Chapter One
THE BACKGROUND OF THE KITĀB

It goes without saying that a work of the size and scope of the Kitāb cannot be without antecedents. Unfortunately no authentic work survives of any grammarian before Sibawayhi, the Muqaddima of his elder contemporary Ḥalaf al-Āḥmar being most probably spurious.1 There remain two sources through which the earliest history of Arabic grammar may be glimpsed, one, much used and much to be mistrusted, the Arabs’ own accounts, and one scarcely appreciated until recently, the contents of the Kitāb itself.

We need not doubt that all the various tales of the grammatical activities of Abū al-Aswad al-Du‘ā’lī are useless as evidence for the beginnings of grammar, through they may conceal the first rumblings of the purist reaction, about which we shall speak later. As assembled by Zubaydi, 2 whose list is longer than that offered by Flügel, 3 the stories involving Abū al-Aswad as a grammarian fall fall into three groups: the first consists of mispronunciations, e.g., for جامع, فانع for فانع, presumably a relic of the traditional Arab contempt for those who could not pronounce their language properly, the second consists of grammatical mistakes emanating from the same sort of people, e.g., "أنتي إبنا لترك يكون which is emblematic rather than a verbīm report of actual errors, and the third consists of such grammarians’ [2] frivolities as حسن أقربك ما أشد الابحاث which perhaps echoing the more feeble erudite jokes going the rounds of the majālis. The reliability of the Arab historians on the origins of Arabic grammar may be gauged from the story of Ibn al-Nadīm in which he describes an autograph manuscript by Yahyā ibn Ya‘mar of Abū al-Aswad’s grammatical treatise. It was written, thought Ibn al-Nadīm, “on Chinese paper.” 4 Since Chinese paper did not reach even the easternmost part of Islam until A.H.

1. See below p. [2].
2. Zubaydi, Ţabāt̄ 13–19th.
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134, and Yahyā died in A.H. 129 it seems clear that, if Ibn al-Nadim was right about the paper, the manuscript must have been a forgery. Finally we may observe that the surviving poetry of Abū al-Aswad reveals no particular reason why he should be regarded as the founder of Arabic grammar. Occasional lines of his Diwān where the subject of speech crops up are better evidence for that ingrained habit of the Arab mind which expresses man's conduct through the metaphor of movement towards or away from the good, than as proof that Abū al-Aswad was even remotely interested in grammar. That he is quoted several times by Sibawayhī in the Kitāb as a poet but never mentioned as a grammarian is perhaps all the confirmation we need to assert with Aḥmad Aḥmad that this whole matter is nothing but a "fairy tale."7

The only other serious contender for an important place in the history of Arabic grammar is Ḥalaf al-Aḥmar, whose claim is based on the existence of an abridged grammar attributed to him, the attribution [3] being stoutly, but somewhat vainly defended by his editor 'Īz al-Dīn al-Tanūhī. There are three reasons why the authenticity of the manuscript is to be denied. The editor publishes as part of his preface the opinions of several Arab scholars, of which I give here the essence: the terminology and topics of the Muqaddima do not differ from those of the Baṣrans, and so there is nothing to prevent it from being Ḥalaf's work (Muḥammad al-Fahhām); it represents grammar of the time "before they philosophised it" (Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt); the Ḥalaf of the manuscript is not the 'Āli al-Aḥmar with which he is often confused (Muḥammad 'Ali al-Najjār); finally Muhāyil al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamid declares, "I agree with the opinion of my friend Dr. Fahhām... this is one of the simplest grammars ever composed, resembling the Ājurrūmiyya for students." The accumulation of these evasive remarks has, if anything, the opposite effect to that intended by the editor: if so many eminent scholars are anxious not to confirm the authenticity of the work, who will dare contradict them?8

Secondly, the internal evidence makes it difficult to believe that this work was written before, or even contemporaneously with the Kitāb. I will not stress the inadequacy of the editor's own view that the short introductory prayer and formula قَالُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ (before Qur'ānic quotations are "signs of antiquity,"9 but I would point out that the manuscript evinces a technical knowledge of purely grammatical causes (مل) and grammatical principles (صل) which one would not expect in a work of this putative date.10 There is a curious inconsistency in terminology which the editor takes as proof of antiquity but which could equally well betray a clumsy attempt to give the work the character of a

6. Kitāb 1, 16/21, 60/71, 72/85, 125/149.
8. Ḥalaf, Muqaddima 5–6.
9. Id. 7.
10. Ḥalaf, Muqaddima 33, 34, 100.
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grammar composed before the rival schools became rigidly distinct. If this is so, the author of the Muqaddima should not have shown such a concern to give explicitly "Kūfan" and "Basran" equivalents on two minor occasions if he is supposed to be writing in a period when the two schools did not exist. 17

The third reason for dismissing the work as spurious is a more general one. The editor admits that Ḥalaf is not credited with any grammatical works by the biographers, and we might well ask, what would be the reason for composing an abridged text-book of a discipline which did not yet formally exist. The second century A.H. is too early for such manuals of instruction, for the subject itself has yet to be fully explored and defined. Even the Kitāb is primitive enough not to recognise the academic independence of the system it describes, in marked contrast with such third century works as the Muqaṭṭāb of Mubarrad, to which the Muqaddima is much closer in spirit. For this and other reasons mentioned above it can safely be said that the Muqaddima is neither a work of Ḥalaf's nor of the second century A.H., which leaves us with no material evidence for the forerunners of Sibawayhi outside his own acknowledgements or refutations in the Kitāb itself.

[5] Not only do we lack direct evidence of grammatical activity before Sibawayhi, we are also likely to find, on examining the works of the Arab biographers, that there are no books before Sibawayhi which, from their titles at least, can with certainty be said to be grammatical treatises in the way that the Kitāb is a grammatical treatise. Ḥalil, pace Reuschel, 13 is a case in point. His works increase in number with the date of the biographer, so that in the earliest he is credited with nothing more than the Kitāb al-'Ayn, 14 which is shortly increased by the addition of prosodic works, 15 until we reach the time when he is given the authorship of grammatical works with suspiciously sophisticated titles such as Kitāb al-'awāmil. 16 These, one feels, would surely have been mentioned by Sibawayhi if they had existed, or at the very least some reference would be found in the biographers closest to him in time. 16

Two other works reputedly written before the Kitāb, and indeed said to be included in the Kitāb itself, are the Jāmi' and the Ikmal of İsā ibn 'Umar. Having no corroboration in the form of quotations or surviving fragments it is impossible to invalidate the account or to make any use of it in the study of early Arabic grammar. There is, however, a disparity between İsā's relatively early date of death (149 A.H.) and the assumption that he was a direct influence upon Sibawayhi, who would have been somewhat young (not more than 14 years old) for the supposed speculations of İsā. Since the latter is only rarely [6]

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11. Id. 53, 80.
12. Cf. Anbāari, Inṣāf, intro. 61, and below pp. [28] and [35].
quoted in the Kitāb and mostly via Yūnus, the incongruity of the fact that Sibawayhi never refers to any book of 'Isā’s is increased, and the likelihood of 'Isā’s being the author of any grammatical work in such an early period correspondingly decreases.

The same might be said of Yūnus, whose idiosyncrasies in the matter of grammatical technique have been pointed out more than once without, to my knowledge, ever having been substantiated.18 They may be based on nothing more than the impression that Sibawayhi often quotes Yūnus in order to disagree with him,19 which could account for the desire of the later biographers to father upon Yūnus the work bearing the title Kitāb al-qiṣāṣ fl l-nahw,20 which is significantly absent from the list of Yūnus’s works in the Fihrist. In addition, the source of Yūnus’s reputation for individual qiṣāṣ, namely Sirāfi, does not mention any works with which to support the assertion: it seems that Flügel has misunderstood Sirāfi’s phrase ّهما قياس في النحو as meaning “he is the author of a book Qiṣāṣ fl l-nahw,” which throws enough doubt on the matter to enable us to feel certain that Yūnus did not write any grammatical works, even though he may have produced several lexicographical and dialectal treatises or, more likely, compilations.

Perhaps these alleged early works are the kind described by Abū Ṭayyib when discussing 'Abdullāh ibn Ābi Ishāq, another of Sibawayhi’s sources: “He had so much to say about hamz that a book on that subject [7] was made up from what he dictated.”21 It is possible that ibn Ābi Ishāq knew enough about hamz for this to happen but that is no proof that it did. It is extremely doubtful, on the other hand, whether we can accept as genuine a work of his entitled Sarh al-‘i‘al on such a late attribution as Suyūṭī, in the absence of any corroboration from the earlier sources.22

Other older contemporaries of Sibawayhi, such as Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī and Abū ‘Amr ibn al-‘Alā can claim authorship only of marginal works, i.e., of lexical and dialectal content, and by the time we reach the period of Aṣma’i with his Kitāb uṣūl al-kalām, Kisā’i with his Kitāb al-faysal, Qutrub with his Kitāb al-‘i‘al fl l-nahw and so on, the moment has passed when we can consider any of these as forerunners of Sibawayhi, who in any case predeceased even some of the earlier “grammarians” such as Yūnus, ibn Ābi Ishāq and Kisā’i. The old tale that the Kitāb is a result of the labors of forty-two scholars23 is not only meaningless on the grounds that there were scarcely more than a handful of scholars who could assist Sibawayhi, it is made meaningless by its lack of precision: we do not know whom Ṭa‘lab means and how he understands them to have contributed to the

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17. Reuschel, Hall, 10: 13 times, but see Trounce, Arabica 8, 309-312.
19. See below, p. [34].
20. Only in Flügel, loc. cit.
Kitāb. Most likely it is a mere attempt on the part of the fanatical “Kūfān” to belittle the achievement of the greatest “Baṣrān” grammarian.

Everything points to the absence of any formal predecessor for the Kitāb, in the sense that Sibawayhi was probably the first person to [8] treat this relatively new subject (which even then did not have a name) in a comprehensive, unified and consistent way. But it should not be supposed that the lack of technical literature before the Kitāb is evidence for the absence of discussion of Arabic grammatical problems. This has obviously been going on ever since the poetic koine of pre-Islamic Arabia achieved a recognisable form: with the standardisation of such an artificial language inevitably came the awareness of divergences from it. Thus the poet Nābiġa al-Ḍubayrī, who died shortly before the advent of Islām, though near enough to meet the muḥaddīḏīn poet Ḥassān ibn Ṭabīt, offers an example of the sort of criticism current among poets at that time: in response to the verses of Ḥassān ibn Ṭabīt quoted in support of his claim to be a superior poet to Nābiġa and Ḥansā who was also present, Nābiġa says, “You would certainly be a poet if you did not give جمان the plural of paucity and did not boast of your offspring instead of boasting of your forebears.” Other criticisms are given in an alternative riyāya, mainly concerned with pointing out Ḥassān’s ineptitude in choice of vocabulary for the verses. The awareness of the difference in meaning between the two plurals of جمان (if the story is genuine) must not be taken, however, as proof of any “grammatical” speculations at so early a date.

Similarly the famous poem by Ḥūţay’a, which was apparently composed with a quiescent rhyme-letter, but which can be vocalised throughout in the “nominative” form without breaking the rules of grammar or of [9] rhyme is not evidence for any knowledge of the nature and functions of the “nominative” as such, which is what Ibn Fāris seems to imply when he says that “if Ḥūţay’a had not knowingly done this, it is most probable that the endings would all have differed, because for them all to have the same single vowel by accident and without intention can scarcely be.” Ibn Fāris’ implications are, for this period of Arabic, less probable than the chance agreement of restored vowels in a quiescent rhyme. A recent attempt to revive this belief has been made by Nāṣir al-Dīn Asad, who uses Ibn Fāris’s story of Ḥūţay’a for the same purpose. It cannot be said that either has proved the specific point for which the poem was adduced, namely that the early Arabs were familiar with the skill of writing, for the prosodic ambiguity of rhyme would not show in writing anyway. Both scholars may well be right in asserting that the Arabs of the Jāḥiliyya were not as “ignorant” as they were made out to be, but nor were they as sophisticated as Ibn Fāris and Asad would have us believe. The true picture is more likely to be that painted by Abū ‘Alī al-Fārisī, who explained that the Bedouin Arabs were prone

24. Ḥasānī, Aṣāfī, 8, in Krenkow, JRAS Centenary Supplement 1924, 255.
to make mistakes “because they had no (grammatical) principles to refer to and no rules to resort to.”\textsuperscript{27} At least this view is founded on common sense, in spite of the fallacy (still current, alas) that native speakers of any language ever make conscious reference to a body of abstract rules.

