asrār al-‘Arabiyyah* which has several chapters of morphological *ta‘līl*.⁷¹

Ibn Jinnī, a highly acclaimed grammarian of the 4th/10th century in Baghdad, is renowned for his significant additions to the theoretical advancement of morphology. His commentary on Al-Māzinī’s *Kitāb al-Taṣrīf, Al-Munṣif*, is distinguished as a classic work in the study of Arabic morphology for its well-structured and more systematic nature than the works of both Sībawayh and Al-Māzinī.⁷² He was the first grammarian to divide the theory of *‘ishtiqaq* into two parts, *‘ishtiqaq al-ṣaghīr* or *al-‘aṣghar* (minor derivation) and *‘ishtiqaq al-kabīr* or *al-‘akbar* (major derivation). *‘Ishtiqaq al-ṣaghīr* (minor derivation) is producing a derivative from a base-form which must refer back to it in meaning.⁷³ In *al-‘ishtiqaq al-kabīr* (major derivation) sounds have close association to meaning, regardless of the position of the root consonants.⁷⁴ What he termed *al-‘ishtiqaq al-kabīr*, although his teacher Abū ‘Alī Al-Fārisī (d. 377/987) and Al-Khalīl made use of it they failed to define it or give it a name.⁷⁵ Other works of Ibn Jinnī include *al-Taṣrīf al-Mulūkī*, *Sirr Ṣinā‘at al-‘i‘rāb* and *al-Khaṣā‘iṣ*. He is highly regarded by modern Arab linguists as the Imām and backbone of the traditional Arab morphologists.⁷⁶ The study and growth of Arabic morphology reached its zenith in the 12th and 13th centuries when the formal structure of morphology was finally completed.⁷⁷ This period also saw intensification in writings on morphology. Grammarians centered more and more on producing morphological works for pedagogy, summaries, compilation of all

⁶⁹ Bernards (2001: 25).

⁷⁰ Baalbaki (2006: 22).

⁷¹ Ibid., 22.

⁷² Al-Ḥadīthī (2003: 24).

⁷³ Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Mubdi‘ fī al-Taṣrīf* 53.

⁷⁴ Chejne (1969: 49); Ibn Jinnī, *al-Khaṣā‘iṣ* II, 134.

⁷⁵ Ibid., II, 133; cf. ‘Abd al-Maqṣūd (2006: 11). Ibn Jinnī says: “This subject was not named by any of our teachers although Abū ‘Alī was making use of it [...] but he did not give it a name, however he turned to it when necessary [...] but we brought these changes” (Ibn Jinnī, *al-Khaṣā‘iṣ* II, 133).

⁷⁶ Al-Sāmarrā’ī (1969: 119).

⁷⁷ Al-Ḥamalāwī, *Shadhā al-‘arf* 9.

topics on morphology. They also explained literary works on it with numerous commentaries.⁷⁸ Some works produced in this period and following include *Kitāb 'Abniyat al-'Af 'āl* by 'Alī Ibn Ja'far Ibn Al-Qaṭṭā' (d. 514/1121 or 1122), *al-Wajīz fī al-Taṣrīf* by Ibn Al-Anbārī, *al-Mumti' fī al-Taṣrīf* by Ibn 'Uṣfūr, Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd Allāh Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274) who wrote *Lāmiyat al-'af 'āl* and Raḍī Al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Al-Ḥasan Al-Astarābādī's (d. 686/1288) *Sharḥ shāfiyat Ibn Al-Hājib*,⁷⁹ as well as 'Abd Allāh Ibn Yūsuf Ibn Hishām (d. 761/1360) with *Nuzhat al-Tarf fī 'Ilm al-Ṣarf*. Throughout the centuries following Sībawayh, some grammarians continued to follow his style by combining morphology with *naḥw* such as Maḥmūd Ibn 'Umar Al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) with his *Kitāb al-Mufaṣṣal fī 'Ilm al-'Arabiyyah*, Al-Mubarrid with his *Kitāb al-Muqtaḍab*, Muḥammad Ibn Al-Sarī Ibn Al-Sarrāj (d. 316/929) with *al-Uṣūl fī al-Naḥw* and 'Alī Ibn Ya'īsh (d. 642/1245) with *Sharḥ al-Mufaṣṣal*.⁸⁰ Others like 'Izz Al-Din 'Abd Al-Wahhāb Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn 'Abd Al-Wahhāb Al-Zanjānī (d. 660 /1262) with *Taṣrīf al-'Izzī* and 'Abd Al-Qāhir Al-Jurjānī with *al-Kitāb al-Miftāḥ fī al-Ṣarf* and *al-'Umad: Kitāb fī al-Taṣrīf* adopted the method of Al-Māzinī by examining it as an independent topic.⁸¹ Some modern works on *taṣrīf* include *Shadhā al-'arf fī Fann al-Ṣarf* by Aḥmad Al-Ḥamalāwī, *Durūs al-Taṣrīf* by Muḥammad Muḥyī Al-Dīn 'Abd Al-Ḥamīd.⁸²

