

Chapter 15: The Precedence Of The Shi'ah In Arabic Grammar

Section One: The Pioneer of This Discipline

The person who invented Arabic grammar and dictated its principles and broad outlines was the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a). There is a consensus of expert opinion on this issue as reported by Jamal al-Din Ali ibn Yusuf al-Qafti in his *Tarikh al-Nuhat* and by al-Marzibani in *Al-Muqtabas*. In the chapter on the truthfulness of narrators in *Al-Khasa'is*, Ibn Jinni states: “First, you should know that the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) was the first to introduce grammar and drew the people’s attention to it”. Abdulhamid ibn Abi al-Hadid noted: “This fact is known to everyone”.

This issue is treated by the scholars as an indisputable fact. In the original version of this book, I have cited their explicit statements which indicate that the claim of consensus was accurate, simultaneously reputing as weak, the view that the inventor of grammar was Abdurrahman ibn Hurmuz. In reality, this man learnt grammar from Abu al-Aswad, and some say, from Maimun al-Aqran who himself learnt from Abu al-Aswad. Another reason why Abdurrahman could not have enjoyed that position is that all narrations about the issue end up with Abu al-Aswad who in turn links them to Ali (‘a). In the unabridged version of this book I have cited Abu al-Aswad’s narration to that effect through numerous links that are continuously transmitted (*mutawatir*). We shall mention some of them in due course.

Section Two: The First to Systematize Grammar Studies

Abu al-Aswad al-Du’ali is the one who founded and systematized the study of grammar. His surname al-Du’ali is derived from al-Du’al ibn Bakr ibn Abdumanaf ibn Kinanah. Abu Ali al-Ghiya’i states in *Kitab al-Qari’* that the grammarians al-Asma’i, Sibawaih, al-Akhfash, Ibn al-Sikkit, Abu Hatim, al-Adawi and others, say that ‘al-Du’il’ should be pronounced with the vowels ‘u’ and ‘i’ after the letters ‘dal’ and ‘hamzah’, respectively (i.e. Du’il). The *hamzah* carries an ‘a’ vowel only in the form denoting descent or origin (i.e. Du’ali meaning descending from Du’il) just as in the case of *nimr* and *al-nimari*; *salim* and

al-salami. Al-Asma'i said that Isa ibn Amr preserves the 'i' vowel on 'hamzah' even in the form denoting decent, thereby violating the rule of conjugation. Abu Ali says "Al-Kasa'i, Abu Ubaydah and Muhammad ibn Habib used to say that Abu al-Aswad was related to al-Dil [i.e. 'dal' will have the vowel 'i' and 'hamzah' gives way for 'ya' with no vowel where in effect the 'ya' serves as a prolongation of the 'i' vowel of 'dal']. His name was Zalim ibn Zalim and the diminutive form for both names (Zuwaylim ibn Zuwaylim). Others say he was known as Amr ibn Uthman ibn Amr or Zalim ibn Umar ibn Zalim. Still others say he was a descendant of Sufyan ibn Amr ibn Khulais ibn Nafa't ibn Adiyay ibn al-Du'il ibn Bakr ibn Kinanah.

The most correct pronunciation of the name is Du'ali, the form what denotes descent from Du'il, the change to Du'al [with 'a' before 'l', rather than 'i'], this being the form denoting origin or descent. Most scholars think that Abu al-Aswad's name was Zalim ibn Amr al-Du'ali a descendant of al-Du'il ibn Bakr ibn Abdumanaf ibn Kinanah. He was one of the chiefs of the *tabi'is* and among the most faithful companions of the Commander of the Faithful ('a).

Abu al-Tayib, the lexicologist who died in 351 A.H. wrote in *Maratib al-Nahwiyyin* that the first person to chart the course for the study of grammar was Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali who learnt it from the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) In *Kitab al-Ma'arif*, Ibn Qutaybah states that: "Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali's name was Zalim ibn Amr ibn Jandal ibn Sufyan ibn Kinanah and his mother came from the clan of Abduddar ibn Qusayy. Abu al-Aswad was intelligent and resolute but mean. He was the first person to record the rules of Arabic and he was a proficient poet". The author of *Al-Shi'ir wa al-Shu'ara* says "He is counted as one of the poets, the *tabi'is*, the traditionists, the niggards, the semi-paralyzed ones, the lame and the grammarians. He was the first person to write a book on grammar, having adopted it from Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a). He was appointed by Ibn Abbas Abu al-Aswad as governor of Basra when the former went to participate in one of the battles fought by the Commander of the Faithful ('a). Abu al-Aswad died there, a very old man".

In *Al-Isabah*, al-Hafiz ibn Hajar writes about Abu al-Aswad: "Abu Ali al-Qali relates from Abu Ishaq al-Zajjaj on the authority of Abu al-Abbas al-Mubarrad who said: The first person to record (the rules of) the Arabic language and assign the dots to (some letters of) the Holy Qur'an was Abu al-Aswad. When he was asked as to who paved the way for him, he answered: Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a). Amr ibn Shubbah relates through his chain of transmission that Asim ibn Bahdalah said: 'The first person to record grammar was Abu al-Aswad'."

Al-Jahiz is reported to have said that Abu al-Aswad was considered to be among the *tabi'is*, the jurists, the traditionists, the poets, the nobles, the knights, the princes, the grammarians, the shrewd, the quick-witted and the niggardly. He was also counted among the 'bald noblemen' and had foul breath. He was also a Shi'ah. Al-Jahiz's report is related by both Abu al-Faraj in *Al-Aghani*, and al-Suyuti in *Bughyat al-Wu'at*. Similarly, al-Raghib states in *Al-Muhadarat* in his account on Abu al-Aswad that he was the first to furnish (some of the letters of) the Holy Qur'an with dots and he also established the

discipline of grammar under the supervision of Ali ('a). He was among the most accomplished people in judgment and intellect and he was a Shi'ah, a poet, a quick-witted man, reliable in what he relates..."

Al-Yafi'i records in *Mir'at al-Jinan* that Zalim ibn Amr, Abu al-Aswad al-Basri was among the most eminent *tabi'is* and a companion of the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) with whom he participated in the battle of Siffin. He was among Ali's best supporters who were endowed with sound judgment and mature intellect. He was the first to record Arabic grammar by the direction of the Commander of the Faithful".

Imam al-Baihaqi writes in his book *Al-Mahasin wa al-Masawi* that Yunus ibn Habib, the grammarian has said "The pioneer of Arabic studies who opened up the gates to this discipline and trod its path is Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali whose name is Zalim ibn Amr".

Abu al-Barakat, Abdurrahman ibn Muhammad al-Anbari records in the beginning of his book *Nuzhat al-Albab* that Abu 'Ubaydah Mu'mar al-Muthanna and others, relate that he learnt grammar from Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a). Abu Hatim al-Sajistani says that Abu al-Aswad was born in the pre-Islamic era and learnt Arabic grammar from Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a). Abu Salamah Musa ibn Isma'il narrates from his father who said: "Abu al-Aswad was the first person to introduce grammar and it was in the city of Basrah". Ibn Al-Anbari observes: "Indeed, the founder of Arabic studies who defined its broad outlines and rules was the Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) and Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali took after him".

Ibn Jinni records in *Al-Khasa'is* in the chapter about the truthfulness of transmitters the Commander of the Faithful was the one who started it (grammar), drew people's attention to it and caused its spread. Then Ibn Abbas actualized it while Ali ('a) entrusted Abu al-Aswad with its development".

In *Kitab al-Awa'il*, Abu Hilal Hasan ibn Abdillah al-'Askari had this to say: "The founder of grammar was Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a)." This fact is recorded by al-Zajjaji in his *Amali* on the authority of al-Mubarrad.

Abu Ubaydah says: "The first to write about the Arabic language was Abu al-Aswad, followed by Maimun al-Aqran, then Anbasat al-Fil and then Abdillah ibn Ishaq". It is obvious that these people adopted it from Ali ('a) because Abu Ubaydah himself attested to that, as we saw in Ibn Al-Anbari's quotation.

In the same vein, Ibn Abi al-Hadid declares in his commentary on *Nahj al-Balagh*, that it was invented by Ali ibn Abi Talib who dictated its broad outlines to Abu al-Aswad. Abu al-Fadl ibn Abi al-Ghana'im wrote in *Sharh al-Mufassal* that Abu al-Aswad reported to have acquired the knowledge of grammar from Ali ('a) who directed him to apply it to the speech (of the Arabs). Abdulqadir al-Baghdadi records in *Khazanat al-Adab* in his account about Abu al-Aswad, that he was the founder of grammar by Ali's instruction. Likewise al-Damiri mentions in *Hayat al-Hayawan* while commenting on the word Da'il, that Abu al-Aswad was the first to write about grammar according to the directives of Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a).