\textsuperscript{[10]} A more useful example for Asad’s case, and one which also serves our purposes equally well, is the answer given by Ayesha in response to a query about the grammar of S\u{u}ra 4, 162\textsuperscript{28} “It is reported from Ayesha that she was once asked about this place, and she said, ‘It is a mistake of the scribe’s.’”\textsuperscript{29} All we need to know is that was possible in those days to distinguish between right and wrong language, and we must beware of assuming that the ability to do so is testimony to the existence of a conscious “grammar.”

Even as late as Farazdaq, who was reputedly very sensitive to criticisms of his language, there is still no evidence of specifically grammatical awareness. We might go as far as to claim that no “grammar” is involved even when Farazdaq’s target is a grammarian, for example his well-known satire on ‘Abdulläh ibn Abī Ishāq,\textsuperscript{30} or when, in a milder mood, he praises Abû ‘Amr ibn al-‘Ala’\textsuperscript{31} Perhaps it may be taken as a further sign of the absence of grammatical speculations that, on another occasion, Farazdaq absolutely refused to consider an alternative case-ending in one of his verses, where it is astonishing that Ibn Abī Ishāq’s discussion of the problem is completely devoid of grammatical terms. Instead he says “if you were to say فوعلٍ instead of فعولان” etc., which suggests that he, at least, could not provide any grammatical descriptions of the words whose grammar he could nevertheless discuss in lay fashion.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{[11]} This seems to have been the normal state of affairs in Umayyad times: many examples are to be found in Fück’s \textit{Arabiyo}\textsuperscript{33} both from the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods, from which we may at least grant that the wealth of evidence precludes the spuriousness of the entire collection of stories, and reveals the genuine acuity of Arab \textit{Sprachgefühl} which was later channelled into the construction of a grammar of the language.\textsuperscript{34}

This ability to sense mistakes of language, however, is not by any means unusual, being essentially an intuitive grasp of the mother tongue, and far from needing the support of an abstract system, it could not possibly devise one as long as the reasons for the awareness of speech mistakes remained intuitive. The Arabs thus found themselves in the situation described by Bloomfield:

\textsuperscript{27} Ibn Jinnî, \textit{Ḫadî‘a} 3, 273, Suyūṭî, \textit{Muzhir} 2, 494.
\textsuperscript{28} Anbârî, \textit{Inṣaf} 195, cf. Sezgin, \textit{GAS} 1, 3.
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Kitâb} 2, 53/58.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Kitâb} 2, 150/148.
\textsuperscript{31} Zajjâj, \textit{Majáls} 85.
\textsuperscript{32} Op. cit. chs. 2 and 3.
There are some circumstances, however, in which the conventionally educated person discusses linguistic matters. Occasionally he debates questions of "correctness"... If possible he looks to the conventions of writing for an answer... Otherwise he appeals to authority: one way of speaking, he believes, is inherently right, the other is inherently wrong."

It is certain that Bloomfield had never read any of the accounts of the majālis in the second century A.H., which makes it all the more significant that his words should apply so aptly to most of the contents of these Arab causeries. Unfortunately, for the reason I have already [12] given, such academic conversations could not provide a satisfactory explanation for the origins of Arabic grammar. The purist is seldom an innovator: his energies are directed towards the preservation of the status quo and the rejection of alien elements both lexical and grammatical. His contribution to a scientific study of his language would always remain within the limits described by Bloomfield, which in the particular case of Arabic characteristically led to the adoption of the ʾisnād as a formalised "authority" for the purist's judgements, just as the ʾisnād was used to authenticate tradition of every kind in ʾIslām, in which linguistic behavior was only one of many aspects of the sunna. This is probably the stage reached by the immediate predecessors of Sibawayhi, and we can be sure that AbūʾAmr ibn al-ʿAlāʾ, ʿAbdullāh ibn Abī Iṣḥāq, Iṣā ibn ʿUmar, Yūnus and Ḥalīl all had a highly developed sense of linguistic correctness, a nose for anomalies and sufficient personal authority to give prescriptive force to their utterances. Whether they also had a technical vocabulary is a point I shall deal with in due course, but it will be enough for the present to say that only Yūnus and Ḥalīl of the above show signs of any systematic abstraction of grammatical phenomena. The others must be regarded as highly observant purists whose principal contribution to Arabic grammar lay in detecting, and perhaps discussing, lines of poetry, verses of the Qurʾān etc., which attracted their attention simply on the grounds that their language seemed different from the expected standard. In this they reached a point which had already been accurately described by Flügel in his [13] assessment of the earliest grammarians:

We may expect to find in them no system, no closely-knit paragraphs, strictly ordered and conforming to a doctrine, for which all those poetic fragments and quotations could serve as examples: instead they were scattered grammatical or linguistic studies and observations as they occurred in isolation to every compiler, lacking inner consistency and rational treatment."

34. Flügel, Gram. Schulen 35.
It is time now to turn to the Kitāb, which as well as providing valuable evidence for early Arabic grammar, will, I hope, also reveal itself to be conspicuously closely-knit and well ordered in contrast with the kind of works Flügel described.

The Kitāb itself is the earliest source of information about the history of Arabic grammar, and both in its construction and in its allusions it reveals that there was certainly some sort of grammatical speculation in progress during the time of its composition, although it offers no conclusive evidence for such activities before that time. The mere fact that the arguments of Sibawayhi sometimes take for granted theorems which have yet to be established is clear proof that the Kitāb is an apology for ideas already well-known to its intended readership. This and other features of the work will be dealt with in later chapters.

Following the negative tone which I have so far maintained, let me [14] reiterate that Abū al-Aswad al-Du‘alī is never mentioned in the Kitāb as a grammarian, but only as a poet. Conversely, Ru‘ba the poet is occasionally cited as the authority for certain prose constructions, in every case but one on the authority of Yūnus.35 This is a particularly important fact for the history of Arabic grammar, and one which Reuschel characteristically dismisses as irrelevant.36 It shows us that at least by A.H. 149 (the date of Ru‘ba’s last datable poem)37 and probably earlier, the “grammarians” were beginning to cross-examine the poets about their usage. But significantly Ru‘ba is not quoted as having any grammatical opinions of his own: that is exclusively Yūnus’s occupation. Equally significantly Ru‘ba is never directly quoted by Sibawayhi, which affords a little certainty amidst the confusion of Sibawayhi’s dates, for it suggests that Ru‘ba’s death and Sibawayhi’s birth must have been fairly close, i.e., about A.H. 150. Curiously enough, ‘Isā ibn ‘Umar died at about the same time and he, too, is mostly transmitted through Yūnus. Thus Yūnus himself provides, as it were, an ante quem non for the beginnings of Arabic grammar. This can be supported by examining the use Sibawayhi makes of ‘Isā ibn ‘Umar in the Kitāb: of the fourteen occasions38 when Sibawayhi refers to ‘Isā, two are simply poetic quotations transmitted by ‘Isā,39 one gives [15] his manner of reading a Qur’anic verse,40 four concern ‘Isā’s way of expressing himself without implying that he could formulate in grammatical terms the peculiarities of his speech,41 three refer to ‘Isā’s report of other people’s usage,42 and only four are remotely connected with the “verdict” (qawi‘) of ‘Isā as a grammarian.43 But it is almost certain that ‘Isā’s “grammatical” views are merely his lay

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36. Reuschel, Ḥall 11.
37. Et, art. Ru‘ba by F. Krenkow.
38. Kitāb 1, 72/85, 213/250.
40. Id. 1, 168/199, 2, 7/7, 68/73, 134/132.
41. Id. 1, 318/363, 366/412, 2, 302/278.
42. Id. 1, 194/228, 232/272, 2, 6/7, 38/42.
opinion translated into the technical language of his transmitter, Yūnūs, or by Sibawayhi himself in discussing the problems raised. The same is true of the five occasions on which Sibawayhi quotes 'Abdullāh ibn Abī Ishāq; three are concerned only with the non-grammatical facts that he “allows” a verse of poetry to be read in a certain way or reads and speaks in a particular manner. The remaining two cases reveal unmistakably amateur philology in the garb of intricate grammatical reasoning. When Sibawayhi says that

Yūnūs ... (dealing with) Ṣurūt b. al-Muqtar used to correlate the ‘nominative’ with the ‘nominative,’ ‘genitive’ with ‘genitive’ and ‘accusative’ with ‘accusative.’

He claimed that the ‘nominative’ as we have explained it was erroneous even though this was the opinion of Ḥalil and Ibn Abī Ishāq.

there is nothing which compels us to believe that the last-named authority had any idea of what was meant by “nominative” etc.

[16] Likewise in the discussion of the verse

داً الخلافة إلا دار ساً

it would seriously affect the history of Arabic grammar if Ibn Abī Ishāq’s “qawl” had been as Sibawayhi reports it, viz.

They have made غيّر an adjective in the status of مثل, and whoever makes it an exceptional will have no alternative but to put one of two (excepted words) in the “accusative.”

Such grammatical sophistication from a man who died in A.H. 127 is not to be expected. At the very least it would suggest that he was as familiar with grammatical terminology as Ḥalil or Yūnūs, thereby entailing the heresy that Ḥalil, Yūnūs and Sibawayhi found their entire system already worked out for them and fully developed, having been so since as far back as the end of the reign of Caliph Hīṣām (125 A.H.). It is much more sensible to assume that Ibn Abī Ishāq was aware that the use of غيّر in the line in question brought about differences of meaning, which he may have pointed out to Yūnūs (who was evidently a pupil and admirer of his) and that this observation was then transmuted into grammatical form by Yūnūs and Sibawayhi. The same strictures apply to the other grammarians whom Sibawayhi mentions by name, Abū al-Ḥāṭṭāb, Hārub and Abū ‘Amr ibn al-ʿĀlā’, this last (who died in 154 A.H.) probably being available to Sibawayhi only through Yūnūs and, rarely, Ḥalil. For the purposes of the history of Arabic grammar

43. Id. 1, 118/141, 379/426, 2, 458/410 respectively.
44. Id. 1, 218/256.
45. Id. 1, 325/373.
46. Reuschel, Ḥalil 10.
the absence in the Kitāb [17] of any references to the first two tabaqa‘ī of the traditional Arab scheme (which led Ibrāhīm Muṣṭafā to suppose that the founder of Arabic grammar must therefore be ‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Isḥāq, who belongs to the third tabaqa‘ī’), and the likelihood that Sibawayhi received his tuition almost exclusively from Ḥalīl and Yūnūs, together imply that there was no grammar before Sibawayhi encountered his two great masters. As we shall see later, Sibawayhi did not even come to Başra to study grammar in the first place, which is quite consistent with the impression created by the references in the Kitāb to other so-called “grammarians.”60

Yet other “grammarians” there must have been, for Sibawayhi refers on a variety of occasions to nahlīyyūn. Since he does not name them, even when he says, for example, “Yūnūs and some of the grammarians,”61 it seems likely that the term nahlī had not yet acquired its academically defined sense usually rendered in English as “grammarian.” Very probably, judging from the way Sibawayhi disagrees with them more often than not, their name has something of a pejorative quality once inherent in such English nicknames as “Methodist” and “Quaker,” which have long since lost their original opprobrium, just as nahlīyyūn now applies to perfectly respectable scholars. Their name is evidently derived from their frequent use of the term nahl, about whose meaning I shall have more to say below.62

I shall now follow, as briefly as possible, the arguments of the “grammarians” in the Kitāb. It need not be stressed that these [18] disagreements are probably the only reliable, direct evidence for the state of grammar in Sibawayhi’s time. For that reason I shall supplement the overt arguments with certain examples of dispute between unnamed opponents, either unspecified “people” or merely “those who say” (من قال من زعم) and the like.

