

The Issue of Greek and Syriac Influence on the Emergence of the Science of Nahw

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Abstract

Before the science of grammar became a systematic branch of science in the Arabic language, the foundations of this science began to be laid. In order to protect the Arabic language from linguistic errors and most importantly to read and understand the Holy Qur'an correctly, Arabic language grammar studies started in the Sadr al-Islamic period. In the following periods, these studies began to be put forward systematically and grammatical schools emerged. With the Basra school of grammar, which was the first school of grammar to emerge, grammar studies became systematized. Important studies on Arabic grammar in Basra led to the development of this science and its spread to different cities. The language scholars trained in Basra were instrumental in the birth of the madrasas of Kūfah and Baghdad in the Eastern Arab world and the Andalusian grammar school in the Western Arab world. These grammatical schools, which carried out studies on the science of grammar, endeavored to determine the rules of language by following different paths. There are some claims put forward by some western orientalists about these studies that started in the early periods of Islam. These orientalists claim that Syriac and Greek grammars were influential on the birth of Arabic grammatical studies. There are also observers who disagree with and oppose the orientalists who put forward this claim. Scholars in the Arab world and in our country have written various studies on this issue raised by Western Orientalists. The most important feature of our study, which distinguishes it from other previous studies on this subject, is that it evaluates the issue in the context of istishhād from the verses, hadīths and Arabic poetry, which are extremely important in determining the rules of grammar. This is because witnessing from classical Arabic poetry and verses is of great importance in determining the rules of grammar. The data we have obtained in this study are extracted and presented using the interpretive research technique and qualitative research technique.

Keywords: Arabic Language, Nahw (Arabic Grammar), Istishhād, Shahid (Attester), Lahn (Solecism).

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Nahiv İlminin Doğuşuna Yunan ve Süryani Etkisi Meselesi

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Öz

Arap dilinde nahiv ilmi sistematik bir ilim dalı haline gelmeden önce bu ilmin temelleri atılmaya başlanmıştır. Arapçayı dil hatalarından korumak ve en önemlisi Kur'an-ı Kerim'i doğru okuyup doğru anlamak maksadıyla Sadru'l-İslam Döneminde Arap dili gramer çalışmaları başlamıştır. Sonraki dönemlerde ise bu çalışmalar sistemli bir biçimde ortaya konmaya başlamış olup gramer ekolleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Ortaya çıkan ilk gramer ekolü olan Basra nahiv ekolü ile nahiv çalışmaları sistematik hale gelmiştir. Basra'da Arap grameri üzerine yapılan önemli çalışmalar bu ilmin gelişmesine ve farklı şehirlere yayılmasına neden olmuştur. Basra'da yetişen dil alimleri Doğu Arap dünyasında Küfe ve Bağdat medreselerinin, Batı Arap dünyasında ise Endülüs gramer ekolünün doğmasına vesile olmuşlardır. Nahiv ilmi üzerine çalışmalar yürüten bu gramer ekolleri, farklı yollar izleyerek dil kurallarını belirlemeye gayret etmişlerdir. İslamiyet'in erken dönemlerinde başlayan bu çalışmalar hakkında batılı bazı oryantalistlerin ortaya attıkları birtakım iddialar mevcuttur. Bu oryantalistler, Süryani ve Yunan gramerlerinin Arap gramer çalışmalarının doğuşu üzerinde etkili olduğunu iddia etmektedirler. Bu iddiayı ortaya atan oryantalistler ile aynı fikirde olmayan, onlara karşı çıkan müsteşrikler de mevcuttur. Arap dünyasında ve ülkemizde Batılı oryantalistlerin ortaya attığı bu konuyu ele alan ve tartışan bilim adamları çeşitli çalışmalar kaleme almışlardır. Bizim çalışmamızı bu konu hakkında kaleme alınmış olan diğer öncül çalışmalardan ayıran en önemli özelliği; meseleyi nahiv kurallarının belirlenmesinde son derece önem arz eden âyet-i kerime, hadîs-i şerif ve Arap şiirinden yapılan istişhâdlar bağlamında değerlendiriyor olmasıdır. Zira nahiv kurallarının belirlenmesinde klasik Arap şiirinden ve âyet-i kerîmelerden yapılan şâhid gösterme son derece büyük bir öneme sahiptir. Bu çalışmamızda elde etmiş olduğumuz veriler, yorumlayıcı araştırma tekniği ve nitel araştırma tekniği kullanılarak çıkarılmış ve sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap Dili, Nahiv, İstîşhâd, Şâhid, Lahn.