In *Al-Fihrist*, Ibn al-Nadim quotes Abu Ja'far ibn Rastum al-Tabari as saying "The reason why *nahw* is

given this name is that, on receiving some principles of grammar from Ali ('a), Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali sought his master's permission to follow his example (*nahw*). This is why this branch of knowledge is named *nahw*. Ibn al-Nadim adds: "I have come across a proof which confirms the idea that grammar was first recorded by Abu al-Aswad. I found four pieces of paper of Chinese origin, I suppose the title of whose content reads: "These papers contain Abu al-Aswad's discussions on subject (*fa'il*) and object (*maf'ul*) in Yahya ibn Ya'mur's handwriting". Under this was an old line reading "This is the hand-writing of al-Nadr ibn Shumayl'.

Ibn Khillikan and Ibn al-Anbari report that Abu Harb the son of Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali said: The first chapter which my father wrote was about words expressing wonder and admiration (*ta'ajjub*). Ibn al-Anbari observes that Abu al-Aswad compiled the concise book ascribed to him after he had furnished the Holy Qur'an with dots, an exercise which he accomplished during the time of Ziyad.

Ibn al-Anbari observes in *Al-Nuzhah*: "The truth is that, Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) was the one who invented grammar because all the reports ascribe this subject to Abu al-Aswad who confesses that it is ascribed to Ali. It has been related that Abu al-Aswad was asked one day about the source of his knowledge of grammar and he answered 'I acquired its outlines from Ali ibn Abi Talib and built on that'.

Imam Fakhr al-Razi states in *Kitab Manaqib al-Shafi'i* that al-Khalil ibn Ahmad studied under Isa ibn Umar who learnt from Abu 'Amr ibn al-'Ala' from Abdullah ibn Ishaq al-Hadrami from Abu Abdillah Maimun al-Aqran from Anbasat al-Fil from Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali from Ali ('a). Similarly, Rashid al-Din ibn Shahrashub al-Mazandarani records in *Kitab al-Manaqib* that al-Khalil ibn Ahmad relates from Isa ibn 'Amr al-Thaqafi from Abdullah ibn Ishaq al-Hadrami from Abu 'Amr who was known as 'Alam al-Nahw and Ibn al-'Ala' from Maimun al-Aqran from Anbasat al-Fil from Abu al-Aswad from Ali ('a).

Other notable scholars such as al-Azhari, in his *Tahzib al-Lughah*, Ibn Makram in *Lisan al-Arab*, Ibn Sayyidah in *Al-Muhkam* and Ibn Khillikan, in *Al-Wafayat*, corroborated that report. In the same way, Ruknuddin Ali ibn Abu Bakr al-Hadithi writes in *Kitab al-Rukni* that the first person to found grammar was Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali, the teacher of al-Hasan and al-Husayn. He learnt grammar from Ali ibn Abi Talib and subsequently five people studied it from him. They are his two sons, 'Ata and Abu al-Harith, Anbasah, Maymun and Yahya ibn al-Numan. Abu Ishaq al-Hadrami, 'Isa al-Thaqafi and Abu 'Amr ibn al-'Ala, in turn, acquired it from these five. Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad studied Arabic grammar under 'Isa al-Thaqafi and excelled in it. He taught Sibawayh and later al-Akhfash. Thereafter, two literary schools, the Kufi and the Basri, took shape.

Al-Kaf'ami, an Imamiyyah scholar wrote in his *Mukhtasar Nuzhat Ibn al-Anbari* that Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali was the founder of Arabic studies, having learnt it from Ali ('a).

These citations are sufficient to ascertain this fact.

Here, an objection by Ibn Faris in this regard is worth discussing. In his book, *Al-Sahibi* subtitled *Fiqh al-Lughah* says: "If it is said that there are successive reports that confirm that Abu al-Aswad was the

first to record the rules of Arabic while al-Khalil was the founder of prosody, the answer will be that we do not deny this but it should be noted that these two disciplines are ancient branches of Arabic studies that were neglected over time and revived by these two masters”.

This argument sounds like the speech of the deranged because the Arabs of the pre-Islamic period did not stand in need of the knowledge of grammar because they spoke Arabic naturally; they could not have deviated from the correct form, not to mention needing a set of rules by which their speech would be corrected. In fact the narrations, which Ibn Faris acknowledges are successively transmitted, indicate the reason why the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) invented this field and Abu al-Aswad followed in his footsteps.

It was the corruption noticeable in the language of the Arabs who were born of Nabatean and Persian mothers during and after the days of the Prophet. Apprehensive that these corrupt usages might spread and spoil the language, they founded the grammar to preserve what was, hitherto protected by virtue of the natural disposition of its speakers.

On the whole, both facts of history prove the opposite of what this scholar claims. It was a personal view of his which he upheld without realizing that it would be liable to objection. We, therefore, take what he narrates and ignore what he thinks. As for the supposition that prosody was an ancient discipline in Arabic, it has already been refuted.

Section Three: Imam Ali Set up the Principles of Grammar

The people are divided on both issues. Concerning the first, a number of views were put forward. The first is cited by Ibn al-Anbari in the preface of the commentary on Sibawaihi’s book. It reads: “One day the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his Household, heard someone reciting the Qur’anic verse ‘...**Allah and His Messenger are free from liability to the idolators...**’ (Chapter 9 verse 3) and read the word *rasul* (messenger) with the *kasrah* i.e. /i/ vowel.

The Prophet was angered by this blasphemy so he directed the Commander of the Faithful Ali (‘a) to set up the grammar (*nahw*) and prepare its rules to prevent this type of solecism”. [*Rasul* (messenger), as a grammatical conjoint with the word ‘Allah’ in the above verse is also a subject of the verb ‘*bari*’ and its last letter must therefore have *dammah* i.e./u/ vowel. A *kasrah* at the end of the word *rasul* (messenger) makes it the object of that verb and this is blasphemous because it will then mean that Allah denounces His messenger.]

So the Commander of the Faithful summoned Abu al-Aswad al-Du’ali and taught him the *awamil* (expressions that govern the condition of other words in the same sentence) and the conjunctions. He also compiled aspects of the Arabic language and enumerated the marks of declinable (*i’rabiyyah*) and indeclinable (*bina’iyyah*) words.

The intelligent Abu al-Aswad promptly noted everything down and whenever he encountered a problem he consulted the Commander of the Faithful ('a). Hence, after organizing and putting together some constructions, he brought them before Ali ('a) who gave his approval saying "The way you have taken (*nahw*) is excellent, indeed'. Abu al-Aswad considered this comment a good omen and named this discipline *nahw*".

From the above account it is clear that the first to use the word *nahw* was the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his Household, not Ali ('a), as stated by Ibn al-Anbari. What the scholars consider to be the reason why Arabic grammar is called *nahw* is what Ibn al-Anbari held, not what is contained in this story that sounds like the tales of story-tellers, for those conversant with the annals deny that what it purports really took place during the time of the Prophet. As far as I know, Ibn al-Anbari was the only narrator of this report because I have not come across anyone who preceded him, although some later scholars whom I mentioned in the original version of this book relate it from him.

The second view is what Ibn Shahrashub mentions in *Kitab al-Manaqib* and that is, the reason why the Commander of the Faithful ('a) founded the grammar is that the Quraysh were marrying from among the Nabateans and having children whose tongues become corrupted. For instance, a daughter of Khuwailid al-Asadi who was married to a Nabatean once said: "*Inna abuya mata wa taraka alayya malan kathira* (my father died and left behind much wealth for me) [The solecism is evident in *abuya* and the wrong preposition *alayya*].

When Ali ('a) saw how corrupt her language was, he decided to found the grammar. Another account reported in *Kitab al-Rukni* a work written by Ruknuddin Ali ibn Abu Bakr al-Hadithi says that the reason is that a lady went to Mu'awiyah during the time of Uthman and said: "*Abuya mata wa taraka malan*". Mu'awiyah considered her speech repugnant. When Ali ('a) heard her story he wrote for Abu al-Aswad a piece of paper in which he outlined the principles of grammar. These two reports do not seem to contradict each other.