1) 1, 140/167-8. Jahn translates the last part of the title of this chapter wrongly as “Über diejenigen Constructionen, welche die Grammatiker als incorrect für hässlich halten, und anderes beurteilen als die Araber”63 (my emphasis). It should read, “Concerning what the grammarians detest as bad Arabic, for they put such words in a position that the Arabs do not,” taking ِتَكُونُ لَهُ a to mean “words in the bāb under discussion.” This is the only way to make sense out of the fact that Sibawayhi defends the natural unassimilated form يَبْعِثُ نَحْلَةَ وَبَنَى against the form devised by “the grammarians,” يَبْعِثُ لَهُ وَبَنَى, and for the fact that he dismisses يَبْعِثُ لَهُ وَبَنَى as “bad Arabic,” because the “grammarians” have put يَبْعِثُ لَهُ in a position where it is not used by the Arabs. If they insist on putting it there, says Sibawayhi, it has to take direct form to account for its apparent isolation. All “grammarians” agree that يَبْعِثُ (with its complementary idea لَهُ) takes the direct form. It is not at all clear, however, whether Sibawayhi counts himself among the nahlīyyūn in thus saying. [19]

49. Jahn, Kitāb 969.
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2) 1, 164/194-5. When the types اما العلم فقوه علم وما العلم فقوه علم and اما العلم فقوه علم وما العلم فقوه علم are conjoined the "grammarians" assimilate them into مبین عيبية علم وما العلم عيبية علم وتمب عيبية علم, thereby relating a verbal noun like علم وما العلم فقوه علم وما العلم عيبية علم to a reference to the false assimilation in the previous case of دينه دينه and بهما. This is regarded by Sibawayhi as bad Arabic and the objection is supported by a reference to the false assimilation in the two constrictions, wrong in itself, leads to further mistakes of theory.

3) 1, 184/214. To say مرت بالجمال اداة فردأ when all you mean is "like a lion" is both feeble and bad Arabic, being nothing but the "grammarians" invention from a false comparison with which 아ما علم وما العلم فقوه علم وما العلم فقوه علم is rightly considered to be a هال, but from which it has been falsely deduced that أداة is a definite adjective. This is denied by Sibawayhi.

4) 1, 190/223. Because the emphatic and generalising words like كله etc. follow the inflections of the words they qualify, the "grammarians" have wrongly assumed that they must be adjectives.

5) 1, 193/227-228. Here for the first time Sibawayhi seems to ally himself with the "grammarians," though with reservations. The case arises out of the claim (ان زعم زعم) made by an anonymous adversary of Sibawayhi that is is possible to distinguish between the meanings of مرت بالجمال مخالطة بدنية فردأ and مرت بالجمال مخالطة بدنية فردأ where مرت بالجمال مخالطة بدنية فردأ with tanwin would give present and future meaning, and without tanwin past meaning. Sibawayhi implies that the unknown critic must fall foul both of the "grammarians" and of the Arabs if [20] he persists in his erroneous view. The point is argued at some length by Sibawayhi, in the true Socratic dialectic of obtaining step by step the agreement of his adversary until the latter has talked himself into the opposite of his original claim. It is an interesting coincidence, but scarcely proof of any Greek influence, that the debate should be conducted in this way, the typical antiphony of the majlis.({6})

That this is a dispute of considerable importance is shown by the subsequent digression in which Sibawayhi expounds, without apparently sharing, the views of Ḥāfaṣa b. ʿUmar and ʿUmar b. Yūnūs on an even more subtle distinction. The root of the difficulty is in the borderline cases where adjectives become هال, typified in the sentence مرت بالجمال قامة فردأ. The quality of an adjective is that it is identical with the word it describes and therefore takes identical form, while the characteristic of the هال is that it is expressly not identical with the term it qualifies, and so takes an explicitly different form. This latter situation is exemplified in مرت بالجمال قامة فردأ for a discussion of which see Chapter Six. When we encounter mixed forms such as مرت بالجمال قامة فردأ, where strictly speaking a هال should not qualify an undefined term, we realise that the Arab grammarians had already firmly established their principles, and so were very likely to differ profoundly on marginal cases such as those in this chapter. What they are trying to solve is the problem of the adjective which has verbal (participial) form, and therefore brings in difficulties of temporal connotation which should not be present in true adjectives [21] but which are inherent in هال situations, and which also has a double reference (i.e., the sabab of improper ḍanā) both backwards to the noun it qualifies, and forwards to its verbal complements. It may not make the problem any easier to discuss it in these terms, but we must assume that those were
the considerations which brought about the difference of views we are trying to analyse. It will be perhaps simpler to treat this issue as two distinct questions: when Sibawayhi talks about concordance he is trying to unravel the confusion of ُهَلَّ and adjective, and when he talks about ُهَلِّ he is concerned with the difference in meaning (which he does not himself fully accept) between participial adjectives with or without ُهَلِّ. The two problems combine in the sentence ُهَلِّ يَدَّ بِنَيَائِهِ بِخَالِقَهُ, but I hope that by now there will be no need to point out the easiest way to approach such a rebarbative specimen.

It only remains to tabulate the views of the “grammarians” on the meaning of the ُهَلِّ.

Yūnus believes that as well as the difference effected by the presence or absence of ُهَلِّ, there is a further subdivision of forms without ُهَلِّ, namely the type of action which has no perceptible execution, e.g., ُأَخْذُ, ُلَّزْمُ etc., and that which has, e.g., ُكَأْسُ, ُقَرَبُ, ُجُرَّ. The first type, somewhat unexpectedly, is always treated as ُهَلَّ and given direct form (cf. ُبِيْهِ دَّلِّ بِنَيَائِهِ) while the second, which might seem to us to be more suitable for ُهَلَّ status, is always independent and adjectival.

‘Īsā ibn ‘Umar proposes a different scheme for the two types of [22] meaning when there is no ُهَلِّ. The first, treated as ُهَلَّ and therefore direct in form, are the words which denote actions that have occurred, while those which denote actions which have not (yet) occurred are treated as independent adjectives.

Needless to say, these are wanton speculations based on an apparent inconsistency in Arabic usage, and Sibawayhi presents them only as examples of an approach he certainly deplored. We have here an interesting example of the capabilities of the early “grammarians” but it is also significant that such a complex dispute is rare in the Kitāb.

6) 1, 206/242. The “grammarians” wrongly suppose that adjectives may be freely inverted. If this were so, “a great deal of what people say would be corrupt.” The point is proved by reductio ad absurdum: the inverted form of ُبِيْهِ دَّلِّ بِنَيَائِهِ ُجُرَّ would be nonsense if the pronoun of ُجُرَّ preceded its noun, and equally nonsensical is the transformation of ُجُرَّ into a dependent ُهَلَّ ُجُرَّ ُهَلَّ both on grounds of meaning and of the unsuitability of the undefined term (ُهَلْ) for qualification by ُهَلَّ.

7) 1, 219/257. Although the personal pronouns are normally used instead of the name of the person whose identity they denote, there is one case, e.g., ُبِإِنَّا عَبَدُ اللَّهِ فَاحْزَرُ ُجُرَّ, where the pronoun can be qualified by its proper noun as a form of emphasis. The situation in which this occurs is described by Sibawayhi as cases of “threatening, boasting and self-abasement,” which makes the rhetorical nature of this [23] construction pretty clear. On the other hand it is quite wrong to do as the “grammarians” do and make the pronoun into a subject and the proper noun into its predicate, as in ُبِإِنَّا عَبَدُ اللَّهِ مَنْطَقُ ُجُرَّ, when the emphasis is only on the going away, not, as in the correct usage, on the fact that a named person is in a certain state or condition.

8) 1, 335/383. The suffixed pronouns have a natural order of attachment corresponding to our 1st, 2nd and 3rd person. In doubly transitive verbs the second object may be suffixed (أَمَاتِي إِيَاهُ) or take the disjunctive form (أَمَاتِي إِيَاهُ). The forms of the type ُهَلِّ are
The Background of the Kitāb

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“bad Arabic not spoken by Arabs, but the ‘grammarians’ have derived them by analogy” (Tasawwur)

9) 1, 345/393. The use of the independent pronouns as adjectives is likened by Sibawayhi to the use of كل the بسماء etc. (cf. example no. 4 above), but they are not true adjectives, contrary to the assumption of the “grammarians.”

10) 1, 347/395. When the independent pronouns are used to separate the two parts of a sentence, they do not affect the behavior of either part. Thus و may be prefixed to them at will, leaving the predicate uncharged, which is the practice of the “Arabs and all the grammarians.” This is only the second case among those cited here, where the Arabs and “grammarians” agree, cf. example no. 5 above.

11) 1, 369/414-415. When using ب نتم with the independent form, i.e., denoting a definite temporal connection between the main and [24] subordinate verbs, it makes no difference if the main verb refers to continuous past action (كنت نت) or to an isolated past action (نتم) in either case the verb of ب will be independent. “To say that there is a difference is only what the ‘grammarians’ say on feeble grounds. They say that if no change of meaning (نتم) is allowed [after و] we use the direct form. This, if they are right, would oblige them to say نتم in the direct form, and yet there is not an Arab in the world who says نتم without also saying نتم.”

This is a difficult argument to grasp. Jahn, in following Sirāfī, missed the point completely by taking نتم as meaning change in meaning, cf. the ام لم يلقي مال المضارع إلى الماضي 51 and note also that Sibawayhi elsewhere expresses syntactical inversion in connection with و. 52 Whether نتم in this rarer meaning is Sibawayhi’s own term or whether he is quoting it as part of the usage of his opponents is not clear, though the latter seems more likely.

At all events, as the preceding and subsequent passages show, Sibawayhi is at pains to prove that no modification of the verb, either through و or additions such as إنما، أي، كنت و قد تلقي معنى المضارع إلى الماضي 51 and negative particles, affects the form of the verb after [25]. The “grammarians,” on the other hand, distinguish between simple نتم and modified نتم etc., on the grounds that after modified verbs the connection between the main and subordinate verbs is then of the kind which requires a direct form after ب. Thus they contrast ب نتم ب نتم “I travelled and now I have entered it” with ب نتم ب نتم “I once travelled and at that time entered it.” This contrast is rejected by Sibawayhi, who turns the argument of the “grammarians” against them by saying that if ب you always has to mean the same thing they would always have to use direct verbs after it whereas, in fact, you can say ب نتم ب نتم if the entry is regarded in the present, which is confirmed by Arab usage. As always the semantic argument is much more difficult than the formal one.

50. Jahn, Kitāb §239 and notes.
51. Reckendorf, Arab. Syntax 46.
52. Kitāb 1, 39-40/50-51.
12) 1, 385/433. Regarding the connection between interrogative and conditional particles, which has been over-generalised by the “grammarians,” Sibawayhi says, “As for the opinion of the ‘grammarians’ that everything which can be used as an interrogative can also be used as a conditional particle, it makes no sense (لا يستوجب) by virtue of the fact that you can use إن إذا ما and حيما إن as conditionals, but not as interrogatives.” Though it is not our purpose to criticise the validity of Sibawayhi’s objections to the “grammarians,” it must surely seem from the naïve logical fallacy this argument contains, that Sibawayhi was scarcely an Aristotelian!

[26] 13) 1, 386/434. A verse adduced to illustrate the independent form of an inverted object after إن ما.

فقال: آفة الله العزيز

إذا ما الخيل تأدهب بلحم

receives the well-deserved qualification: “it is said that the grammarians forged it.” The expression is in brackets, and presumably was not written by Sibawayhi, but by Jarmi when he attributed all the verses quoted anonymously by Sibawayhi.