Atıf

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Introduction

In order to be able to correctly understand and interpret the works written in Arabic language, especially the Qur'an and the words that carry literary content such as poetry, akhbar, rare sayings, proverbs belonging to the Jahiliyya period, certain language studies were carried out by language scholars in time after the advent of Islam. The basis for these studies was mostly the misreading of the Qur'an. Later on, these language studies were advanced and developed as a systematic science under the name of the science of *nahw*. During this development, different views emerged and from time to time there were alliances and from time-to-time disagreements. As a result, different schools of language were born. Each grammatical school has tried to determine the rules of Arabic language by following different paths.¹

The scholars of grammar divided Arabic grammar into two parts and called the first part "ilm al-sarf". The science of *sarf* deals with the roots of verbs and some nouns, their masculinity, femininity, singular, dual and plural forms. This part mainly deals with the structure of the word. The second part is called "ilm al-nahw". The science of *nahw*, deals with the arrangement of words in sentences and their *i'rab* so their final movements.² If we make a generalization, we can say that the science of *sarf* deals with words and the science of *nahw* deals with sentences.

The first systematic study of Arabic grammar was initiated in Basra by Abū al-Aswad al-Du'ālī (d. 69/688), and his students and the greats of the tabi'in, such as Nasser ibn Asim al-Laysi (d. 89/708), Yahya b. Ya'mer (d. 89/708), 'Anbeset al-Fil (d. 100/719), Maimon b. al-Akran and 'Abd al-Rahman b. Hormuz (d. 117/735). These scholars transmitted the science of grammar to the generations that came after them, drew attention to this science, and paved the way for the widespread study of Arabic grammar. These scholars were the first representatives of the Basra school of grammar.³

Language studies, the foundations of which were laid in Basra and became systematized, began to be addressed in Kūfah from the second century onwards. Language scholars such as 'Abd al-Rahman al-Tamīmī (d. 164/781), Abū Ja'far al-Ru'āsī (d. 187/803), Zuhayr b. Meymūn (d. 155/781), who took lessons from Basra language scholars, stand out as the first people who started the Kūfah grammar school.⁴ Some of the important figures of the grammatical school of Kūfah are Ali b. Hamza al-Kisā'ī (d. 189/805), Yahyā b. Ziyād al-Farrā (d. 207/822), Ahmad b. Yahyā Sa'leb (d. 291/904), and Abū Bakr al-Anbārī (d. 328/940).⁵

The linguists who took lessons from the scholars of Basra and Kūfah started language studies in Baghdad from the 4th century onwards. Although the method of the scholars who carried out linguistic activities in Baghdad was initially based on choosing among the knowledge they learned in Basra and Kūfah, they later developed a method of their own.⁶ Some of the important figures of the Baghdad grammatical school are al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923), Ibn al-Sarraj (d. 316/929), Ibn Durustawayh (d. 347/958), Abū Saïd al-Sirāfi (d. 368/979), Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987), al-Rummānī (d. 384/994), Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/1002).⁷