The third view is that one day a Bedouin heard someone among the common people reciting the verse: 'Allah and His Messenger are free of liability to the idolaters...' (with repugnant solecism) so he hit him on the head. The assailant then sued his victim before the Commander of the Faithful for committing blasphemy while reciting the Qur'an. Ali ('a) replied that it was an inadvertent slip. Then he wrote down the principles of grammar on a piece of paper and gave it to Abu al-Aswad. This report has been recorded by Rashid al-Din.

In his *Al-Rashad*, a commentary on Allamah al-Taftazani's *Al-Irshad* Shamsuddin Muhammad ibn Sharif al-Jurjani writes about the reason why grammar was called *nahw*, and states that Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali heard someone reciting the verse": 'Allah and His Messenger are free of liability to the idolaters' and read the letter at the end of *rasul* (messenger) with *kasrah* i.e. /i/ vowel instead of *dammah*, i.e. /u/ vowel. Al-Du'ali reported the matter to the Commander of the Faithful Ali ('a) who ascribed what had happened to their intermingling with the non-Arabs and pointed out that Arabic words are of three

classes: noun (*ism*) verb (*fi'l*) and particle (*harf*).

Imam Maytham al-Bahrani wrote in *Bidayat al-Amr* that Abu al-Aswad heard a man reciting: 'Allah and His Messenger are free of liability to the idolaters' and pronounced the letter at the end of the word *rasul* with the vowel /i/. So he disapproved of that and said 'we seek refuge with Allah from reverting to a state of weak faith'. Then he consulted Ali ('a) on it. The Imam declared 'I am preparing a standard for the people to enable them to speak correctly'. Then our master ('a) dictated to him: 'Words are of three classes: noun, verb and particle. The noun is...' and went on explaining the details. After that he directed Abu al-Aswad to follow this outline and taught him how to do it.

There is no contradiction between these reports except for the difference as regards the one who heard the recitation of the Qur'anic verse in question.

The fourth view is: Ibrahim ibn Ali al-Kaf'ami al-Shami said that it has been narrated that the reason behind Imam Ali's decision to write down the grammar is that he heard a man reciting the verse: **'None shall partake of it except the wrongdoers (Qur'an: Ch 69: v 37)**. Instead of saying *khati'un*, the reciter said *khati'in*, which is grammatically wrong here.

The fifth view is: Rashid al-Din states that the cause is that one day Abu al-Aswad was walking behind a bier when a man asked him: "who is the dead person?" [The questioner said *mutawaffi* i.e the one who causes people to die instead of *mutawaffa* i.e the one who died]. Abu al-Aswad replied: "Allah", and later informed Imam Ali about this incident. So Imam Ali drew up the rules of grammar and passed them in a paper to Abu al-Aswad saying, 'How excellent this way (*nahw*) is! Fill in the relevant issues (in their sections)'. So it was called *nahw*.

The sixth view is: In *Fusul al-Mukhtarah*, al-Sayyid al-Murtada who relates from *Kitab al-Uyun wa al-Mahasin* by Sheikh al-Mufid also known as Ibn al-Mu'allim, says: Sheikh Abu Abdullah, may Allah perpetuate his honour, informed me on the authority of Muhammad ibn Salam al-Jamahi, that Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali went one day to the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) and the latter tossed a sheet of paper to him.

In it, was written: 'In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. The parts of speech are three: noun, verb and particle which carries some meaning. A noun is that which denotes something or someone, a verb denotes the motion or action of somebody or something and a particle is that which give meaning to other than itself'. 'This speech is beautiful' observed Abu al-Aswad, 'what do you command me to do about it. I have learnt a great deal by acquiring it'.

The Commander of the Faithful replied, 'I have heard awful solecism being committed in your city and I decided to write a book so that whoever reads it will be able to distinguish between the speech of the Arabs and that of these people. So follow this example, that is, the speech of the Arabs'. Abu al-Aswad remarked, 'May Allah give us success to achieve what is proper through your guidance, O Commander of the Faithful'.

Relating from Ibn Salam al-Jamahi, Rashid al-Din says: 'Ali ('a) wrote: It is written by Ali ibn Abu Talib' ('a) [with Abu ending with /u/ instead of /i/] a construction which the people did not understand. Some said that Abu Talib was both the name as well as the surname of his father. Others explained that (Abu Talib) was a compound name like Darahinna and Hadramaut. Al-Zamakhshari states in *Al-Fa'iq* that the normative form (*raf'*) is maintained even in the genitive case (*jarr*) of the word (Abu) because it is so well-known in this way that it is treated like a phrase which does not change.

Abu al-Qasim al-Zajjaj writes in his *Al-Amali*: On the authority of Abu Ja'far al-Tabari from Abu Hatim al-Sajistani from Yaqub ibn Ishaq al-Hadrami from Sa'id ibn Muslim al-Bahili from his father from his grandfather from Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali who said: I went to Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) and saw him looking down thoughtfully. I asked: 'Oh Commander of the Faithful what are you thinking about?' 'I heard grammatical errors in the speech of the people of this city of yours and I intend to compile a book on the principles of Arabic', was his answer.

So we said: 'If you do that you will revive us and this language will remain safe and sound with us'. Then I went to him three days later and he gave me a pamphlet in which these words were written: 'In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Language can be classified into noun, verb and particle. A noun is what speaks of a thing that has a name, a verb denotes the motion of the noun while a particle is that which carries a meaning and it is neither a noun nor a verb'.

Then he instructed me saying: 'Follow this way and add to this outline whatever comes to your mind. Oh Abu al-Aswad know that things are of three classes; apparent (*zahir*), implied (*mudmar*) and a third which is neither this nor that'. Abu al-Aswad said, 'So I compiled and presented to him some material among which were the particles that govern the accusative and subjective forms (*nasb*) mentioned *anna*, *an*, *laita*, *la'alla*, *ka'anna*, but I did not include *lakinna*. The Imam asked me why I left it out, to which I replied that I did not consider it among the particles. He said that it was, so I added it to the others.

Now on studying the aforementioned viewpoints concerning the reason why *nahw* was initiated, we will reach the conclusion that the solecisms observed among those whose tongues had been corrupted as a result of intermingling with the non-Arabs was the reason which prompted the Commander of the Faithful to invent this branch of knowledge and direct Abu al-Aswad to take up this task. All these views render Ibn Faris' claim untenable, as we stated previously.

As for the narrations on the reason why Abu al-Aswad drew up the rules of Arabic grammar, we observe that there is no contradiction between them to that effect. Abu Sa'id has related that once Sa'ad, a Persian from Zandkhan came to Basrah with some members of his family. They approached Qudamah ibn Maz'un and claimed that they accepted Islam at his hand and therefore they considered themselves his clients (*mawali*). One day while Sa'ad was leading his horse he passed by Abu al-Aswad. The latter asked him: Oh Sa'ad, why do you not ride?' Sa'ad answered '*Inna farasi dhali'an*' [instead of *dhali'un*] 'My horse is balky'. Some of those who heard him laughed. Abu al-Aswad said 'These clients have in fact embraced Islam willingly; therefore, they are our brothers. We better help them acquire the

language.’ So he wrote a chapter about subject and object.

Another story says that one day a lady called on Mu’awiyah during the time of Uthman and said to him: “Abuya mata wa taraka malan”, meaning: (My father died and left some assets). Mu’awiyah considered it repugnant [because she should have said ‘abi’ not ‘abuya’]. When Imam Ali heard this story he set up the rules of grammar and had Abu al–Aswad compile them. The latter first wrote a chapter on the letter (ya) and the genitive case (al–idafah). Abu al–Aswad also heard a man reciting ‘Allah and His Messenger are free from liability to the idolaters’ and read the letter at the end of the word rasul with /i/ vowel. So he wrote the chapters about conjoints (atf) and adjectives (na’t). According to another story his daughter one day said: “Father, what is the most beautiful thing in the sky?”(Ma ahsanu al–sama?) with /u/ vowel at the end of ahsanu. Abu al–Aswad answered: ‘Its stars’. She said ‘I only meant to express my wonder at its beauty’. So her father remarked: ‘You should say: ma ahsana al–sama, with the vowel /a/ at the end of ahsana’. Then he wrote the chapters on ta’ajjub and istifham, the forms for expressing wonder and the interrogative, respectively. The reader is aware that there is no contradiction between these narrations because each of them expresses the reason for writing a particular chapter on grammar.