14) 1, 18/18. If masculine sound plural or dual nouns were to be used as proper names they would keep their original inflections, but some “grammarians” give them partial inflection by saying هم من رجاء, in which case, Ḥalil points out, they would also be obliged to say من سامثن by analogy with من سامثن.

15) 1, 106/107. Concerning the formation of the diminutive of quinqueliteral a purely theoretical observation is attributed to Ḥalil: “If I were to make diminutives of these nouns without eliding any part of them as some of the ‘grammarians’ say, I would say فعل دونين and معين دونين as you can see, so that it took the pattern of the أصل, which is nearer to the normal usage even though it is not part of the Arabs’ speech.”

16) 2, 160/157. A case of over-enthusiastic analogising is attributed to “Yūnus and certain grammarians (Kūfans according to Sīrāfī).” They form non-existent energetic imperatives [27] for the dual and feminine plural respectively. The Arabs do not say this, nor are there any similar examples in their speech.

17) 2, 343/315. In a chapter-heading there is a reference to “what the ‘grammarians’ call التصريف والفعل التصريف.” This would seem to mean the process of deriving from the triliteral root all the nominal patterns, though as such it is hardly ever used. I have found it once in Ibn Jinni, where he says that the form من الفعل is the form من الاسم from the verb تلوث. From the occasions when the expression occurs in the Kitāb it is not quite clear whether they cover all the nominal derivatives of the verb or merely the verb’s powers of full con-

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53. Jahn, Kitāb 2, 478 adds the parenthetical comment.
54. Ibn Jinni, Ḥaṣṣah is 1, 33.
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jugation. Perhaps, if the latter is more likely, the observation that the “grammarians” had a term المعرف والفعل may be nothing more than a later addition to the text.

Significantly, Sibawayhi invariably quotes the “grammarians” in order to refute them. Disregarding the occasion on which they are accused of forging a verse of poetry (example no. 13) the disputed fall into three main types, viz. the group of wrong assumptions alleged to have been made (nos. 6, 7, 11), two cases where Sibawayhi and the “grammarians” seem to align themselves against the opinions of a third, unnamed critic (nos. 5 and 10) and all the rest, which deal, as might be expected, with the exaggerated or mistaken analogies drawn by the [28] “grammarians.”

The very existence of methodological disputes points to more than just the “qawl” of the named grammarians in the Kitāb, which, as we have seen, may mean nothing more than an uncritical observation decked out in technical jargon by a later scholar. These “grammarians,” on the other hand, are clearly specialists and capable of going beyond the appeal to authority, into the realm of systematic speculation. Against this, however, we must set the fact that there is no suggestion of any “Kūfān” or “Baṣrān” schools—indeed we would not expect to find any in this period. The anonymity of the “grammarians” perfectly reflects the inchoate state of their science, and, incidentally, confirms that the conventional history of grammar at this stage is necessarily based, as it so obviously betrays itself as being, on mere guess-work and legend. It is thus possible to discern in the background of Sibawayhi’s speculations a well-informed but unidentifiable body of specialists in refutation of whom, and indeed for the enlightenment of whom the Kitāb was written. The “grammarians” are perforce the audience and public to which the Kitāb was aimed, and the old Newtonian principle of action and reaction is seen to apply here as well as to the mechanics of the universe: there must have been at least as much grammatical “action” to provide the springboard for Sibawayhi’s grammatical “reaction.” I find myself agreeing with Fück (though for entirely different reasons), that the Kitāb is a reactionary work, but whereas Fück regards as the most noteworthy feature of the Kitāb the fact that Sibawayhi relies almost exclusively [29] on Bedouin Arabs and dead poets for his material, I would regard it of fundamental importance that the Kitāb would have been literally incomprehensible if it were not the product of a climate of intense technical discussion against which, as I have shown, it was a reaction. This interpretation imposes a certain modification of the usual history of Arabic grammar, for it follows that anything which Sibawayhi does not undertake to refute can be assumed not to have been within his knowledge: I need not enlarge on the effect of this view upon the theory that Arabic grammar owes its origins to Greek logic.

56. Cf. Hadiṭi, Abriyat al-sarf 64.
Chapter One

So much for explicit references to "grammarians." Of the many occasions when there is obviously a debate in progress between Sibawayhi and unnamed opponents, here follow some characteristic examples:

1) 1, 169/199. In the expression 

سَبََتُ النَّارِ "he is about to be divided by fire," the direct forms are explained by Sibawayhi as denoting a state (حَال). Other "people," however, try to connect their direct form with the elision of 

اذَا كَانَ "if he was," which Sibawayhi does not accept.

2) 1, 227/266. There is disagreement over nouns which are composed of ابن اُبَيْث followed by a word of the pattern أَفْلَام. If this word denotes only a common noun then, according to Sibawayhi, the combined expression ابن أَفْلَام can become defined only by prefixing the article to the second term, whereas there are some who erroneously maintain that all nouns composed of ابن and أَفْلَام are defined. They base their claim on the fact that أَفْلَام is not fully declinable and must therefore always be defined, a claim which is quickly dismissed [30] by Sibawayhi with the example حَمْذَة أَفْلَام and a verse of Dū al-Rumma in which أَفْلَام is qualified by the undefined adjective مَهِم.

3) 1, 341/389. In order to explain the forms أَطْالِيّ للوَّاقِي and أَطْالِيّ للوَّاقِي where the personal suffixes are independent in function and respectively oblique and direct in form some "people" draw a parallel between the real double functions of أَطْالِيّ للوَّاقِي (oblique and direct) and a hypothetical double function in أَطْالِيّ للوَّاقِي (independent and oblique) and أَطْالِيّ للوَّاقِي (independent and direct). This is called a "disgraceful way of arguing" by Sibawayhi, who goes on to say, in a most interesting statement of his principles, "You have no right to violate a grammatical category when it is uniformly consistent and when you can find a valid alternative argument. There are indeed times when one thing is determined by something remote if nothing else can be found, and this often happens in their speech."

4) 1, 357/403. In هَيْكَا you the words may be left in their original form (Hijāzī usage) or restored to their independent form (Tamimi usage). Thus from the statement ردَّتُ زِيْنَةٌ من زِيْنَةٌ while the Tamimi would ask ردَّتُ زِيْنَةٌ من زِيْنَةٌ while the Hijāzī would ask ردَّت زِيْنَةٌ من زِيْنَةٌ. When more than one word is to be repeated it is general in both dialects to restore them to the independent form, but some "people" by applying analogy arrive at such forms as ردَّت زِيْنَةٌ من زِيْنَةٌ suggested by Yūnus.

5) 1, 237/277. The الأَمْلُ للوَّاقِي is just not said, according to Sibawayhi, though he allows it in poetry. If anyone says ردَّت زِيْنَةٌ من زِيْنَةٌ [31] let it have the status of ردَّت زِيْنَةٌ من زِيْنَةٌ, the answer is that, although the quīmīf has enough resemblance to a verb for these two sentences to be analogical in form, it has not the التَّارِجُ of a verb and so cannot exercise all the functions of a verb, i.e., in this case to allow the حَال to precede it.

6) 1, 252/293. The مَنْ is that is equivalent to ردَّت زِيْنَةٌ prompts the question: what business has this predicative مَنْ assuming the status of a noun without tanwīn? Sibawayhi's not very convincing answer is that since مَنْ has two functions it is given the status of the numerals, i.e., it can be followed either by direct or oblique forms just as the numerals are.

7) 1, 383/430. It is not a little disturbing to find in the next argument both the terms سَبِيب in the meaning of "cause." Fortunately they are not used to mean grammati-
cal cause, and they are furthermore used as synonyms, which is scarcely precise enough for philosophy.

The dispute concerns the unusual direct verb in Sūra 2, 282: 

أَنْ تَنفِّدْ إِخْتِصَامًا فَانْفِدْ إِخْتِصَامًا

If somebody (أَنْ تَنفِّدْ) is read as though to mean “in order that (one of the two female witnesses) should go astray” when it obviously does not mean that, Sibawayhi would give the following somewhat odd answer: “أَنْ تَنفِّدْ is only mentioned as the cause (سبب) of reminding, as a man says, ‘I prepared it that the wall might lean’ and I might prop it up.’ Here he is [32] not, by the act of preparation, requiring the wall to lean, but he is simply stating the reason (سبب) and cause (محصلة) of the propping up.” The likelihood that the explanation is an interpolation is suggested by the fact that we do not find it in one place where we might expect it, namely in Farrāʾs discussion of the same verse. 58

There are many other such examples, illustrating a kind of permanent opposition from the critics of Sibawayhi's theories. Sometimes the tone of an entire chapter is contentious in the extreme, as for instance chapters 250 and 251, where the phrase أَنْ تَنفِّدْ occurs with almost rhetorical frequency. And even Ḥalil is not always accepted by Sibawayhi as infallible, witness the occasion where an opinion of Ḥalil is declared to be "bad Arabic, feeble and inadmissible except in cases of necessity," and in another place, "that first explanation of Ḥalil's is far-fetched and only allowed in poetry or necessity." 59

To these we can add the following as evidence of Sibawayhi's independence from Ḥalil: the attraction of the type أَنْ تَنفِّدْ is allowed by Ḥalil only when the number and gender of the two terms are the same, but not when they are different أَنْ تَنفِّدْ أَنْ تَنفِّدْ (مانع جرح ضرب حریان) of which Sibawayhi says, "This is what Ḥalil says, but in my opinion the two expressions are identical." 60 Similarly, when Ḥalil explains أَنْ تَنفِّدْ as a contraction of أَنْ تَنفِّدْ بالأس, Sibawayhi says that "what Ḥalil says is not a strong argument, for you can say أَنْ تَنفِّدْ — ذهب أَنْ تَنفِّدْ أَنْ تَنفِّدْ (ذهب أَنْ تَنفِّدْ أَنْ تَنفِّدْ) in [33] which أَنْ تَنفِّدْ is the subject of أَنْ تَنفِّدْ. Ḥalil's etymology of أَنْ تَنفِّدْ does not disallow by Sibawayhi on the grounds that "if it was as Ḥalil says, you would not be able to say أَنْ تَنفِّدْ أَنْ تَنفِّدْ (أَنْ تَنفِّدْ أَنْ تَنفِّدْ أَنْ تَنفِّدْ Aَنْ تَنفِّدْ), since أَنْ تَنفِّدْ and its verb constitute a noun in which the verb is a ُسل, which would be like saying (wrongly) أَنْ تَنفِّدْ. 61 On another occasion Ḥalil's explanation of أَنْ تَنفِّدْ is dependent upon أَنْ تَنفِّدْ أَنْ تَنفِّدْ Aَنْ تَنفِّدْ, namely that أَنْ تَنفِّدْ أَنْ تَنفِّدْ is described by Sibawayhi as "in this respect not good Arabic in speech, because all that is meant is the same with the أَنْ تَنفِّدْ left out, although it is permissible in poetry." 62 One final example, in which Sibawayhi actually rejects Ḥalil's argument in favour of Yūnus's, will suffice to demon-

58. Farrāʾ, Maʿānī 1, 184.
59. Kiāb 1, 151/181 and 351/398 respectively, in Mubarak, Rummānī 127.
60. Id. 1, 185/217.
61. Id. 1, 254/294.
63. Id. 1, 333/381.
strate the independence of the pupil from the master: when the conjunction الأَو định a verb of independent form with one of a copulated form, as in

إن تركوا نكوب البخيل عادًا

Halil can only explain it as “association” (الشراطن) of two meanings just as in the verse

سُنُول فإنًا مبشرُ نقلًا

where is oblique in form by analogy with the meaning of a predicate of ليس using ب. By the same token is independent because it relates to the equivalent of a question, i.e. إن تركوا or نزلوا. *Yûnûs*’s “easier” explanation is simply that begins a new [34] sentence, and Halil’s “association” is discounted by Sibawayhi as “farfetched.44

This brings us to the problem of *Yûnûs*’ role in the *Kitâb*, where he is quoted 201 times.49 In contrast with his relatively rare disagreements with Halil, Sibawayhi frequently disagrees with *Yûnûs*. Often the disagreement is merely implied by reporting first the acceptable ideas of Halil and only then the dissenting opinion of *Yûnûs*, prefaced by “as for *Yûnûs*” (نَفَّذ يُونُسَ) or “*Yûnûs* claimed” (أَيَّم يُونُسَ).50 When more positive rebuttal is necessary, Sibawayhi discusses the weak points of *Yûnûs*’s argument in detail, e.g., 1, 303/347, or dismisses *Yûnûs*’s claims with such verdicts as “not allowed” (١ ٢١٧/٢٥٥ بحوزـ), “bad Arabic” (١ ٢٣٣/٢٧٣ لْبَحُوز نَفَّذ يُونُسَ), “bad Arabic and feeble grounds” (١ ١١١/١٣٢ بحوزـ) and even “rarely used and abominably bad Arabic” (١ ١٦٤/١٩٤ بحوزـ). If anything, the fact that Sibawayhi can be so critical of a man whose views he is nevertheless prepared to accept when they seem better than Halil’s, is excellent proof of Sibawayhi’s fundamental independence from all his mentors. The study of this particular problem by Reuschel tends to obscure Sibawayhi’s independence by demonstrating that Halil was familiar with everything which Sibawayhi discusses. This has the effect of depriving Sibawayhi of any originality whatsoever, which, if this were the case, would leave unanswered the vital questions of why Halil is never [35] credited with any specifically grammatical works and why all the hostility in the historical accounts is directed towards Sibawayhi.