After the conquest of al-Andalus in 93/711, linguistic activities began in al-Andalus as a result of efforts to read the Qur'an correctly, to explain obscure words, and to answer grammatical questions. The foundations of the Andalusian grammatical school were laid by al-Jūdī b. 'Uthmān al-Mawūrī (d. 198/814), who went to the East to study. al-Mawūrī took lessons from linguistic scholars from Kūfah, such as al-Kisā'ī and al-Farrā, and as a result, when he returned to Andalusia, he followed the path of the linguistic scholars from Kūfah.⁸ Some of the important figures of the Andalusian grammatical school are Muhammad b. Yahyā al-Rabāhī (d. 358/969), Abū Bakr al-Zubaydī (d. 379/989), Ibn Sīda (d. 458/1066), al-'Alām al-Shantamari (d. 476/1084), Ibn Mālik al-Tā'ī (d. 672/1274), Ibn Hishām al-Hadrāwī (d. 761/1360).⁹

¹ For detailed information, see here: Ignace Goldziher, *On the History of Grammar Among the Arabs*, trans. Kinga Devenyi – Tamas Ivanyi (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994), 3-35; Cornelis Henricus Maria Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar & Qur'anic Exegesis in Early Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 2-16; Mahmut Kafes, "Arap Dilinde Nahiv İlminin Doğuşu ve Önemi", *S.Ü. Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Edebiyat Dergisi* 9/10 (1994), 101-115; Sevim Özdemir, "Gramer Ekollerinin Doğuşu ve Basra ve Kûfe Ekollerinin Temel Prensipleri", *Nüsha Şarkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 14/39 (Aralık 2014), 47-56.

² Ignace Goldziher, *Klasik Arap Literatürü*, trans. Azmi Yüksel - Rahmi Er (Ankara: İmaj Yayınları, 1993), 72; Selami Bakırcı - Kenan Demirayak, *Arap Dili Grameri Tarihi* (Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınevi, 2001), 14.

³ Abū Sa'īd al-Hasen b. 'Abd Allah al-Sirāfi, *Akhbār al-nahwiyyin al-basriyyin* (Cairo: Matba'atu Mustafa al-Bābī 1375/1955), 17-19; Goldziher, *Klasik Arap Literatürü*, 73; Abū Bekr Muhammed b. al-Hasen al-Zebīdī, *Tabaqāt al-lughaviyyin va'n-nahwiyyin* (Cairo: Dār al-Me'ārif, 1405/1984), 26-30.

⁴ Zebīdī, *Tabaqāt al-lughaviyyin va'n-nahwiyyin*, 125; Shevki Dayf, *al-Medāris al-nahwiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Me'ārif, 2008), 154-159; Carl Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-adab al-'Arabī*, trans. 'Abd al-Halīm al-Nejjār (Cairo: Dār al-Me'ārif, 1379/1959), 2/196-197.

⁵ Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-adab al-'Arabī*, 2/197-220; Zebīdī, *Tabaqāt al-lughaviyyin va'n-nahwiyyin*, 125; Dayf, *al-Medāris al-nahwiyya*, 154-159; Mahmūd Fehmī Hijāzī, *İlm al-lughat al-'Arabiyye* (Cairo: Mektebetu Gharīb, n.d.), 87-88.

⁶ Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-adab al-'Arabī*, 2/221-222; 'Abduh al-Rājihi, *Durūs fī medhāhib al-nahwiyya* (Beyrūt: Dār al-Nahdati al-'Arabiyye, 1401/1980), 159-160.

⁷ Hijāzī, *İlm al-lughat al-'Arabiyye*, 88-91.

⁸ Zebīdī, *Tabaqāt al-lughaviyyin va'n-nahwiyyin*, 256-257; Dayf, *al-Medāris al-nahwiyya*, 288-289.

⁹ Rājihi, *Durūs fī medhāhib al-nahwiyya*, 216.

In our country, in the Arab world and in the Western countries, there are many studies on the birth of Arabic grammar and Arabic grammatical schools, or in other words, grammar madrasas. For this reason, we have briefly summarized this subject here. Researchers can benefit from the studies mentioned in the footnotes in the previous paragraphs.