As for Ibn al–Nadim’s view in Al–Fihrist and Sheikh Abu al–Hasan Salamah ibn Iyan (who was a Syrian grammarian) in the beginning of Al–Misbah fi al–Nahw, it refers to a different question altogether. Ibn al–Nadim says: “The people differ as to what prompted Abu al–Aswad to draw up the rules of grammar. Abu Ubaydah says: ‘Abu al–Aswad learnt grammar from Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a) and at the beginning he would not reveal anything from what he learnt until Ziyad sent him a directive asking him to prepare a work that would help the people understand the Book of Allah. Abu al–Aswad requested that he should be relieved of this task. But when he heard someone recite ‘Allah and His Messenger are free from liability to the idolaters’ with the vowel /i/ at the end of rasul, he said: ‘I have never imagined the situation to be as terrible as this’. So he went back to Ziyad and said: ‘I will discharge what the Prince commanded, and I want a clever scribe who will do what I say’. So a scribe from the tribe of Abd al–Qays was brought to Abu al–Aswad but he was not satisfied with him and another one was brought to him. Abu al–Abbas al–Mubarrad thinks he was also from the same tribe. Abu al–Aswad said to the new secretary: ‘Whenever you see me open my mouth while pronouncing a letter, put a dot on top of it, whenever you see me protrude my mouth, put a dot after the letter and when you see me pronounce a letter with a ‘flagging tone’ (kasartu), put a dot below it’. This is the principle according to which Abu al–Aswad arranged the dots.’ ”

This story has no bearing on the issue in question because the subject of discussion is the reason for starting grammar not the writing of the Qur’an. What is amazing is that these two scholars mention this story to show the reason why nahw was drawn up. Is this point not worth pondering over?

To sum up, the literal meaning of al–nahw and al–Arabiyyah is expressed by the Imam’s saying: inha nahwah or usluk tariqah that is, act according to it. Al–Baihaqi says: “Al–nahw means uprightness

(al-istiḡamah). Al-nahw used to denote the way by which the Arabic language is put right. Some say that al-nahw means the direction. Abu Uthman al-Mazini says al-nahw is a certain direction (nahiyah) of language. Al-nahw also means pattern (al-mithal) and if we say 'this follows a certain nahw' it means 'this follows a certain mital (pattern)'.

Al-Khalil says: "Al-nahw means direction because when Ali ('a) heard a man committing grammatical errors in his speech he said to Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali: 'Set up standards for the Arabic language because the number of the Nabateans and the arabicised people is increasing'. When al-Du'ali wrote it the Commander of the Faithful commended him by saying 'How excellent is the nahw you produced' By nahw he meant the direction and the way. He then said to the arabicised people: (inhu nahwah) i.e. follow its direction (qasdah) and take its way".

Al-nahw denotes the direction which one seeks. *Naha nahwah* means he sought a certain direction. What the Commander of the Faithful meant by *inhu...* is follow the rules, patterns and marks (*al-i'rab*) of Arabic.

Al-Arabiyyah is the name given to the language. It is said, 'it is the Arabic language' meaning that is the excellent, eloquent and perspicuous one. And an Arab is thus called because he makes himself clear in speech (*a'rab*). Al-Asma'i says: 'A man once said to his sons: My sons! Let your speech be correct because when a difficult situation befalls a man in which he needs to adorn himself, he can simply borrow garments from his brothers or his father, but nobody can lend him his speech'.

Section Four: The First Person to Learn the Grammar from Abu al-Aswad

As recorded by Abu Hatim al-Sajistani and Abu Tayyib, the philologist, in his *Maratib al-Nahwiyyin*, the first student whom Abu al-Aswad taught grammar was his son Ata ibn Abi al-Aswad followed by Yahya ibn Ya'mar al-Udwani. These two were masters of grammar after Abu al-Aswad. Ibn Qutaybah states in *Al-Ma'arif* that Abu al-Aswad had two sons 'Ata' and Abu Harb. After Abu al-Aswad, 'Ata' and Yahya ibn Ya'mur developed the study of Arabic.

'Ata' did not have any offspring. Abu Harb, the other son of Abu al-Aswad, was a wise man and a poet". This account is recorded in *Al-Ma'arif*, but it is doubtful if 'Ata' and Abu Harb were two different persons. In *Fihrist Musannifi al-Shi'ah* by al-Najashi who was an authority on genealogy, we read: 'Abu Harb, Ata ibn Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali was the teacher of al-Asma'i and Abu 'Ubaydah'. In *Al-Taqrīb* Ibn Hajar says: 'Abu Harb ibn Abi al-Aswad al-Du'ali al-Basri was a reliable narrator. Some say that his name is Mahjan and others say 'Ata'. He died in the year 108 A.H. Ruknuddin Ali ibn Abu Bakr writes in his book *Al-Rukni fi al-Nahw* that five people had learnt grammar from Abu al-Aswad: his two sons 'Ata' and Abu al-Harith...'

Section Five: The Pioneers in Basra and Kufa on Nahw

The pioneers in Basra and Kufa to expatiate on *nahw*, give it a sound footing, define its various principles, bring out its meanings and furnish the arguments in support of their opinions.

In Basrah, it was Abu al-Fadl al-Khalil ibn Ahmad, a great scholar, an authority on literature and an exponent of the Arabic language. He refined this discipline and through his work, it reached advanced stages. His clear-sightedness, subtle wisdom and intellectual accomplishment inspired Sibawayh to compile his famous book, the like of which no one before or after him could produce. Some accounts indicate that al-Khalil himself did not produce any work on grammar although Ibn Khillikan and others ascribe *Kitab al-Awamil* to him and al-Suyuti says that *Kitab al-Jumal* and *Al-Shawahid* are his works. These scholars say that Sibawayh related from al-Khalil as much as a thousand pages on grammar as stated in al-Suyuti's biography of Sibawayh in *Al-Tabaqat*.

The pioneer in Kufa is the erudite scholar, Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Abi Sarah al-Rawwasi, a chief of the Kufis and one of the Kufi grammarians. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti states in his biography in *Al-Tabaqat*: "He was the first Kufi to compile a book on grammar. He taught al-Kasa'i and al-Farra. Al-Khalil sent someone to al-Rawwasi requesting for the latter's book. The request was granted and al-Khalil was able to read the book.

Whenever Sibawayh's book states: 'Al-Kufi said such and such', it refers to al-Rawwasi and his book. According to *Al-Mazhar*, the title of the book was *Al-Faysal*. Al-Rawwasi was among the Shi'ite chiefs. The *Fihrist*s of Imamiyah writers present his biography and works. He was a companion of Imam al-Baqir and Imam al-Sadiq (a). Al-Rawwasi came from a family known for learning and culture. The original version of this book contains a detailed biography of the man.

Section Six: The Famous Shi'ah Masters of Grammar

'Ata' ibn Abu al-Aswad whom we mentioned in section four, is one of them.

Another is Yahya ibn Ya'mur al-'Udwani al-Wasqi al-Mudari al-Basri whose lineage goes back to Adnan ibn Qays ibn Ghaylan ibn Mudar. He was from the clan of Banu Layth ibn Kinanah. He was one of the reciters of Basra and it is from him that Abdullah ibn Ishaq learnt the recitation of the Qur'an. Ibn Khillikan says: "He was well versed in the Qur'an, grammar and Arabic dialects. He studied grammar under Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali. He was one of the early Shi'ah who subscribed to the superiority of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) without disparaging the venerable people who were not from them".

Al-Hakim has praised al-'Udwani profusely in *Tarikh Nishapur*. I have mentioned part of this eulogy in the original version of this book, as well as his disputations with al-Hajjaj that are presented in *Al-Raud al-Zahir* in which he demonstrated that al-Hasan and al-Husayn were the sons of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his Household. Al-'Udwani gives solid evidence by quoting the Qur'anic verse

“And We have given him Isaac and Jacob....and Jesus and Elias...”(Qur’an ch. 6 vs 84–85).

In his diaputation with al-Hajjaj, Yahya ibn Yamur al-Udwani posed the question: ‘Who was Jesus’s father? For Allah has included him among the offspring of Abraham, not to mention the interval between Jesus and Abraham was far greater than that between al-Hasan and al-Husayn and Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his Household’. Hajjaj answered: “You have indeed introduced a solid proof and expressed your idea very clearly...”. The author of *Bughyat al-Wu’at* writes that al-Udwani passed away in the year 129. It is recorded in *Al-Taqrīb* that he died before the close of the first century and, according to another view, after that.

Another is Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Abi Sarah al-Rawwasi who was a client of the Ansar. He was the chief of the Kufi master of the Arabic language. He is also the first Kufi to write a work on grammar, as we already mentioned in section five. He died after the first century. His biography and a list of his works are mentioned in the original version of this book.