I am afraid that it is impossible to reconcile Reuschel’s implications with the physical presence of a work which Halil could not possibly have written. Sibawayhi self-consciously seeks to overcome objections to his ideas, whether they emanate from his two masters, from unnamed “grammarians,” or merely from “people” who disagree with him, so much so that the Kitâb depicts, as it were, a running battle between Sibawayhi and his opponents. This is the true state of affairs of which the accounts of his bicker-

64. *Kitâb* 1, 382/429.
65. Reuschel, Halil 10, but v. Troupeau, Arabica 8, 310, 311(5).
The Background of the Kitāb

ings with Kisāʾi and Farrāʾ are nothing but distorted reflections. Moreover, if we were to take the trouble to extract and classify all the points of disagreement, we would almost certainly arrive at the interesting conclusion that the disputes between Sibawayhi and his opponents are altogether different in subject matter from those between the "Kūfān" and the "Baṣrān," thereby confirming what has recently been claimed, that the two schools of grammar are not primitive, but are merely the product of rivalries at the court of Baghdad with Kisāʾi and Farrāʾ as the ring-leaders. This helps to account for the fact that Sibawayhi never refers to Kūfān except with regard to their Qurʾānic "readings" and never to Yūnus as a protagonist of Kūfān views. Yūnus, of course, was long regarded as the founder of the Kūfān school in the sense that his method appeared to contain individual features foreign to the Baṣrān approach. But [36] this fact provides only a negative reason for Yūnus's alleged Kūfān bias, and it is more than likely that his name was attached to the Kūfān school by default.

It is even possible to suspect that he was pushed into the Kūfān camp by the mere fact that Sibawayhi appears to disagree with him so often. Certainly the Kitāb itself does little to confirm long-held beliefs on this subject: it is nonsense to assert that when Sibawayhi quotes an unnamed Kūfān he means Ruʾāsī, for Sibawayhi never mentions Kūfān "grammarians" as such, and the references to Kūfān "readings" are surely not sufficient to justify Ruʾāsī's claim, as one recent scholar seems to believe. Yūnus's connection with the Kūfāns may, in fact, be nothing more than the result of a chance remark of his about ʿIsā ibn ʿUmar, that "he is not the sort of person to relate what he had not heard." This would immediately make Yūnus a likely candidate for founder membership of a school of grammar noted for its emphasis on ʿaṣma. But we should also note that Sibawayhi himself runs the risk of being associated with the Kūfān by declaring, in connection with the problem of the mamduʿ and the maṣṣār, "They say ʿr with kasra of the r just like ʿn and do not pronounce it on the patterns of the words to which it is [most] similar, but they only dare to do this sort of thing on the basis of what they hear (faṣya) ... and there are many cases in speech where it is not known whether the word is defective until you find out that the Arabs speak it, and if they do you will then know [37] that the word ends in y or w preceded by a faṣaḥ." The obvious willingness of Sibawayhi to accept evidence, which, though authentic, is incompatible with theory, seems to be more Kūfān in spirit than Baṣrān, if we are to believe Weil's grim portrait of Baṣrān hyper-rationalisation.

66. Mubārak, Rummānī 286.
68. Anbārī, Insāf, intro. 71.
69. ʿAdī, Kitāb Sibawayhi 40.
70. Kitāb 1, 366/412.
71. Kitāb 2, 166/162.
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The last major matter I propose to deal with in this section, since we are looking in the Kitāb for evidence of the earliest state of Arabic grammar, is the way in which Ḥalil seems to favour grammatical arguments based on phonological rather than syntactical considerations. We shall thus be able to suggest that, to judge from the type of analysis favored by Ḥalil at least, the first enquiries in Arabic grammar may have been largely phonologically inspired, thereby laying to rest an ancient ghost which evidently haunted Jahn to the extent of frightening away common sense, when he wrote, of the structure of the Kitāb:

The Arab grammarians conclude with phonology (as the most difficult), with which our grammarians begin.\(^{72}\)

There must be a better reason than that: I would like to think that the arrangement of the Kitāb (which was, of course, slavishly followed by every subsequent Arab grammarian), reflects Sibawayhi’s priority of interest in syntax and a deliberate change from the mode of thought in which he first developed his ideas.\(^{40}\) By following some of Ḥalil’s arguments we may gain an impression of the background of Sibawayhi’s speculations.

[38] It has already been pointed out that one effect of Reuschel’s study of Ḥalil is to obliterate any difference which might have been discernible between master and pupil, even as far as ignoring instances where Sibawayhi declares his disagreement with Ḥalil, with one exception.\(^{73}\) Yet many of the arguments put forward by Ḥalil are notably phonological in character. I shall list the most interesting of them in order of their occurrence:

1) 1, 185/217. Of the attraction in هذَا جَعْرُ شُبْحٍ طَرْبٍ Ḥalil offers two explanations, one of which is that “they have made oblique (جُر) follow oblique just as they make kasra follow kasra in the words بَدَارِمٍ، بِهِم, etc.” Note here, too, the use of جُر in a phonological sense.\(^{40}\)

2) 1, 252/293. Sibawayhi asks Ḥalil about the expression عليكم جَعْرُ بِيتك بَيْنِي, to which he replies, “Most people say جَعْرُ it, which is the correct analogical form. Those who make it oblique wish to give it the meaning of من, but they elide من here to make it easier for the tongue, and علي compensates for من.” This kind of elision is then compared with elisions in oaths beginning with ﷽, shortened from من and the like.

3) 1, 253/294. Ḥalil explains ﷼ and ﷼ as contractions of ﷼ and لله ﷽ respectively with elisions “to make it easier for the tongue,” which Ḥalil qualifies with the general statement that “they often suppress and elide the preposition (مِن) in expressions which occur frequently in their speech because they have most need to make easier that which is in most use.” [39]

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\(^{72}\) Jahn, Kitāb 5565, n. 1.

\(^{73}\) Reuschel, Ḥalil 24.
1) 269/310. The word اللَّهُ الْعَلِيمُ is explained as having a مَّمَّنَى at the end to replace the يَا of the vocative, except that “in this case the مَّمَّنَى is part of the word just as نَّينُ is in لَّهُ الْعَلِيمُ.”

5) 1, 277/320. Ḥalil explains the لَّامُ الْاسْتِفْعَاء as follows: “This لَّامُ is a substitute for what is added to the end of the word when يَا if prefixed, e.g. يَا بِكَرَاهُ ٍ يَا بِكَرَاهُ, when you call for help or express surprise. Each one of these (يَا-لَّامُ and يَا-لَّامُ) is equivalent to the other, just as the كُافَّ of حَكَمَة is equivalent to the يَا of حَكَمَة, or the الَّيِّ of يَقْرَأِ اللَّهُ, to the يَا-ةِنِي. This sort of thing is common in their speech, as I hope you will see.”

6) 1, 281/323. On this occasion we find Ḥalil using an argument which is peculiar to him, though Sibawayhi makes use of his own development of the idea in the Kitāb. Ḥalil regards the second part of مَدَافِعُ اللَّهِ as equivalent to the “completion" of a single word, hence the مَدَافِعُ اللَّهِ can be considered as equivalent to the tanwin on a single word. In this case the criterion is used to distinguish between مَدَافِعُ اللَّهِ, whose form tells us that it is being treated as a single word, and such pairs as كَرَاهُ يَا بِكَرَاهُ, where as Ḥalil says, the suffixing of the -ةِن is prevented by the fact that the second word is not part of the vocative expression in the way that the مَدَافِعُ اللَّهِ is in the first example.

7) 1, 282/325. The same argument is used to account for مَّمَّنَى يَا بِكَرَاهُ, i.e., that “the tanwin remains because it is the middle of the word and مَّمَّنَى is the completion of the word." The whole group, which can be paraphrased by an مَدَافِعُ اللَّهِ (جِرَّاءُ الْجِرَّاءِ) (ضَالِعُ الْحَشَائِشِ), is therefore [40] treated as equivalent to a single word just as a true مَدَافِعُ اللَّهِ is considered syntactically and phonologically to be a single word.

8) 1, 298/341. To form the shortened vocative مَّمَّنَى (ترْحَمُ) of compound nouns Ḥalil declares that the second part of the compound should be left off, it being, in his opinion, "of the same status as the كُافَّ of feminine nouns." This also includes the numerals ١١-١٩.

9) 1, 306/350. Using the same principle as set out in no. 6 above, the combination of مَّمَّنَى and the مَنْفَهِ is treated as a single noun in which the tanwin (e.g. لَّهُ الْعَلِيمُ) marks the middle of the word. The explanation is expressly connected with the case of the vocative (no. 7 above).

10) 1, 338/386. Two different explanations of the formation of مَّمَّنَى from نَّينُ are given. In the first case, مَّمَّنَى is grouped with similar words of common occurrence, such as رَنْقَةِ, رَنْقَةِ and مَرْقُ, etc., where their frequency makes the full form of the suffix (e.g. مَرْقٌ) seem too "heavy," hence the reduction to مَّمَّنَى, رَنْقَةِ, etc. In addition, to those who suggest that in any case مَّمَّنَى contains no نَّينُ in the suffix, Ḥalil replies that the نَّينُ has been assimilated to the adjacent لَّامُ which is the nearest to نَّينُ phonetically.

11) 1, 343/391. It is bad Arabic to say مَّمَّنَى because the verb is self-sufficient with its agent, but the مَدَافِعُ is not self-sufficient with the مَدَافِعُ اللَّهِ because the latter is in the status of tanwin." That is to say the verb and the pronoun it contains, although they are parts of one word, make a self-sufficient unit [41] comparable to, as Ḥalil says, the initial term and predicate of a sentence. The parts of an مَدَافِعُ, on the other hand, are like the components of a single word (with the مَدَافِعُ اللَّهِ as the tanwin) and such a single word cannot make a self-sufficient utterance. Applied to the sentence in question
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this means that انت وزيد are both muḍāf ilayhi and cannot therefore stand without a muḍāf, while in the permissible sentence انت وزيد the substitute terms انت وزيد are equivalent to independent parts of the construction. It may be worth noting that Ḥalil concentrates on self-sufficiency (استغثاء), which is a structural feature, and leaves intelligibility (استطاعة) out of account.

12) 1, 361/407. This is Ḥalil’s famous etymology of ْلا, which he compares with the similar reduction in ْلا. It is clever of Ḥalil to prove in addition the fact that Arabic does contain compound words, by giving ْلا and ْلا as examples. Sibawayhi rejects this with some vigour, but Ḥalil at least has Reckendorf on his side.