Conclusion

Arabic linguistics developed in response to the pressing need of Qur'ānic exegesis from the 8th century with apparently no formal precedence. In other words, the Arabic linguistic tradition was initially inspired by a religious inclination rather than by a pure scientific or theoretical interest.⁸³ This tendency was not peculiar to the Arabic grammatical tradition or out of place in the history of linguistics as noted by Versteegh, "as a matter of fact, it is typical of almost every grammar to be used originally as a means to preserve ancient or sacred literature, for instance, the Homeric epic in Greece, the Vedas in India, the Sagas in Icelandic literature, and the Confucian texts in China."⁸⁴ During this period the

⁷⁸ Al-Ḥamalāwī, *Shadhā al-'arf* 9.

⁷⁹ Al-Ḥadīthī (2003: 22, 26-27).

⁸⁰ Al-Ḥamalāwī, *Shadhā al-'arf* 9; Baalbaki (1995: 129).

⁸¹ Al-Ḥamalāwī, *Shadhā al-'arf* 9.

⁸² Hilāl (1974: 10).

⁸³ Kārūrī (1996: 16).

⁸⁴ Versteegh (1977: 5).

study of morphology acquired an important place religiously and linguistically. Morphological issues concerning the Qur'ān that were discussed helped provide solutions in the preservation of the sacrosanct message of the Qur'ān. These scholars who were preoccupied with correcting corruption in the language had to address morphological issues laying the ground work for the eventual systematization of the theories of morphology. With time grammarians began developing a formal linguistic structure of the Arabic language by adopting a descriptive method. Initially, they had considered the science of linguistics study as a homogenous phenomenon. And although they distinguished the various parts that constitute formal linguistics such as phonology, morphology and syntax, none of these linguistic parts acquired independent study until quite later. Using the Qur'ān, the language of the Bedouins and Bedouin informants and the corpus of pre-Islamic poetic works as data, the grammarians occupied themselves in observing and describing the various linguistic patterns that appeared to them regular and predictive. Thereupon, they inductively drew up a set of various laws and rules that govern the language at the phonological, syntactic and morphological level. Subsequently, the science of morphology as we have come to know it crystalized into an autonomous science which they called *'ilm al-taṣrīf* or *'ilm al-ṣarf*. It was recognized as one of the pillars of Arab culture through which one could know the vastness of the language, advance in its study and through it be able to find solutions to difficulties in the language.⁸⁵ Correcting the language was not limited only to problems related to *'i'rāb*, the case endings, it had to extend to the understanding of the structure of words, which is in the field of morphology, and this is the reason for the development of morphology or *taṣrīf*.⁸⁶ As it developed through the centuries, it became more refined and formalized due to the important roles of grammarians like Al-Khalīl, Sībawayh, Al-Māzinī and Ibn Jinnī and their remarkable contributions.

⁸⁵ Al-Maydānī (1993: 27).

⁸⁶ Ibid., 57.

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