Another famous Shi’ite grammarian is al-Farra, Yahya ibn Ziyad al-Aqta’ al-Kufi. The hand of Ziyad, Yahya’s father, was cut in the battle of Fakh while he was fighting on the side of al-Husayn ibn Ali ibn al-Hasan al-Muthallath ibn al-Hasan al-Muthanna ibn al-Hasan al-Sibt. It is stated in *Riyad al-Ulama* that “the assertion of al-Suyuti that al-Farra had an inclination to Mutazilism was perhaps the result of confusing Shi’ah theological principles with those of the Mu’tazilites, for he was definitely an Imamiyah Shi’ah as previously observed”.

It has been related from Abu al-Abbas Taghlib that he said: “had it not been for al-Farra, the Arabic language would not have existed because he was the one who purged it of corruptions and made it perfect.” Abu al-Abbas observes that Arabic would have crumbled because it was subject to disputes; each party claimed authority and the way it was spoken was at the mercy of the people’s level of knowledge and their natural disposition. I have recorded in the original version of this book, a biographical account suitable for his position, and also mentioned his works. He died at the age of sixty-three in the year 207 while he was on his way to Mecca.

Among them is Abu Uthman Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Habib ibn Baqiyyah al-Mazini from the clan of Banu Mazin, a branch of the tribe of Shayban ibn Zahl ibn Thalabah ibn ‘Ukabah ibn Sa’ib ibn Ali ibn Wa’il. He was a master of the scholars of grammar, language and lexicology in Basra and his superiority in this regard is known to all. He was also one of the Imamiyah scholars. We have already talked about him in the section on morphology. According to the most authentic account, Bakr died in 248 A.H.

Another is Imam ibn Hamdun al-Katib al-Nadim who was a famous grammarian. His full name was Ahmad ibn Ibrahim ibn Isma’il ibn Dawud ibn Hamdun, the famous scribe and grammarian. Yaquut says: “Abu Ja’far al-Alawi has mentioned him among Imamiyah authors and declared that Ibn Hamdun was the most eminent master of lexicologists. Abu al-Abbas Taghlib studied and graduated under him before Ibn al-A’rabi”. An account of him is found in al-Tusi’s *Fihrist Musannifi al-Shi’ah* and also in

al-Najashi's *Asma al-Musannifin min al-Imamiyyah*, as stated by Yaqut. I mentioned further information about him in the original version of this book.

Among them is Abu al-Abbas al-Mubarrad Muhammad ibn Yazid ibn Abd al-Akbar ibn Umayr al-Thumali al-Azdi, the famous Basri grammarian and lexicologist. He was the authority on Arabic of his time. He studied it from Imam Abu Uthman al-Mazini. A report on his being Shi'ite and the dates of his birth and death has already been mentioned.

Another scholar is Tha'labah ibn Maymun Abu Ishaq, a client of Banu Asad who was later allied to the Banu Salmah. He was an authority on grammar in Kufa. He was a beneficent man, a persevering worshipper and an ascetic as stated by al-Najashi in *Asma al-Musannifin* where he also relates Abu Ishaq's story about the arrival of the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid in Kufa. Al-Najashi also informs us that this grammarian transmitted hadiths from Abu Abdillah al-Sadiq and al-Kazim ('a) and also compiled a work on hadith. I have cited al-Najashi's detailed account about this scholar in the original version of this book.

Abu al-Qasim al-Jurji al-Kufi is another famous grammarian. His name is Sa'id ibn Muhammad ibn Sa'id. Al-Sam'ani writes in *Al-Ansab*, that he (al-Jurji) was one of the masters of grammar, and he was a trustworthy man and a fanatical Shi'ah".

Another is Yaqub ibn Sufyan who was one of the pillars of literature. He excelled in all Islamic disciplines especially Arabic studies. In *Al-Kamil*, Ibn al-Athir says that Yaqub was among the eminent Shi'ah scholars". He passed away in 277 A.H.

Among the authorities on grammar and lexicology is Qutaybah al-Ju'fi al-Kufi. Al-Najashi describes him in *Asma Musannifi al-Shi'ah* as the accomplished A'sha and calls him by the surname Abu Muhammad al-Muqarri, a client of Azad. Al-Suyuti also mentions Qutaybah in *Al-Tabaqat* and states that al-Zubaydi counts him among the masters of Kufi grammarians.

He also states that al-Zubaydi once said 'Al-Mahdi's scribe landed in some Arab villages (*quran*) pronouncing the word *quran* with 'nunation', i.e. with an /n/ sound at the end. Shabib ibn Shaybah disapproved of that. So he asked Qutaybah concerning it. The latter answered: "If one uses the word *quran* to refer to the villages of Hijaz it should be without 'nunation' because the word is not completely declinable in that case but if it is used to refer to the villages of Sudan it accepts 'nunation' because it would be completely declinable then."

Another is Abu Abdillah Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Sayyar al-Sayyari who was a Basri scribe, lexicologist, grammarian, poet, and a great literary figure. Al-Najashi writes that he was al-Tahir's secretary during the time of Imam Hasan al-Askari ('a). Al-Sayyari wrote a number of books, the titles of which have been listed in the original version.

Abu Bakr al-Suli is another outstanding grammarian. As we previously mentioned, al-Suli studied

grammar under al-Mubarrad.

Another grammarian is Abu Ja'afar Muhammad ibn Salmah ibn Nabil al-Yashkuri. He was an eminent Shi'ah from Kufa and he was a jurist, lexicologist and grammarian. He stayed in the desert for some time and mixed with the Bedouins in order to learn from them. In turn, Yaqub ibn al-Sikkit and Muhammad ibn Abdah al-Na'ib studied under him. Al-Najashi says: "The household of al-Yashkuri in Kufa was famous for the learned and distinguished figures it had. Some of its members have been secretaries". He also mentions the works of al-Yashkuri to which I have referred in the original version of this book.

Abu Ja'afar Ahmad ibn 'Ubayd ibn Nasih ibn Balanjar, a client of Banu Hashim is another prominent grammarian. He was known as Abu 'Asidah. He hailed from Dailam and lived in Kufa. He was an authority on Arabic language. He trained al-Mu'tazz, the son of al-Mutawakkil. Abu 'Asidah studied under al-Asma'i and his peers. He transmitted the hadith from al-Waqidi and al-Qasim al-Anbari and others related from him. Abu 'Asidah narrated from al-Waqidi and others about the merits of the Ahl al-Bayt. In *Tabaqat al-Shi'ah*, Nurullah al-Mar'ashi relates a story in the biography of Abu Asidah about what transpired between him and al-Mu'tazz on the day the latter wanted to kill al-Mutawakkil.

The master of literature, Abu Ali al-Farisi is another Shi'ite grammarian. His name is al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Abdulghaffar ibn Muhammad ibn Sulayman ibn Aban al-Faswi. He was a leading authority on grammar in his time. Accordingly, it is said that grammar started in Persia and ended there. That is, it started with Sibawayh and was sealed at Abu Ali al-Farisi's hands. He visited Sayf al-Daulah at Aleppo in 331 A.H. and stayed with him for some time. Later he left him and joined Adud al-Daulah ibn Buwayh in Persia where he was received well and given a high position. *Riyad al-Ulama* and other sources declare that al-Farisi was an Imamiyah Shi'ite. Those who took him for a Mutazilite were clearly mistaken. We have recorded his detailed biography and a full list of his works in our original version of this book. Al-Farisi was born in 288 A.H. and passed away on Sunday, 17th Rabi al-Thani, 377 A.H.

Another grammarian is Faris ibn Sulaiman Abu Shuja' al-Arjani. Al-Najashi says "He was a chief among our companions who was steeped in literature and hadith. He was a companion of Yahya ibn Zakariya al-Tarmashiri and Muhammad ibn Bahr al-Rahbi and also their student. He compiled a book entitled *Musnad Abu Nuwas wa Hujr wa Ash'ab Bahlul wa Ja'faran*.

Among them is Ibn al-Kufi, Ali ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ubayd ibn al-Zubayr al-Asadi, an Imamiyah Shi'ah. He was one of the famous companions of the Taghlib and a leading Kufi authority on Arabic. Al-Najashi mentioned him in *Asma al-Musannifin* and praised him, and so did Sayyid Bahr al-Ulum in his *Al-Fawa'id al-Rijaliyyah*. Both Yaqut and Al-Suyuti have written accounts of his biography in *Al-Mu'jam* and *Al-Tabaqat*, respectively. I have also written about him in the original version. Among Ibn al-Kufi's works are *Al-Fara'id wa al-Qala'id* (Gems and exquisite pieces) on language, *Kitab Ma'ni al-Shi'r* (Book of the meanings of poetry) and *Kitab al-Hamz* (Book of slander). He was born in 254 and died in the month of Zu al-Qi'dah 348 A.H.