13) 1, 385/433. On the etymology of ْلا Ḥalil explains that it is the particle ْلا with the neutralised suffix ْلا which is also found in ْلا, etc., and that the ْلا has been inserted “because they think it is bad to repeat the same sound and say ْلا ْلا, so they changed the alif of the first ْلا to ْلا”.

14) 1, 423/474. Ḥalil derives ْلا from the kāf of comparison and the particle ْلا, they then acquiring the status of one word. Ḥalil shrewdly backs this up with a reference to such compounds as ْلا ْلا, ْلا ِهَا ِهَا, etc. where the accompanying dependent terms are formal proof that the preceding compounds are complete single words. As with ْلا, the completion of the first word brings about the dependent form in the second.({

15) 2, 1/2. The absence of tanwin in the words of ْلا pattern is first explained on the grounds that they resemble verbs, after which Ḥalil makes it a general principle that tanwin in verbs and verb-like words is “regarded as too heavy.”

16) 2, 12/12. By an argument which is inevitably circular (cf. no. 8 above), Ḥalil treats the suffixed ْلا of the feminine as having “the status of a noun combined with another, and together they are made into one noun like ْلا.”

17) 2, 39/43. If by any chance the expression ْلا ْلا were to be used as a man’s name, the first part of the name would decline fully in its muḍāf form ْلا ْلا ْلا (ْلا ْلا ْلا), etc. because the second part is a correct muḍāf ilayhi, as is proved by the real name ْلا ْلا ْلا. The point of Ḥalil’s argument is that if the second term were not a correct muḍāf ilayhi, then ْلا ْلا would have to behave as though it were the end of the word itself. But since the idāfa is sound, ْلا can behave like ْلا in idāfa (and not like ْلا). Once more the emphasis is on the unity of two words bound together in idāfa. Perhaps the best way to appreciate the consequences of this argument is to compare it with ْلا ْلا ْلا ْلا in the somewhat hypothetical meaning of “the ‘in’ of Zayd,” where if ْلا ْلا were to retain its meaning of “in” it must be made “heavy” (ْلا ْلا) in order to distinguish it from ْلا ْلا ْلا the word ْلا meaning mouth.({

18) 2, 62/66. If such pairs as ْلا ْلا were to be made into names they could not be separated because the second word in each pair has the status of tanwin. This is the same argument as is used in no. 7 above.

74. Kitāb 2, 62/66.
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19) 2, 84/87. To form what are now known as nisba adjectives (but are always called "wāfā") by Sibawayhi from compound nouns, including feminine nouns ending in suffixed -ā', the second component is rejected and replaced by the ya' of the nisba. (40)

20) 2, 136/134. The diminutives of the compound nouns are formed by altering only the first part, and the second being regarded as having the status of the madaf ilayhi, i.e., ultimately of tanwin. (40)

21) 2, 162/158. When the last radical of a doubled verb has a vowel "the Arabs are unanimous in assimilating the two radicals, for that," according to Halil, "is more suitable because when the radicals are both in the same place they find it heavy to raise their tongues once and then return them to the same place." This is an example of the principle of economy of effort which Sibawayhi frequently applies without attributing it to Halil, who is certainly the originator of the idea. A good example is Chapter 470 (2, 252/270), which deals with the effect of the six gutturals on the medial vowel of the verb: it is explained in some detail that the gutturals bring the vowel down from kasra to fatha for reasons of economy of effort, and we can (44) be quite sure that this explanation derives from Halil, because it was Halil who first classified the consonants in order of place of articulation. (44)

22) 2, 433/390. When asked to explain why the forms َةَ and َةَ can be regarded as equivalent to the forms َةَ and َةَ, but that no verbs of the form َةَ can be formed by analogy with such forms as َةَ, Halil answers "That is because in َةَ there are two wawds, so the speaker would have to raise his tongue once and then raise it again, whereas in َةَ he raises his tongue only once. This is permissible as with the َةَ and َةَ, for where he raises his tongue only once, the sound has the status of only a single hamza."

These arguments can be put into four categories. On the simplest level Halil uses the idea of phonetic attraction, e.g., examples n. 1, 32, and the second part of n. 10. For the second category, elision for the sake of ease of pronunciation as in examples nos. 2, 3, and 12 can be grouped with other cases based on economy of effort, i.e., nos. 13, 15, 22 and the first part of n. 10. The third class contains those examples where he favors the principle of phonological equivalence (nos. 4 and 5), which is a kind of analysis below word- level which Sibawayhi does not practice. The fourth type embraces a substantial group of arguments—nos. 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20, in which Halil develops his own unusual line of enquiry. I think I am right to say that it is the sort of interpretation which would only occur to someone whose inclinations favored phonology rather than syntax, (45) morphophonology rather than grammar, since it is quite obvious that Halil, in pursuing his investigations, was striving to identify and define what would nowadays be called, perhaps, the morphological word. (46) For Halil, the formal sign of a morphologically complete word was the tanwin, and he seems to have made a simple equation between tanwin and any attachment to a word (by any syntactic device) from which the resultant pair of terms acquire the same limited status as a single word. This extends from the feminine singular to the idāfa and pseudo-idāfa combinations, all of which have no more power to stand alone (i.e., make sentences by themselves) than any isolated noun. That
may be regarded as a perciipient analysis by Ḥalil: certainly it is one which simplified Sibawayhi’s task considerably, and he developed it in his own way in his establishment of the phrase مشرون درهمة as an important locus probans in the Kitāb, which I shall discuss in due course.\(^{60}\)

We are left with a strong impression that Ḥalil’s interest in Arabic was concentrated on the word and its parts, whether as a phonetician and lexicographer, of which the arrangement and composition of Kitāb al-‘Ayn provide excellent evidence for his capacity in those fields or as a thing to be isolated from the chain of speech, of which the arguments I have selected above will supply the proof. It is a pity that Reuschel overlooked this most important aspect of Ḥalil’s contribution to the Kitāb, for it masks the originality both of Ḥalil and of Sibawayhi. The failure to notice this quality of Ḥalil’s share in Sibawayhi’s work, however, is far from unusual in studies of the [46] Kitāb, as we shall see when we turn to examine the present state of criticism of this much misunderstood work. To conclude this chapter, here are a few miscellaneous items of interest.

Despite his apparent reliance on Bedouin informants, Sibawayhi only ever mentions one by name. He is ‘Abū Murhib,\(^ {79}\) and I can find no information at all about him. His name, therefore, adds nothing to our knowledge of Sibawayhi’s sources.

Another name without a background is ‘Abū Rabī‘a, who is quoted as a grammatical authority by ‘Abū al-Ḥaṭṭāb.\(^ {26}\) Like ‘Abū Murhib, he is unknown to the biographers and commentators, and for that reason of little help to us.\(^ {60}\) The obscurity of these two may, however, be some indication of their authenticity, though this is vitiated by the self-same obscurity.

It is worth recording, if only for its negative value, that nowhere in the Kitāb does Sibawayhi refer to ‘Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī by name. It has already been suggested that this man’s claim to be Sibawayhi’s anonymous “reliable” informant\(^ {77}\) is false, nothing more than historical opportunism.\(^ {24}\) This is rendered more likely by the fact that ‘Abū Zayd himself does quote Sibawayhi in his Kitāb al-nawādir, but he also quotes such grammarians as Aḥfaṣ the Least, Riyyāṣi and Aṣma‘i, all of whom were much later than Sibawayhi. Despite ‘Abū Zayd’s longevity it seems probable that he was not active during Sibawayhi’s lifetime: by the names he drops he betrays himself as belonging to a later period. It is also hardly to be expected that Sibawayhi should omit his name from the Kitāb when he is careful to mention other, less well-known grammarians. [47]

Aṣma‘i is referred to on two occasions in the Kitāb.\(^ {79}\) One would not expect to find him there, as he was so much younger than Sibawayhi. They did meet once, if we are to

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75. Kitāb 1, 137/165.
76. Id. 135-6/163.
77. Cf. Zubaydi, 7baqāt 67 and Sirāfī, Aḥbār 49 for two early versions.
78. Krenkow, Ef‘, art. Sibawaiḥī.\(^ {60}\).
79. Kitāb 1, 388/437, 396/446. Not noted by Troupeau, Arabica 8, 309-312.\(^ {61}\).
believe the biographers, but nothing of any consequence was exchanged in the interview, nor are Aṣma‘ī’s contributions to the Kitāb of any importance. On the first occasion he attributes a verse, and on the second he actually recites two lines to the author (ناذره) but in both instances the mention of Aṣma‘ī’s name is almost certainly due to the editorial efforts of Jarmi.

One line of verse is attributed to Marwān al-Nahwī. He is known to the biographers as a descendent of Muhallab ibn Abī Sa‘īd and a pupil of Ḥalil, in which case one might have expected him to make a little more éclat. An attempt to make him a grammarian was evident in the records of his discussions with Yūnus and Aḥfāṣ, but, as we have seen with Abū al-Aswad and Ru‘ba, Sibawayhi takes grammatical data from poets and quotes only the poetry of those who are alleged dubiously to be grammarians. We may conclude, then, that Marwān is a name added somewhat loosely to the Kitāb, backed by an apologetic rather than a factual biography.

Another name which tells us little is Ibn Marwān, who apparently attracted the censure of Abū ‘Amr ibn al-‘Alā‘ for a solecism. He is presumably a Reader, possibly of Medinese provenance, since the grammar [48] in question is associated a line or two above Ibn Marwān’s name with “the people of Medina.”

The Kitāb makes strange bedfellows of two well-known Islamic figures: ‘Alī is mentioned indirectly in the proverbial expression Marco Polo! 46 while Musaylima is mentioned by chance in a chapter on diminutives, in the sentences which are designed to shed light on the diminutive of the sentence, which is the self-same grammatical graphers and these two may, the self-same

he Kitāb does not connect this thing more at Abū Zayd ch grammar in Sibawayhi’s period. It is 

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80. Zubaydī, Tabaqāt 68, 185, Anbarī, Nuzha 122.
82. Suyūṭī, Buqya 2, 284, Baghdādī, Ḥizāna 1, 447.
83. Sīrāfī, Aḥbār 34, Zajjājī, Majāls 76–77, 87, 244, 323 6.
84. Kitāb 1, 349/397.
85. Kitāb 1, 310/355.
86. Id. 2, 128/126.
87. Zajjājī, Majāls 294.
To return to the Readers in the Kitāb, they are, of course, mentioned collectively as ʾinā and their Readings as ʾinā on [49] numerous occasions. More specifically there are references to the people of Mecca (2, 321/294, 457/408, 459/410), of Medina (1, 244/283, 381/429, 411/463, 2, 157/154) and of Kūfah (1, 350/397, 383/430, 2, 476/426) but never of Baṣrān, perhaps because there was no need to point out the origins of such Readings. Of named Readers Sībawayhi mentions Ubayy (1, 38/49, 340/481), Aʿrāf (1, 264/305, 416/467, 2, 321/294), Abū ʿAmr (1, 204/238, 2, 316/289, 395/358, 467/417), Ibn Masʿūd (1, 220/258, 420/471, 2, 260/244), Muṣḥīdh (1, 371/417) and one “Ḥasan” (1, 73/87, 2, 459/410), possibly Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. In addition there are references to mufassirūn, e.g., 1, 250/290, 413/464, 418/469, 2, 22/23 and the term tafsīr is occasionally used of Qurʾānic exegesis, though its main use is to denote grammatical explanations.