In previous studies in Turkey, the issue of Greek and Syriac influence on Arabic grammar has been mentioned in some scientific studies, but these studies are not directly related to the subject. One of these studies that we were able to identify is the article titled *Arap Nahvinin Doğuşu*.¹⁰ The other studies are the master's theses of *Muhammed Hayr el-Hulvânî'nin Nahivde Yenilikçi Yaklaşımları*¹¹ and *Sîbeveyhi'nin el-Kitâb'ı Çerçevesinde Dil Çalışmalarının Doğuşu*.¹² It is seen that the topic we are studying is also mentioned in these previous studies, but the main topics they focus on are different topics. In our country, one published doctoral dissertation that is directly related to our subject has been identified. This study is a book titled *Nahivciler ile Mantıkçılar Arasındaki Tartışmalar*.¹³ Apart from the studies we have mentioned above, a translation article titled *Arap Edebiyatındaki Yunan Etkisi*¹⁴ which is indirectly related to our subject, has also been identified.

What distinguishes this research from previous studies is that it focuses directly on the issue of Greek and Syriac influence on the emergence of the science of grammar, and the issue will be examined in a more general context and the issue will be handled from a different perspective by presenting examples from the *shahids* who played an important role in determining the rules in the science of grammar. The aim of this article is to investigate whether Greek and Syriac grammars influenced Arabic grammar in the process of its emergence, and if there was an influence, in which subjects and situations.

1. The Issue of Foreign Influence on the Birth of Arabic Nahw

The fact that the science of grammar became a systematic branch of science with al-Sibawayhi (d. 180/796) led to debates on whether there was foreign influence in these studies. The idea that foreign cultures were active in the early period of the activities on Arabic grammar was first brought up by the obscurantists. Later on, Arabs also participated in these debates and some of them supported the views of the orientalist while others opposed them. The emergence of the aforementioned issue was influenced by the scarcity of information about the beginning of language studies. The fact that the first work we have about Arabic grammar is al-Sibawayhi's "al-Kitâb" and that we do not have any written texts about the periods before this work leaves this time period ambiguous, and this has paved the way for these discussions.¹⁵

It is reported that the claim of foreign influence on Arabic grammar was first put forward by Hesse in 1788. According to another view, this claim was first put forward in the late 19th century by the German scholar Albert Merx (d. 1909), who argued that the formation of the Arabic grammatical tradition had borrowed some terms from the Greek logical tradition.¹⁶

According to Merx, a grammar must have a methodology, be based on logic, and use concepts related to these.¹⁷ According to Carl Brockelmann (d. 1956), the linguistic studies of Abū al-Aswad al-Du'ālī and his disciples are nothing but myth and conjecture. For these reasons, they do not take into account the language studies conducted before al-Sibawayhi.¹⁸

According to Carl Brockelmann, the initial period of Arabic grammatical studies is closed and dark due to the lack of sufficient sources. For this reason, it is not possible to clearly claim the influence of foreign cultures on Arabic grammar in this period. In this regard, he refers to Erich Braunlich's (d. 1945) claim that "the foreign influence on Arabic grammatical studies began with Sibawayhi, who was a Persian." Although

¹⁰ Mehmet Cevat Ergin, "Arap Nahvinin Doğuşu", *Dicle Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 7/2 (2005), 119-121.

¹¹ Ahmet Şen, *Muhammed Hayr el-Hulvânî'nin Nahivde Yenilikçi Yaklaşımları* (Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2010).

¹² Ali Benli, *Sibeveyhi'nin el-Kitâb'ı Çerçevesinde Dil Çalışmalarının Doğuşu* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2007).

¹³ Mehmet Şirin Çıkar, *Nahivciler ile Mantıkçılar Arasındaki Tartışmalar* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2017).

¹⁴ Lenn E. Goodman, "Arap Edebiyatındaki Yunan Etkisi", trans. Esat Ayyıldız, *Nüsha Şarkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 18/47 (2018), 15-44.