Al-Akhfash the first, who died before the year 250 A.H., was another prominent grammarian. His name was Ahmad ibn Imran ibn Salamah al-Alhani. He was also called by the agnomen Abu Abdillah al-Nahwi. After presenting his biography, Yaqut added states that he had written many poems about the Ahl al-Bayt and these verses are an example:

Indeed the descendants of the blessed Fatima,

The ones noble in descent and disposition.

Are all like meadows after heavy rains,

And our spring is drought-stricken.

Sayyid Bahr al-Ulum al-Tabataba'i mentioned in *Kitab al-Rijal* that al-Akhfash was among the poets who wrote about the Ahl al-Bayt and that he was loyal to the family of the Prophet. He was originally from Syria and then he migrated to Iraq. Later he traveled to Egypt and then to Tabariyah and he stayed there in the company of Ishaq ibn 'Abdus and assumed the task of educating his children.

Another grammarian is Marzakkah whose name was Zayd. He hailed from Mosul and was one of the Shi'ah masters of grammar. Al-Suyuti has mentioned him in *Tabaqat al-Nuhat*. Al-Safadi writes that he was a grammarian, a poet, and a man of letters and a Shi'ite (*rafidi*). Ibn al-Nadim has also mentioned Marzakkah among Shi'ah poets and theologians.

The outstanding Shi'ah scholar and well-known grammarian, Ibn Abi al-Azhari was also among them. His biography and a list of his works are found in the bibliography of Shi'ah authors. He has been mentioned by biographers, al-Khatib in *Tarikh Baghdad* and others. Al-Azhari died in the year 325 at the age of ninety.

Another is Abu Abdillah Muhammad ibn Abdillah, the Basri scribe, grammarian and poet. He was known as al-Mufaji' whom we previously mentioned. Yaqut says: "He was a great master of grammar, a marvelous poet and a Shi'ah". Al-Najashi describes him as one of the eminent and notable scholars of language, literature and hadith". In the original version I have presented a long biography of this man and a list of his works and have also stated that he died in 320 A.H.

Among them is Ibn Khalawayh, who was a master of language, philology and other literary disciplines. We have previously mentioned him. The original version contains a precise biography and a list of his works. He died at Aleppo in 307 A.H..

Among them is al-Khali'al-Nahwi. His name was Husayn ibn Muhammad ibn Ja'afar ibn Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Rafi'i. Al-Safadi writes: "He was a great scholar of grammar who studied under al-Farisi and al-Sirafi". In *Asma al-Musannifin*, al-Najashi has mentioned him and, to his credit, recorded a number of books such as *Kitab San'at al-Shi'r* (a book about poetry), *Kitab al-Darajat* (a book about grades), *Kitab Amthal al-'Ammah* (a book of popular sayings), *Kitab Takhayyulatal-'Arab* (a book of Arab

fancies), *Kitab Sharh Shi'r Abi Tammam* (a commentary on Abu Tammam's poetry and *Kitab al-Awdiyah wa al-Jibal wa al-Rimal* (a book about valleys, mountains and sands). By the eighties of the fourth century A.H. he was still living.

Al-Marzabani Muhammad ibn Imran, the Baghdadi scribe whom we previously mentioned is among them. He was a master of literature who studied under Ibn Durayd and Ibn al-Anbari and from whom Abu Abdillah al-Saymari, Abu al-Qasim al-Tannukhi, Abu Muhammad al-Jawhari and others learnt. In the original version of this book, there is a list of all his works.

Another Shi'ite grammarian is Abu al-Fath Muhammad ibn Ja'afar Ibn Muhammad al-Hamadani al-Maraghi. Yaqut says: "He was a grammarian who was known for his eloquence and good memory". Al-Tawhidi writes: "He was a leader in grammar and literature when still a youth. I have not seen the like of him". And in *Kitab Musannifi al-Shi'ah*, al-Najashi introduces al-Fath as "an outstanding scholar of grammar and language in Baghdad who had a retentive memory and was an authentic narrator. He was also interested in theology. He died in 371 A.H." I have mentioned his works in the original version.

Another is al-Husayn ibn Muhammad ibn Ali al-Azdi, Abu Abdillah the Kufi grammarian. Al-Najashi says "He is one of our reliable companions who were more interested in biographies, literature and poetry". He wrote *Kitab Wufud al-Nabi*, a book of the delegations to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his Household, and a book about the the personal life of Ibn Abi 'Aqab and his poetry. Abu Abdillah died at the end of the third century".

Ahmad ibn Isma'il ibn Abdillah, Abu Ali al-Bajali, the lexicologist who is known as Samkat al-Qummi. He was the teacher of Ibn al-'Amid who was a master of literature and grammar. Al-Bajali studied under Ahmad ibn Abu Abdillah al-Barqi and others. Al-Najashi says that he had a number of matchless books, the like of which no one has ever written and he mentioned them. I have also listed al-Bajali's works in the original version.

Abu al-Hasan al-Samsati is another Shi'ite grammarian who was a peerless master of all branches of literature and Arabic language during his time. He wrote about all subjects. I have enumerated his works in the original version. Al-Najashi writes: "He was our chief in the Arabian peninsula, the most learned and foremost literary figure of his time". Then he mentioned his works. Al-Samsati entered into correspondence with Saif al-Daulah; therefore, he must have been in the same period of people like al-Kulayni.

Among them is Sheikh Ibn Abdun who was known during his time as Ibn al-Hashir and his name is Ahmad ibn Abdulwahid ibn Ahmad al-Bazzaz and his agnomen was Abu Abdillah. He was a master of the scholars of literature, Islamic jurisprudence and hadith. He devoted a lot of time to attending lectures and narrating.

Al-Najashi writes: "Our master, who was known as Ibn Abdun was well-versed in literature. He read books of literature under great literary masters. He met Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad al-Qurayshi,

who was known as Ibn al-Zubayr. He enjoyed a high position at that time. He wrote a number of books such as: *Akhbar al-Sayyid Ibn Muhammad* (on the reports about Sayyid Ibn Muhammad), *Kitab al-Tarikh* (a book of history), *Kitab Tafsir Khutbat Fatima (a.s.)* (a commentary on the sermon of Fatima ('a), *Kitab al-Jum'ah* (a book on Friday congregation) and *Kitab al-Hadithayn al-Mukhtalifayn* (Book of the 'Two Conflicting Hadiths')". Ibn Abdun also wrote *Kitab Adab al-Khulafa'* (a book on the etiquettes of caliphs). He died in 323 A.H. Sheikh Abu Ja'far al-Tusi attended to his lectures and attested to the authenticity of all that he narrated.

Among them is Ibn al-Najjar, a Kufi grammarian. His name is Muhammad ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Harun ibn Fuqah Abu al-Husayn al-Tamimi, the author of *Al-Mukhtasar fi al-Nahw*, and *Kitab al-Mulah wa al-Nawadir*. In Yaqut's account we read: "He was born in Kufa in 303 (some say 311). He went to Baghdad and transmitted the hadith on the authority of Ibn Durayd and Naftawayh. He was a reliable narrator and an efficient reciter of the Qur'an". Ibn al-Najjar was one of the masters of al-Najashi the author of *Al-Fihrist fi Musannifi al-Shi'ah* where he extolled him and also enumerated his works including *Tarikh al-Kufah*.

It should be noted that the surname Ibn al-Najjar refers to the person in question and also to Muhibbuddin Muhammad ibn Mahmud ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Najjar, the author of *Al-Tahsil wa al-Tadhyil ala Tarikh al-Khatib* (the Summary and Supplement to the *Tarikh* of al-Khatib) who was a Sunni scholar while the one we are writing about here was a Shi'ite. He passed away in 420 A.H. or 460 A.H., according to other accounts.

Abu al-Faraj al-Qinani al-Warraaq, a Kufi grammarian and copyist. Al-Najashi has mentioned him in *Fihrist Asma al-Musannifi al-Shi'ah* and also listed his books. He was among the masters of al-Najashi. In the unabridged version of this book, I have mentioned him in the section about the fourth century scholars.

Another is Abu al-Faraj Muhammad ibn Abi Imran Musa ibn Ali ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Qazwizi, a Kufi scribe and grammarian. Al-Najashi has mentioned him. Although he was contemporary with Abu al-Faraj, al-Najashi did not attend his lectures. He was among the scholars of the fourth century.