One of the outstanding features of Sībawayhi’s treatment of Qurʾān problems is his obvious indifference to the doctrinal implications of textual criticism. The situation described by Pellat still must have obtained when Sībawayhi wrote, i.e., that an official ʿUthmanic recension was in competition with various private copies. That it was the private copies which Sībawayhi meant by muṣḥaf is clear from his reference to “the muṣḥaf of Ubayy” and to “one of the maṣāḥif.” These references clearly prove that there was a disagreement among the maṣāḥif, which is a point that has been discussed by Beck. On the basis of four references to maṣāḥif in the Kitāb he concludes that by “the muṣḥaf of Ubayy” and “in one of the maṣāḥif” Sībawayhi means [50] an ausserutmanischen Kodex, while the one reference to “al-muṣḥaf” means “der ʿUtmansische Kodex als Einheit gefasst.” This seems a little forced. Certainly Beck was right in pointing out that Sībawayhi knew no non-Baṣrān codexes, which suggests to me that in the case of al-muṣḥaf Sībawayhi meant only the ʿUthmanic codex sui generis, especially as the verse which prompts the allusion is one which raises the problem of the Ḥijāzī/Tamīmi dialect cleavage. For it is still too early to witness the continued textual disputes which Beck himself describes, for muṣḥaf to have taken on its later, specialised meaning of ʿUthmanic recension pure and simple.

In conclusion we may also note that Sībawayhi distinguishes between the qurʾān, to which he frequently refers, and the maṣāḥif. It would seem that by qurʾān he understood the original, revealed text, the word of God, while by muṣḥaf he understood those various families of manuscripts in which it was extant. There is no indication that he regarded the ʿUthmanic codex as any more authoritative than the others, unless it can be the version for which he reserves the name “qurʾān,” in view of his patently lukewarm attitude.

88. Pellat, Milleux Basriens 73f.
89. Kitāb 1, 430/481.
90. Id. 1, 365/411, 376/422.
91. Beck, Orientalia (NS) 14, 357 (n).
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to dogmatic and sectarian issues we can assume that this aspect of textual criticism had
no interest for him. He uses the Qur'anic text, official or otherwise, only to illustrate or
confirm points of purely grammatical import.\(^a\)

We shall now turn to examine the curious and varied prejudices to which the Kitāb
has fallen victim at the hands of Western critics, often totally obscuring Sibawayhi's in-
tentions.

Summary

[325] Traditional and contemporary accounts of early grammar are unreliable. A work
attributed to Ḥalaf al-Āhmār is certainly spurious and the grammatical works listed in the
biographies of Sibawayhi's early masters are not to be credited. Sibawayhi was a genuine
innovator.

But grammatical sensibility existed long before Sibawayhi: Nābiqā, Ḥūţay'a and Fāţe
azdaq showed a highly developed purism, but they could have nothing more than per-
sonal authority on grammatical questions. Sibawayhi's authority, on the other hand, is in
the strength of his grammatical arguments.

The Kitāb is the only reliable source of evidence for early grammar. There we find no
mention of Abū al-Aswad as a grammarian, and only modernised accounts of the views
of the so-called early grammarians.

But 17 references are made to "grammarians" and these are examined. They show
that there was a body of grammatical opinion, and the Kitāb must have been composed
for these grammarians." Evidently Sibawayhi was sure enough of his own views to dis-
agree with "others", even with Ḥalil and frequently with Yūnus.

Ḥalil's own interest in language was primarily phonological, and 22 examples from
the Kitāb are given. They suggest that Sibawayhi's interest in grammar led him to extend
Ḥalil's less advanced theories.

A list of the the historical people mentioned in the Kitāb, and of the Qur'ān readings
and readers, concludes this chapter.

Addenda to Chapter One

Since this thesis appeared a great deal of work on the early history of Arabic grammar
has been done. One of the most useful publications (still valuable in our computerised
age) is Troupeau 1976: his Lexique-index has served to refine a number of references to
the location and frequency of names and terms in the Kitāb, as will be obvious below.
The other enormous contribution to our access to early grammatical terms is Kinberg on
Farrā', 1996, see [303] (c), (d).

The appearance of vols. 8 and 9 of Sezgin's GAS (1982, 1984) has immensely increased
our knowledge of the early period.
Parts of this chapter dealing with the lack of historical precedents for the Kitāb, in Arabic and especially in Greek, were used in Carter 1972a; much the same ground is covered by Baalbaki 1995, with additional comparisons with the work of Mubarrad.

The topic of early schools was taken up by Belguedj 1973, and Talmon, particularly 1982, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1987a, 1987b, 1990, 1997, 2003, has added a vast amount of detail to our knowledge of the earliest stages of grammar. Versteegh 1990b, 1993, has literally rewritten the history of pre-Sibawayhian grammar, see under the individual issues below. Larcher 2007 re-examines the conventional account of the origins of grammar as related in some detail by the 4th/10th century grammarian al-Zajjājī, and concludes that, while Sibawayhi was describing a fully inflected classical language, the inflections had begun by Zajjājī’s time to lose their functions with the emergence of the uninflated neo-Arabic dialects. Zajjājī’s narrative, then, reflects an attempt to legitimise the reconstruction of the “classical” form of the language which had existed side by side with the “neo-Arabic” dialects, but these now threatened to replace it.

[1] (a) Zubaydī was chosen as one of the early sources: as time goes by the narrative increases in length but not in comparable authenticity.

[3] (a) Ḥalaf’s Muqaddima is the topic of Talmon 1990, where he argues confidently, on the basis of its arrangement and contents, that it is indeed one of the most ancient grammatical texts we have. Furthermore, he sees enough biographical evidence to suggest that there was a Ḥalaf al-‘Almar, who sided with Kīsā’ against Sibawayhi, and who could have been the author of the Muqaddima.

[5] (a) A Kitāb al-jumal has been falsely ascribed to Ḥalil (noted by Sezgin, GAS 9, 47), and see Carter 1974 for another work wrongly attributed to Ḥalil, also Carter 1998a for a portrait of Ḥalil constructed retrospectively by the biographers, depicting him as a kind of saintly figure.

[6] (a) Troupeau, in both 1961 and 1976, lists 20 occurrences of ‘Isā’s name against the 13 stated by Reuschel, but this latter number is also an error, as Reuschel has miscounted his own list, which contains 14 occurrences.

[7] (a) The Suyūtī source is not named, but Flügel seems to have misunderstood Buγya 2, 2 as referring to a book title, where Suyūtī says that ibn Abī Ishaq ʿarabta ʿilāl. No such work is mentioned in Sezgin, GAS 9, 36f.; it may be compared with the attribution of a book on qiyās to Yūnūs above, [6].

[10] (a) The issue is of a false coordination in yu’minīna bi-mā unzila ilayka wa-mā unzila min qabila * wa-l-muqimīna l-salātī (* marks the syntactical boundary, see further [205] (a) on internal waqj), “they believe in what has been sent down to you * and in what has been sent down before you * and [we praise] those who perform the prayer” misunderstood as “they believe in what has been sent down * and [believe] in those who perform the prayer.” This verse attracted Sibawayhi’s attention twice in the Kitāb, 1, 78/94, (as part of the tanwīn-naṣb topic) and 1,212f/248f, where wa-l-muqimīna is explained as a laudatory expression, hence its dependent form. It is certainly an anomaly, and Ayesha could have been right: the less problematical wa-l-muqimīna certainly exists as a variant.
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[11] (a) One early “naḥwi” who is known only by name is the Persian Bīškast (thus transcribed by Fück 1950, 38, n. 5, correcting Brockelmann’s Śikast. Talmon 1985a regards him as authentic and therefore evidence of a “Medinan” school (see [17] (a) on “schools”). But we lack precise information about his grammatical ideas.

[14] (a) The number fourteen is an error; see [6] (a) for the correct figure of 20.

[14] (b) The EI art. Ruʿba (W. Heinrichs) does not raise this issue, but gives a possible death date of 145/762.

[15] (a) Troupeau 1976 has seven occasions. However, the two additional cases do not change the picture: in one (2, 281/261) there is an indirect report from Ibn Abī Iṣḥāq of an unusual ā vowel raising (imāla) by a certain tribe, in the other (2, 22/23) he is credited, along with Abū ‘Amr (and again indirectly) with the observation that when fully declinable masc. personal names are applied to females they become semi-declinable.

[15] (b) The case names are in quotations marks because their conventional translations are not those favoured by this thesis, see [298].

[16] (a) The poet is Farazdaq, lit. “There is not in the city any dwelling other than a single one, the dwelling of the Caliph, [that is] except for the dwelling of Marwān.” The issue is the case of ġayru and of dāru after ‘illa: all the printed editions have both in independent form, but the dependent form of dāra is proposed as an alternative by Mubarrad, Muqtaṣāb 4, 425. See Fischer/Bräunlich 1945, 279 and Yaʿqūb 1992, 970 for references.

[16] (b) For “brought about differences of meaning” it now seems better to say “could be used in different meanings.”

[17] (a) For obvious reasons “grammarians” must be in quotation marks here and in the ensuing discussion. See further also [303] (c).

The works of Talmon have now advanced and deepened this field. Among his many articles Talmon 1982 takes a critical view of the sections below on naḥwiyyīn, arguing that they were more systematic than they have been portrayed, and indeed may be considered “grammarians” in the full sense; nor were they truly anonymous, as Yūnus and Abū ‘Amr are named as naḥwiyyīn (1982, 30). In 1984 and 1985a Talmon reviews the evidence of early grammatical activities with a view to showing that they were highly elaborate even before Sibawayhi’s time, and he detects the existence of a Medinan school.

In 1985b and 1987b Talmon returns to the question of who was the first grammarian, concluding there were pre-Sibawayhian “schools,” at least in Iraq and the Hijaz, determined by the scholar’s location rather than his doctrine (à la Schacht), and that the first “grammarian” was indeed ‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Iṣḥāq, as already proposed by Ibrāhīm Muṣṭafā in 1948. Again following Schacht, the Abū al-Aswād claim is dismissed as a later imposition on the tradition, once the Baṣrans had achieved ideological dominance in grammar.

Two monographs add massive amounts of data, paintakingly collected and classified. Talmon 1997 is focussed on Ḥalil, and so presents a great deal of grammatical information from Ḥalil’s Kitāb al-ʿAyn, while Talmon 2003 explores an “Old Iraqi School,” as he terms it.
No-one has discovered more material about early Arabic grammar than Talmon, some of it used as evidence against the position of this thesis. This is not the place for a refutation of what is essentially a disagreement in the interpretation of the same data. It is better to look for common ground; we both agree that the Kitāb is the only comprehensive and reliable source of information about the “grammarians” of Sibawayhī’s time and before, supplemented by the Maʿānī of al-Farrāʾ, who died more than two decades after Sibawayhī.

The irony of Talmon’s position is that, while he concedes (1985, 142) “the absolute absence of any details in the authentic sources from the 2nd/8th century concerning awā’il information,” i.e., on the first grammarian(s), he then uses the same data as the Muslim sources to reconstruct his own version of events. It may be worth noting that the Muslims themselves were well aware of their predicament, that their reliance on undocumented transmission meant that the objective truth about the past was inaccessible to them (see Brown 2009 on this issue in the Ḥadīt; he points out that the true text of the Gettysburg Address is equally impossible to establish).

One invaluable result of Talmon’s researches is the abundant disagreement among the early “grammarians” which he uncovers: while he goes too far in regarding them as “schools” (see further [303]), he does give an account of the reactions of their curious minds to a linguistic situation in which “Classical Arabic” was still being formalised. Many of their arguments are a reflection of the instability and incompatibility of the data, which is still clearly visible in the Kitāb. We can be grateful to Talmon for giving us the most thorough survey we are ever likely to have of this primitive stage of pre-scientific linguistic speculation. However, the one reference to “Kūfāns” (Kitāb 2, 438/393) on the pattern jay’il is too isolated (if not an interpolation) to justify a “Kūfān” school.

All the above issues are reviewed by Versteegh 1990b and expanded in 1993, where an entirely new approach is set out, namely that early grammar was heavily dependent on the first exegetes as they struggled with the linguistic problems of the Qurʾān. In the process they developed a fairly advanced technical vocabulary, and, being for the most part Kūfāns, inevitably they became the founding fathers of the Kūfān “school” when it finally emerged. While there can be no doubt that Muqāṭil and his contemporaries had an elaborate specialist vocabulary for linguistic phenomena, the same objections apply here as to Talmon, that it is not possible to prove that a Kūfān “school” existed before the Kitāb.