¹⁵ 'Abdu al-'Âl Sâlim Mekrem, *al-Halqat al-mefkûde fî târîkh al-nahw al-'Arabî* (Cairo: Muessesetu al-Risâle, 1398/1977), 5-7; Rafael Talmon, *Eighth-Century Iraqi Grammar* (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 3; Benli, *Sibeveyhi'nin el-Kitâb'ı Çerçevesinde Dil Çalışmalarının Doğuşu*, 36-37.

¹⁶ Michael Carter, "Sibawayhi", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Leiden: s.n., 1986), 9/525; Gerard Troupeau, "Sibeveyhi'nin 'el-Kitâb' Adlı Eseri Işığında Arap Gramer İlminin Doğuşu", trans. Mazhar Dede, *Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 5/6 (2017), 117; Gerard Troupeau, "Nahw", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Leiden: s.n., 1986), 7/913; Simona Olivieri, "Traditions Blending in: Contributions to the Arabic Linguistic Thinking", *Folia Orientalia* 61/12 (2024), 21.

¹⁷ Mehmet Şirin Çıkar, "Arap Nahv İlminin Kaynağına İlişkin Şüpheli Söylem – Albert Merx Örneği", *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi* 4/16, (2003), 148.

¹⁸ Brockelmann, *Târîkh al-adab al-'Arabî*, 2/123.

al-Sibawayhi's teacher was an Arab, Khalil b. Ahmad (d. 175/791), these observers do not accept him as the founder of the science of grammar.¹⁹

Brockelmann actually contradicts himself at the beginning of his *Tārīkh al-Adabī al-‘Arabī* for the grammatical studies before al-Sibawayhi, which he calls myth and conjecture, by using the statement “Although the science of grammar was the work of pure Arabs at its birth, many of the great grammarians were Persians.”²⁰ How can works that are myths and conjectures, and a period that was closed and dark, be accepted as the work of the pure Arabs?

In the periods following the initial stage of Arabic grammatical studies, relations were established between sciences such as logic and philosophy and grammatical studies, and some interactions may have occurred as a result of these relations. It is also inevitable that there will be an interaction between different language groups in the same geography. There may be some similarities between the grammatical studies of various nations and the reasons why these nations started their language studies may be the same. As a matter of fact, it is stated that the Greeks, Syrians and Hebrews, just like the Arabs, started to put punctuation marks on the letters as a result of their efforts to read their holy books correctly. However, such similarities do not show that a nation is completely influenced by another nation in its grammatical structure.²¹

2. The Issue of Greek Influence

It is stated that the ancient Greek society was the first to introduce grammatical rules in a systematic way. It is reported that the study of language in the Ancient Greeks began with philosophy and attracted a great deal of attention from philosophers. The first problem the Greeks addressed was the problem of the origin of language. The study of language in ancient Greece began by examining whether language was natural (*physis*) or conceptual (*nomos*) and the relationship between the object and the name given to it.²²

Dionysios Thraks, who was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 170 BC and died in Rhodes, Greece in 90 BC, wrote the first grammar book in ancient Greece under the title *Τέχνη γραμματική*. This work was translated into English as *The Grammar of Dionysios Thraks and Art of Grammar*. It was translated into Turkish as *The Art of Grammar*. This work of Dionysios Thraks reflects the language studies of the period in ancient Greece. As the first grammar book written in ancient Greece, the work forms the basis of Greek grammar studies.²³

Greek sciences entered Arab-Islamic culture in the 9th and 10th centuries with the translation of Greek works of logic and philosophy into Arabic. However, the first translators were not Arabic-speaking Muslims, but Syriac-speaking Christians such as Hunayn b. Ishāq (d. 260/873) and his son Ishāq b. Hunayn (d. 298/910). The widely accepted view regarding the translation of Aristotle's (d. 322 BC) logic from Greek into Arabic is that Hunayn b. Ishaq and his disciples translated the entire *Organon* into Arabic.²⁴

With the translation of this work of Aristotle into Arabic, it is thought that Arabic grammar studies were influenced by Greek grammar. Because according to Aristotle, a noun is: “It is a set of sounds that has nothing to do with time, has an agreed meaning, and has no meaning when its elements are considered separately.”²⁵ These and similar definitions of Aristotle were used as a basis for later grammatical studies. The fact that Arabic linguists made similar definitions suggests that Arabic grammar was influenced by Greek logic in later periods, rather than in its infancy.²⁶

There is no evidence that the initiators of Arabic grammatical studies were directly related to Aristotelian logic. However, it is claimed that there was a relationship with Aristotelian logic in the systematic beginning of language studies. Such a relationship could only have been formed as a result of the

¹⁹ Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-adab al-‘Arabī*, 2/123.