Abu al-Hasan al-Rub'i, the grammarian is among them. His name is Ali bin Isa bin al-Faraj bin Salih al-Rub'i. The Syrian scholar, Ibn Kathir, writes in his *Tarikh*: "In the beginning he studied Arabic disciplines under al-Sirafi and then under Abu Ali al-Farisi to whom he fully dedicated himself for twenty years until he attained mastery and surpassed the others....One day while he was walking along the bank of the Tigris he saw al-Sharif al-Murtada and al-Sharif al-Radi in a boat and Uthman Ibn Jinni Abu al-Fath was with them. Ali ibn Isa said to the two "What a strange thing it is that Uthman should be with you while Ali is far away from you, walking along the banks of the Tigris!" Al-Rub'i died in 420 A.H.

Another is Abu Ishaq al-Rifa'i, Ibrahim ibn Sa'ad ibn al-Tayib, the grammarian. Abu Ghalib Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Sahl ibn Bishran, a master of grammar, says: "I have never seen a person more

knowledgeable than Abu Ishaq al-Rafi'i. He was blind. He studied under al-Sirafi who also taught him his commentary on Sibawaih's *Al-Kitab*. In addition he attended his master's classes on literary texts and anthologies of poetry, *diwans*. Later al-Rafi'i left Baghdad for Wasit which he had visited and learnt the Qur'an under Abdulghaffar al-Hisni, prior to his stay in Baghdad. In Wasit, al-Rafi'i would sit in the front in the mosque and teach the Qur'an". In his account about him Yaqut says: "Then he settled down in Al-Zaydiyah where Rafidis (Shi'ah) and Alids lived. Therefore, people considered him a follower of their sect, as a result of which they hated and shunned him. Al-Rifa'i died in the year 411 A.H.

Another grammarian is Abdulsalam ibn al-Husayn, Abu Ahmad al-Basri. Al-Najashi refers to him as the chief master of literature in Basra. He was among the literary masters in Kufa, as well.

Al-Sharif Yahya ibn Muhammad ibn Tabatabai al-'Alawi was also one of them. His agnomen was Abu al-Mu'izz and Abu Muhammad. He was a student of al-Rab'i and al-Shammas and Ibn al-Shajari was his student. Yaqut says: "Ibn al-Shajari was proud of him". In *Al-Fihrist*, Ibn al-Nadim writes: "Yahya al-'Alawi, Abu Muhammad al-Nishapuri, the theologian had some books to his credit. I have met a group of people who had seen him and studied under him". Al-Suyuti relates in *Tabaqat al-Nuhat* that he was a Shi'ite. The chief of the Shi'ah al-Allamah ibn al-Mutahhar has mentioned al-Sharif Yahya in *Al-Khulasah* and observed that he was a learned man, a jurist and a theologian who lived in Nishapur. Al-Najashi, Ibn Dawud and other scholars gave the same account. I have recorded their words in the original version.

Another is Thabit ibn Aslam ibn Abdulwahhab, Abu al-Hasan al-Halabi. Al-Suyuti writes in *Al-Tabaqat*: "Al-Dhahabi says: 'He was an outstanding grammarian and a Shi'ah. He wrote a book about the grounds of Asim's method of reciting the Holy Qur'an. He also headed the library in the service of Saif al-Dawlah in Aleppo. The Isma'ilites accused Abu al-Hasan of corrupting their kingdom because he wrote a book exposing their faults and the way their movement started. So he was taken to Egypt where he was crucified around 460 A.H.

Abu al-Qasim al-Tannukhi, Ali ibn al-Muhsin ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi al-Jahm is another master of grammar: In *Nasamat al-Sahar fi man Tashayya' wa Sha'ar*, he is described as 'a learned man, a poet and a man of letters like his father and grandfather. He studied the Arabic language under Abu al-Ala al-Ma'arri. He related a large volume of poetry. He served as a judge in a number of cities'. Then the author enumerated them. Al-Tannukhi studied under Sayyid al-Murtadha. In *Fawat al-Wafayat*, Ibn Shakir observes: "He was a Mutazili Shi'ah". But this view is baseless, for he was in fact an Imamiyyah Shi'ah. This scholar was born on Tuesday mid-Sha'aban in the year 355 A.H. and passed away in 447. Al-Qadi al-Mar'ashi declares in *Tabaqat al-Shi'ah* that Ali, his father al-Muhsin and his grandfather al-Qadi al-Tannukhi were all Shi'ah.

Another grammarian is Ali ibn Ahmad al-Fanjakri (The surname denotes that he hailed from Fanjkard a village near Nishapur) who was a writer. He authored *Taj al-Ash'ar* and *Salwat al-Shi'ah* which is a collection of poems written by the Commander of the Faithful. Al-Maydani wrote a book in Persian

entitled *Al-Sami fi al-Asami*, which was on the Arabic language, and he dedicated it to al-Fanjakri. In it he praised al-Fanjakri and described him as a great scholar and man of letters. Al-Qadi al-Mar'ashi records in *Tabaqat al-Shi'ah* that he was an intelligent scholar with firm faith. He composed magnificent poems about the Ahl al-Bayt. He cites a sample of his poems. In a similar way, al-Suyuti writes: "The author of *Al-Siyaq* says: '(Al-Fanjakri was) a proficient and well versed writer, whose prose and poetry were devoted to the descendants of the Ahl al-Bayt. He studied the Arabic language very well under Yaqub ibn Ahmad who was also a man of letters". It is written in *Al-Wishah* that he was given the titles 'Chief of the scholars', 'Wonder of his time', and 'Miracle among his peers'. Al-Fanjakri died in 512 at the age of eighty. In *Al-Siyaq*, it is reported that he died on the 13th of Ramadan, 503. I have presented a sample of his poems in the unabridged work. He was contemporary with al-Zamakhshari and concerning the two some anecdotes have been reported.

Malik al-Nuhat, al-Hasan ibn Safi ibn Nazzar ibn Abi al-Hasan: It is stated in *Kashf al-Zunun* that his surname was Abu Nazzar. Under the letter 'ain', the author writes: "The pillars of grammar was Abu Nazzar, the king of the dissenters (*al-rawafid*) [a derogatory name given to the Shi'ah] and the grammarians, Hasan ibn Safi Bardun al-Turki, who died in 798". The date of his death given by the author of *Kashf al-Zunun* like the dates of his birth and death given by al-Suyuti are not correct.

The latter said that Malik al-Nuhat died in Damascus on Tuesday, 9th Shawwal, 568 and he was born in 489, but he, may Allah be pleased with him, died in 463 as recorded in *Al-Hulal al-Sundusiyah* and Ibn Khillikan attests to its correctness. Malik al-Nuhat studied grammar under al-Fasihi the Imamiyyah scholar, until he attained proficiency. He wrote *Al-Hawi* and *Al-Umdah* on grammar, *Al-Maqsad* on morphology, a book of prosody, *Kitab al-Tadhkirah al-Sanjariyyah*, *Al-Maqamat*, the Ten Puzzling Issues and a *Diwan* of poetry. He was born in Baghdad. He travelled to Iran, Khurasan, Kerman and Ghaznah. Finally, Malik al-Nuhat went to Syria and stayed there until he died. I have quoted some of his verses in the original version.

Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Abi Zayd al-Fasihi (thus known because he read the book al-Fasih repeatedly): He came from Astarabad in Jurjan province. He studied grammar under Abdulqadir al-Jurjani and in turn, Malik al-Nuhat learnt from him. He was a master of all Arabic disciplines. He taught grammar at the Nizamiyyah school in Baghdad after the tenure of al-Khatib al-Tabrizi. When his Shi'ism became known and he was questioned about that, al-Fasihi replied "I do not deny that I am a Shi'ah from head to toe". So he was dismissed and replaced by Abu Mansur al-Jawaliqi. Al-Fasihi died in Baghdad on Wednesday 13th Dhu al-Hijjah 516 A.H.

Ibn al-Shajari, the teacher of Ibn al-Anbari was peerless in his age surpassing all in Arabic language, lexicology, and the poetry and history of the Arabs. He was well versed in literature and an immensely erudite man. This is al-Suyuti's account. Ibn Khillikan, Yaqut and Ibn al-Anbari also gave a similar one. Among our companions, Sheikh Muntajab al-Din has mentioned him in *Fihrist Asma Ulama al-Shi'ah* which is about the Shi'ah scholars who came after Sheikh al-Tusi. Sayyid Ali ibn Sadr al-Din al-Madani

has also mentioned Ibn al-Shajari in *Al-Darajat al-Rafi'ah fi Tabaqat al-Shi'ah*. Al-Suyuti's account about the noble lineage of this man was incorrect.