[17] (b) See ch. 4.

[17] (c) This conclusion is strongly supported by Pellat, Milieu baṣriens 130, n. 5.

[18] (a) Here and elsewhere “direct” should be read as “dependent,” see discussion at [298] (a).

[20] (a) In other words the “Socratic” style attributed here to Sibawayhī is by no means intended to suggest any direct Greek influence, cf. [268] (a) on Bezirgan’s 1979 claim that Sibawayhī used syllogistic arguments.
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[20] (b) The preference here and in the following pages is now for “indefinite” rather than “undefined,” see [250] (a).

[23] (a) An extreme case, ‘aḥibtu min i’tā‘ihi ḥāhu [sic] “I was amazed at his giving her it,” is attributed to Ibn Qutayba in a late and inauthentic-looking manuscript, Carter 1979, 271.

[26] (a) The anonymous passive yuqālu of Būlāq is preferred here, as it is not clear who is speaking from Deroenbourg’s qāla waḍa‘ahu l-nahwiyyūn.

[26] (b) This silly verse is quoted again in the Kitāb, 2, 147/144, to which we can respond in kind by quoting Howell’s pompous translation, “Whenever thou seasonest the bread with meat, then that, (I swear by) God’s trust, is the dish called ṭarāḍ.” See Fischer/Bräunlich 1945, 56, Ya’qūb 1992, 228 for other locations of this still as yet unattributed line.

[27] (a) The term taṣrīf occurs twice more, alone, in 1, 297/341, 409/460 (see Troupeau 1976, s.v.). The original metaphor is “putting [a coin] into circulation.”

The same metaphor is seen in the cognate term taṣawwaf in [31], i.e., “circulating freely” in all syntactic environments.

Another cognate, šarīf “free circulation” denotes the possession of full inflection by nouns, specifically marked by tanwin, hence (a fourth cognate) such fully inflected nouns are called muṣāṣaf “being circulated freely,” see [262] (b).

Šarīf also acquired (but not in the Kitāb) the specific sense of “morphology” in contrast to nāhwi “syntax,” see [154].

Our notion of the “currency” of a coin expresses a similar concept.

[31] (a) For taṣwārūf “circulating freely,” see [27] (a).

[31] (b) Lit. “that one of them should mistake, so the other will remind her,” with a problematical an “that” where in “if” would be expected.

[33] (a) The poet is Aṣṣā, see Fischer/Bräunlich 1945, 186, Ya’qūb 1992, 691: “If you ride [to battle], then riding horses is our custom [too], or you dismount, well, we are a people who [also] dismount [to fight].”

[33] (b) The poet is Zuhayr, see Fischer/Bräunlich 1945, 288, Ya’qūb 1992, 1066: “It appeared to me that I shall not catch up with what has already passed, nor outpace anything when it is coming.”

[34] (a) One wonders whether za‘ama is used slightly here, cf. the Hadīth bi’sa maṭṭiyātu rajul za‘amū, and the more prosaic za‘amū kunyatul ‘l-kidh, and similar sentiments in Tāj al-‘arās under za‘ama. [Ibn] al-Anbārī, Āsrār 157, observes that za‘ama introduces “a statement of something unsound” al-qawl ‘an ḡayr šīḥa. See also Ivāni 1991, 201-3 on levels of reliability in Sibawayhi’s data.

[34] (b) Troupeau 1976, 230 retains his revised figure of 217 times.

[35] (a) In fact there is one reference to Kūfāns in a purely morphological context, see [17] (a) at end. For further comments on the “Baṣrans” and “Kūfāns” see [303] (c).

[36] (a) Notwithstanding that Farrā’ī, Ma‘ānī 1, 9, does identify Ru‘āsī as rajul min al-nahwiyyūn (unless this is a gloss), but in any case it involves a Qur‘ān reading.
1981a argues that a work attributed to Ru‘āsi under the title al-Faysal may in fact have been a version of the Kitāb that he was working on, and on which he was consulted by no less than Ḥalil. This certainly muddies the waters about the pre-history of the Kitāb, while going some way to justify the scepticism of Talmon, cf. [17] (a).

[37] (a) This is a very immature judgement, for a number of reasons. First of all, the sequence syntax-morphology-phonology is appropriate for describing the language to native speakers: Western critics start from a pedagogical perspective designed for non-native speakers who must begin with the sounds. Secondly the amount of space Sibawayhi devotes to morphology is about as much as he gives to syntax, and this is hardly good evidence of a prejudice against morphology. Thirdly a phoneme inventory, unlike a morpheme inventory or set of syntactic structures, is very limited, so that the number of variants and combinations can be covered in a much smaller space. The fact that this thesis gives so little attention to these last two is partly due to a personal preference, partly to the belief that Sibawayhi’s originality lay in his perception of the language as following the same principles at all levels. See further [179] (a).

[38] (a) See [164] (a).

[39] (a) Sibawayhi seems to be applying this principle in his own way when invoking the complementary distribution of alif-lām and tanwīn below, see [260] (b).

[40] (a) The topic is discussed at considerably more length in 1, 298-299/342.

[42] (a) Here the term “dependent” for “direct” has inexplicably crept in, see [298] (a). Ḥalil does not himself quote ḫrāna dirham n in his argument, though he would have been aware of the issues, see below [262]–[263]. Note also that variations in the syntax of kadhā wa-kadhā dirham n were linked with the Ḥanafī legal school by one late commentator on Ibn al-Mu‘īn (d. 628/1231), see Carter 2003, 180f.

[43] (a) Thus ḥamsī as the nisba of ḥamsata ‘asara.

[43] (b) Thus ‘ubaydu lāhī as diminutive of ‘abdul lāhī.

[44] (a) Ḥalil’s views on the short vowels should be added here, though they are not prominent in Sibawayhi’s own analysis, namely (2, 342/315) that the short vowels a, i, u are augments (zawā‘id) to the consonants required to enable the consonant to be pronounced (al-takallum bih), and that they are derived from alif, yā’ and wāw respectively. The former part of this formulation obviously underlies Qurbūb’s claim that inflectional vowels are meaningless and serve only a phonological purpose, where he may have over-interpreted Ḥalil’s term zawa‘id, here denoting “augments,” not “redundant elements,” see Versteeg 1981 (1983) for a detailed survey of Qurbūb’s position and Nasser 1993, 20 for a brief reference to the origins of the short vowels: neither work acknowledges Ḥalil as the originator of these concepts.

[45] (a) To this extent we can agree with the findings of W. Fischer, 1985, 100, that “al-Ḥalil’s approach to linguistics was morphophonemic.”

[45] (b) See Chapter Six. See also [181] on the syntactical units treated as single words by Sibawayhi.
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He was certainly aware of the *kalima* as a unit of discourse, without troubling to define it explicitly, though Levin 1986, 426, sees Kitāb §508 as a *de facto* definition of *kalima*, since it lists all the possible forms of the consonantal roots from biliteral to quinquiletal. This is in keeping with Sibawayhi’s practice of defining by enumeration, as he does from the very first lines of the Kitāb. Levin’s exhaustive account of the *kalima* shows above all how sensitive Sibawayhi was (following Ḥalil) to the status of compound free morphemes, notably with the distinction between the etymological consonants (radicals) and augments, as well as between stems and inflections. We can certainly agree that our term “morpheme” does not map exactly on to Sibawayhi’s analysis: elsewhere in the Kitāb Sibawayhi does provide an empirical definition of the phonological unit (of any size) by observing that all utterances begin with a vocative element (which may be omitted) and end in a pausal form, see below [204f].

[46] (a) Abū Rabi’ā is mentioned as a lexicographer and linked with Ḥalil in Sezgin, GAS 8, 29, but not listed among the grammarians in GAS 9. Whether he is the Rabi’ā al-Baṣrī, a sedentarised Bedouin mentioned in Ibn Nadim, *Fihrīst* 80 (reproduced in Ibn al-Qiftī, *Inbāḥ* 2, 9, with one further reference to Ibn Maktūm) remains to be confirmed.

[46] (b) This view is preserved implicitly in *EF*, art. Sibawayhi, without discussion.

[47] (a) To put this more clearly, Kitāb 1396/446 reports that Ḥalil said ‘Aṣma’ī recited to him two lines of verse by an Asadi poet, on the authority of Abū ‘Amr ibn al-‘Alā‘. This elaborate *ismād* has the effect of removing Aṣma’ī from Sibawayhi’s direct acquaintance. It is not insignificant that the older “grammarians” cited in the Kitāb are mostly known indirectly to Sibawayhi, often through Yūnus.

[47] (b) But he is picked up in Troupeau 1976, 228.

[47] (c) The name given here must be corrected to Ibn Marwān al-Nahwī, listed in Troupeau 1976, 232 as a poet. This creates a new problem, as we end up with two different people with very similar names, (1) Ibn Marwān al-Nahwī the poet and (2) an Ibn Marwān listed as a grammarian in Troupeau 1976, 227 and connected with Medina.

Both have to be left here with the problem unsolved, as there is not enough biographical information to separate them. No “Ibn Marwān” is listed in Sezgin GAS 8 or 9 as a lexicographer or grammarian, and Talmön 1990, 227, can add nothing to the little we know. The remote chance that one of them bears the title *Nahwī* as a simple tribal *nisba* (cf. Ibn Durayd, *Iṣṭiḥāq* 512f) cannot be ruled out, but again we are no wiser.

[48] (a) This might be translated “What, a case [in law] and no ‘All to judge it!?” The ensuing discussion identifies “Abū Ḥasan” here with the fourth Caliph. The grammatical anomaly is that his original *kunya* Abū al-Ḥasan has to become formally indefinite in order to be categorically negated by ِلَا. The expression is quoted again below, [150], as evidence of Sibawayhi’s use of legal material.

[49] (a) See now Troupeau 1976, 227–231 (Grammarians and Readers). The page references following have not been checked against Troupeau’s list, and may not be exhaustive.
[50] (a) As stated, Sibawayhi was not interested in the theological consequences of Qur'anic usage or establishing the superiority of one version over another. More significantly, he had no desire to set up the Qur'an as a model for perfect Arabic; he parades its anomalies with the same impartiality as those of the poets. He reveals his personal position in a remark about the Hijazi dialect as being "good old Arabic," (Kitāb 2,474/424), quoted below, see [291] (a), with the implication that it is not the variety favoured in the urban centres of the East. However, he also makes it clear that the language of the Qur'an is that of the ordinary people; "God's servants were spoken to in their own speech and the Qur'an came down in their language and according to what they mean" (Kitāb 1, 139/167).

For studies of Sibawayhi's use of the Qur'an see Anṣāri 1972, Baalbaki 1985 and Brockëtt 1988. This last tabulates all the verses quoted, both in page order and by Sūra, concluding that "it is as though [Sibawayhi] studiously avoided readings with bearing on fiqh, kalām or ta'rikh, perhaps to preserve as much objectivity as possible." (207, n. 7). In this light it is worth noting that on two occasions readings are attributed to anonymous Bedouin, viz. al-ḥamdū l-llāhi rabba l-ʿālamīn (for rabī, Sūra 1,2, Kitāb 1, 221/248) and idān lā yaḥṣī (for yahṣūna, Sūra 17, 56, Kitāb 1, 365/411). This is astonishing in itself but seems to pass without comment in Brockëtt, although it would certainly strengthen our general impression that Sibawayhi was not unduly concerned with questions of personal textual authority, see Carter 2015, 58.

A chapter in a work attributed to Zajjāj, ʿIrāb al-Qurʾān (§87, pp. 45-935), is entitled Mā jā'a fī l-tanzil min al-qirāʿat allatī rawāhā Sibawayhi fī Kitābih. This is not the place to explore it in detail (not least because the attribution to Zajjāj is itself challenged), but the chapter needs further study.

[50] (b) Beck's statements can be translated "an extra-Uthmanic codex" and "the Uthmanic codex considering as a single entity" respectively.