²⁰ Brockelmann, *Tārīkh al-adab al-‘Arabī*, 2/8.

²¹ Ismā'il Ahmed 'Amāyira, *al-Musteshriqūn ve nazāriyyātuhum fī neshe'ti al-dirāsāti al-lughaviyye* ('Amman: Dāru Hazīn, 1413/1992), 42-44.; Muhammed Hüseyin 'Āl Yāsīn, *al-Dirāsātu al-lughaviyye 'ind al-‘Arab ilā nihāyeti al-qarni al-thālis* (Beyrūt: Dāru Mektebeti al-Hayāt, 1401/1980), 85; Çıkar, *Nahivciler ile Mantıkçılar Arasındaki Tartışmalar*, 23; Benli, *Sibeveyhi'nin el-Kitāb'ı Çerçevesinde Dil Çalışmalarının Doğuşu*, 39-40.

²² Ahmed Mukhtār 'Omar, *al-Bahthu al-lughavī 'inde al-‘Arab* (Cairo: 'Alema al-Kutub, 1409/1988), 61; Platon, *Diyaloglar I*, trans. Komisyon (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1998), 257; Çıkar, *Nahivciler ile Mantıkçılar Arasındaki Tartışmalar*, 23-24.

²³ Dionysios Thraks, *The Grammar of Dionysios Thrax*, trans. Thomas Davidson (s.l.: Studley Company, 1874), 3; Dionysios Thraks, *Gramer Sanatı*, trans. Eyüp Çoraklı (İstanbul: Kalcı Yayınevi, 2006), 7-10; Margherita Farina, “Diathesis and Middle Voice in the Syriac Ancient Grammatical Tradition: The Translations and Adaptations of the *Téchne Grammatiké* and the Arabic Model”, *Aramaic Studies* 6/2 (2008), 176-177.

²⁴ Wout van Bekkum vd., *The Emergence of Semantics in Four Linguistic Traditions Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, Arabic* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1996), 252-253; Gerard Troupeau, “Neshe'tu al-Nahw al-‘Arabī fī Dav'i Kitābi Sibeveyh”, *Mejellethu Mecme'at al-Lughaviyyet al-‘Arabiyet al-Urdunī* 1 (1978), 127; Benli, *Sibeveyhi'nin el-Kitāb'ı Çerçevesinde Dil Çalışmalarının Doğuşu*, 40-41.

²⁵ Aristoteles, *Organon II Önerme*, trans. Ragıp Atademir (İstanbul: MEB Yayınevi, 1989), 5.

²⁶ Faruk Z. Perek, *Eski Çağda Dilbilgisi Araştırmaları (Gramerin Doğuşu)* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1961), 16.

works of Syriac linguists and the translation of Greek logic books or the study of their works in their language by Arab linguists.²⁷

Orientalists' views that the Arabs were influenced by the Greeks in their grammatical studies are divided into three parts. Scholars such as the German Merx and the French Henri Fleisch (d. 1985), who are in the first part, are of the opinion that the Arabs completely borrowed grammar from the Greeks. Contrary to the views of the scholars in the first section, the British Michael Carter in the second section argues that most of the terms used by al-Sibawayhi in his *al-Kitāb* were taken from the science of fiqh and that Arabic grammar is original. Orientalist scholars in the third section, such as the German Enno Littmann (d. 1958), take a more moderate stance and argue that the Arabs produced their own linguistics but were influenced by Greek logic through the Syriacs.²⁸

It seems to be an unfounded claim to say that there was an influence from Greek grammar at the stage of the birth of Arabic grammar. The fact that the jury members in the Jahiliyyah period paid attention to some language rules while evaluating the poems of the poets in the fairs, and the fact that the poets of the period wrote their poems in perfect Arabic shows that even in that period, certain language rules were applied.²⁹ There are no sources indicating that the poets who lived in the Jahiliyyah period either knew Greek or had any scientific contact with the Greeks.