Likewise, Yaqut's account about al-Shajari was wrong. To put the record straight, this scholar was Hibatullah ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Hamza ibn Ahmad ibn Ubaydullah ibn Muhammad ibn Abdurrahman al-Shajari (Shajar is a village in the district of Medina) ibn al-Qasim ibn al-Hasan ibn Zayd ibn al-Hasan al-Sibt ibn, Ali ibn Abi Talib the Commander of the Faithful ('a). Ibn al-Shajari passed away in the year 537. I have mentioned his works in the original version of this book.

Yahya ibn Abi Tay' Ahmad ibn Zahir al-Ta'i al-Kalbi al-Halabi known as Abu al-Fadl al-Nahwi: Yaqut writes: "He was one of those scholars who were learned in literature and jurisprudence according to the Imamiyah school. He wrote a number of books on various disciplines. He lived around the year 600..." We read also in *Kashf al-Zunun*: "Ibn Abi Tay' Yahya ibn Hamidah al-Halbi, who died in the year 335 wrote *Akhbar al-Shu'ara' al-Sab'ah*. It was arranged alphabetically". I think he had missed the right date because Ibn Abi Tay' was born in the month of Shawwal of the year 575.

Among the outstanding grammarians is Ahmad ibn Ali ibn Ma'qil, Abu al-Abbas al-Muqri al-Azdi al-Muhlabi a peerless scholar of Arabic language and literature who hailed from Hims. Al-Suyuti writes about him saying: "Al-Dhahabi says: He was born in the year 567. He migrated to Iraq and adopted Shi'ism from a group of people at al-Hillah. He studied grammar in Baghdad under Abu al-Baqa' al-'Akbari and al-Wajih al-Wasiti and under Abu al-Yaman al-Kindi in Damascus. Al-Muqri excelled in the Arabic language and prosody and also wrote about the two. He composed excellent poetry and nicely versified *Al-Idah* and *Al-Takmilah* in Persian. He gained access to al-Malik al-Amjad and enjoyed his favours. As a result the Shi'ah of that area attained their welfare. Al-Muqri was a very intelligent man who held extreme Shi'ah views. He was very religious and ascetic. He died on 25th Rabi' al-Awwal, 644 A.H."

Ahmad ibn Muhammad, Abu al-Abbas al-Ashbili al-Azdi, known as Ibn al-Haj is another master of language and grammar. Ibn al-Haj studied under al-Shalubin and the like till he became a great master of Arabic and a custodian of various dialects and he took the lead in prosody. In *Al-Badr al-Safir* it is said "he was so proficient in the Arabic language that no one has ever surpassed or even equalled him". In *Al-Bulghah*, Majduddin reports: "He used to say: 'When I die, let Ibn Usfur do whatever he likes to Sibawayh's book'".

Ibn al-Haj dictated a commentary on the book of Sibawayh, and wrote a good book about *imamah* (leadership) in which he established the right of the leadership of the twelve Imams. This is reported in *Ma'alim al-Ulama*. He also wrote about Qur'anic sciences and he wrote books including *Mukhtasar Khasa'is Ibn Jinni* (a summary of Ibn al-Jinni's *Al-Khasa'is*), a book on the rule of listening (*hukm al-sima'*), a summary of al-Ghazzali's *Al-Mustasfa* on principles of jurisprudence, glosses on the problems of *Al-Mustasfa*, glosses on *Sirr al-Sina'ah* and on *Al-Idah*, *Kitab al-Nuqud 'ala al-Sihah* and *Al-Iradat ala al-Mughrib*". Ibn al-Haj died in 647 A.H. Ibn Abdulmalik holds that it was in 651 but the first

view is more reliable.

Najm al-A'imma al-Radi al-Astarabadi is another famous grammarian. Al-Suyuti describes him in *Al-Tabaqat* in these words: "Al-Radi, the renowned master, author of the commentary on Ibn al-Hajib's *Al-Kafiyah*, the like of which is not written about this book or on most other books of grammar for that matter. The singular worth of this book stems from the level of its comprehensiveness and the quality of research and the proofs it contains. The people showed great interest in reading it and it was well circulated. The masters of the time referred to it. His title was Najm al-A'imma but I could not find his name or his biography".

Al-Fadil al-Baghdadi writes in the introduction to *Khizanat al-Adab*, a commentary on *Sharh Shawahid Sharh al-Radi*: "I have seen the following account written at the end of an old copy of these commentaries: He is the master, erudite scholar, king of scholars and most eminent of the learned, mufti of the sects and great jurist, who is known as Najm al-Millah wa al-Din (The Star of the Creed and the Religion) Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Astarabadi. He dictated this commentary at the noble Gharawi precincts (i.e. in Najaf) in the month of Rabi al-Akhir of the year 688 A.H." I have also seen, in the handwriting of al-Fadil al-Isfahani, known as al-Fadhil al-Hindi, the following words written on the cover of al-Radi's commentary on *Al-Shafiyah fi al-Sarf*: A commentary on *Al-Shafiyah* by Sheikh al-Radi, the star of the creed, the truth and the religion, al-Astarabadi, the gems of whose speech are more brilliant than heavenly stars, and to pursue them is easier than to seek the pearls in the sea. When he talks he moves the hearts and his speech rouses the desire to listen. He was like a king among the masters; he was obeyed by friend and foe throughout the lands".

At the end of his commentary on *Al-Khifayah*, before the section on the rules of the 'ha' that requires pausing, he says: "This is the end of the commentary on the preface. Praise be to Allah for His bounties by which the book reached completion. May His blessings be on Muhammad and his noble family. The book is completed in Shawwal, 686 A.H. in the noble Gharawi precincts. May the best greetings and peace of the Lord of Glory be on the one who has ennobled this area.

Sayyid Ruknuddin, the author of *Al-Mutawassit* was another grammarian. He wrote three commentaries on the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn al-Hajib, the *Al-mutawassit* being the most well-known. Al-Suyuti says: "At the end of *Tarikh Baghdad*, Ibn Rafi writes: '(Sayyid Ruknuddin) came to Baghdad and studied under our master, Nasiruddin al-Tusi. Noticing his remarkably high intelligence, al-Tusi promoted Ruknuddin and made him the head of the students in Maraghah. The latter was very brilliant in philosophy and wrote glosses on *Al-Tajrid* and other works. He also compiled a commentary on al-Tusi's *Qawa'id al-Aqa'id* for his master's son. When al-Tusi left for Baghdad in 672, Ruknuddin maintained his company until his master's death which took place the same year.

After his master's death, Sayyid Ruknuddin moved to Mosul and settled there. He taught at the Al-Nuriyyah school where he was charged to run its endowments also. He wrote three commentaries on Ibn al-Hajib's *Muqaddimah*, the best known of which is *Al-Mutawassit*. He also gave lectures on the

principles of Islamic jurisprudence. He studied the *Al-Shafiyah* under Saif al-Amudi who later commissioned him to teach it at the Al-Sultaniyyah school.

Al-Safadi writes: “He (Ruknuddin) was extremely humble; he rose for everyone including water carriers. He was very clement. The Tartars held him in great esteem. He wrote a commentary on the original *Mukhtasar* of Ibn al-Hajib and another on *Al-Shafiyah fi alTasrif*. Ruknuddin lived for more than seventy years”. It is recorded in *Riyad al-Ulama*: “Al-Sayyid ibn Sharafshah is al-Sayyid Ruknuddin al-Astarabadi, that is Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Sharafshah al-Husayni. He wrote *Manhaj al-Shi’ah fi Fada’il Wasiyyi Khatam al-Shari’ah*, (The Shi’ah approach to the merits of the legate (Imam Ali) of the seal of the Islamic creed (i.e. the Holy Prophet). This work was dedicated to the Sultan Uways Bahadar Khan. We have in our possession his commentary on *Qawa’id al-Aqa’id*, by his teacher Khwajah Nasiruddin.” The author of *Al-Rawdah* says: “He was among the Shi’ite figures. A group of scholars confirm that he was a Shi’ah”. He also mentioned his works, counting *Manhaj al-Shi’ah* among them.

Ruknuddin died in the year 718, although some say that he died on 14th Safar, 715.

The book is completed by its author, the servant who longs for the kindness of his Gracious Lord, Abu Muhammad al-Hasan, known as Sayyid Hasan Sadr al-Din, the son of Allamah Sayyid al-Hadi al-Kazimi, on Saturday, the 15th of Jumada al-Akhirah, in the year 1330 A.H.

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