

Chapter 14: The Precedence Of The Shi'ah In Arabic Morphology

[Section One: The First to Introduce This Discipline for the Arabs](#)

The person who originated this branch of Arabic studies is Abu Muslim Ma'adh al-Harra' ibn Muslim ibn Abi Sarah al-Kufi, a client of the Ansar, a well-known grammarian as reported by Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti in the second volume of his *Al-Mazhar* and also in *Bughyat al-Wu'at* in the section about the biography of Muslim al-Harra'. Al-Suyuti observes that he was in charge of training Abdulmalik ibn Marwan and he was a Shi'ite. In *Al-Wasa'il fi al-Awa'il* al-Suyuti says: "The first person to introduce morphology is Ma'adh al-Harra'." In *Al-Bulghah*, Allamah al-Bahrani states: "Mu'adh al-Harra was the inventor of morphology as declared by several literary masters including Khalid al-Azhari."

Al-Kasa'i and others took after al-Harra and wrote about morphology. Apart from being a pioneer in this field, al-Harra compiled a number of books on grammar and hadith. The indexes of authors written by our companions carry a detailed biography of this scholar. Ibn Khillikan tells the story of al-Harra's encounter with the poet al-Kumayt ibn Zayd indicating the brotherly ties of the two and says that al-Harra' was a Shi'ite. In fact, he was among the chief companions of Abu Abdillah al-Sadiq ('a) as stated in al-Mufid's *Al-Irshad*, among others. He died in 187 A.H. As an aged man he used to fasten his teeth with gold.

[Section Two: The First Scholar to Write about Arabic Morphology](#)

Abu Uthman al-Mazini preceded all others in this respect. This is what is construed from Abu al-Khair's assertion, as quoted in *Kashf al-Zunun*, that Abu Uthman al-Mazini was the first to write about the science of morphology (*sarf*) which was hitherto treated as part of grammar (*nahw*). In *Fihrist Musannifi al-Shi'ah*, al-Najashi says: "Abu Uthman al-Mazini, Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Habib ibn Baqiyyah from

Mazin a clan of Shayban ibn Dhuhayl ibn Tha'labah ibn 'Ukamah ibn Mis'ab ibn Ali ibn Bakr ibn Wa'il. He was the master of the scholars of grammar, lexicology and other branches of Arabic in Basra. His lead in these disciplines is widely known”.

Abu al-Abbas Muhammad ibn Zayd al-Mubarrad says: “Among the Imamiyyah scholars is Abu Uthman Bakr ibn Muhammad who was one of the servants of Isma'il ibn Maytham, one of the leading theologians of Shi'ah”. Al-Allamah ibn al-Mutahhar al-Hilli also has made a mention of al-Mazini in *Al-Khulasah*, giving a similar account to that of al-Najashi. We have already mentioned his works.

Section Three: The Books Written on Morphology by Shi'ah

Scholars in Ancient Times

Kitab al-'Ishtiqaq (a book on etymology) by Ibn Khalawayh; *Kitab al-Tasrif* (a book of morphology) by al-Tabari; *Kitab 'Ilm al-Sarf* (a book on the science of morphology) by the Moroccan vizier; *Kitab al-Tabyin fi al-Tasrif* (a book on the exposition in morphology) by Sheikh Ahmad ibn Ali al-Mahabadi; *Kitab al-Muqtasid fi al-Tasrif* (a book on morphology) by Malik al-Nuhat; a commentary on *Al-Shafiyah* on morphology by Najm al-A'imma Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Istarabadi; a commentary on *Al-Shafiyah* by al-Sayyid Jamal al-Din Abdullah al-'Ajmi al-Nuqrakar, about whom al-Muhaqqiq al-Karaki declares in *Hashiyat al-Dhikra'*, that he was among the scholars of the Shi'ah; and lastly, a commentary on the *Al-Shafiyah* of Kamal al-Din Muhammad ibn Mu'in al-Din al-Nasa'i in which the glosses are skilfully intertwined with the text. It is the best of its kind. Other such famous books are mentioned in the *fihrist*s (indexes) of the names of writers.

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