The fact that the Arabs living in the Jahiliyyah period sent their children to the bedouins who lived in the deserts and protected their language from *lahn* in order to learn Arabic³⁰ shows that the bedouins preserved their language by observing some rules of grammar. There is no evidence that the bedouins living in the deserts had contact with the Greeks.

In the Sadr al-Islamic period that followed the Jahiliyya period, the Arabic language was tried to be preserved by people like the Prophet (pbuh) who used the language fluently and paid attention to language mistakes. The Prophet (pbuh) once said to his companions when a person speaking in his presence made a linguistic mistake: "Correct your brother because he has made a mistake."³¹ Abu Bakr (d. 13/634): "I would rather skip a word in the qiraat than recite it with a linguistic error."³² 'Umar (d. 23/644), when he was the caliph, was angered by the language mistakes in the letter sent to him by Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (d. 42/662), who was the governor, and demanded that he punish his scribe.³³ When we look at the Sadr al-Islamic period, the fact that the Prophet (pbuh) and the Khulafa al-Rashīdīn warned people about *lahn* shows that some rules of grammar were applied and paid attention to in this period.³⁴

In addition to this, some basic terms in the field of grammar studies began to be named in the aforementioned period. The person who initiated these studies was Ali (d. 40/661). When Ali ordered Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī to work on the subject of grammar, he handed him a piece of paper on which he wrote that kalam consisted of noun, verb and letter and the definition of these concepts.³⁵ There is no narration that Ali discussed grammatical issues with the Greeks. At the same time, the fact that translation activities did not start during the time of Ali leads us to believe that there was no Greek influence on the emergence of the science of grammar in this period.³⁶

3. The Issue of Syriac Influence

Syriacs have an important place in the history of grammatical studies. Being neighbors of the Greeks and living under their sovereignty for a period, they translated Greek grammar into Syriac and transferred

²⁷ 'Abduh al-Rājihī, *al-Nahwu al-'Arabī ve al-dersu al-hadīth* (Beyrūt: Dār al-Nahdati al-'Arabiyye, 1400/1979), 62; Çıkar, *Nahivciler ile Mantıkçılar Arasındaki Tartışmalar*, 161-162.

²⁸ Khadiçe al-Hadīsī, *al-Medāris al-nahwiyya* (Irbid: Dār al-Emel, 2001), 31-32; Michael Carter, "The Origins of Arabic Grammar", *The Early Islamic Grammatical Tradition*, ed. Ramzi Baalbaki (London: Routledge, 2007), 1-26; Şen, *Muhammed Hayr el-Hulvānī'nin Nahivde Yenilikçi Yaklaşımları*, 4-5; Daniel King, "Grammar and Logic in Syriac (and Arabic)", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 58/1 (Spring 2013), 101-110.

²⁹ Abū al-Ferej al-Isfehānī, *Kitāb al-eghānī* (Beyrūt: Dāru Sādir, 1430/2008), 11/6-7; Hanna al-Fākhūrī, *al-Jāmi' fī tārikh al-adabi al-'Arabī al-adab al-qadīm* (Beyrūt: Dār al-Jīl, 1406/1985), 49-50.

³⁰ Turan Bahşi, "Arapça'da "Lahn"ın İlk Dönem Dil Çalışmalarına Etkisi", *Turkish Academic Research Review* 5/4 (Aralık 2020), 600.

³¹ İbn Jinnī, *al-Khasāis* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Misriyye, 1377/1957), 2/8.

³² Jelāl al-Dīn al-Suyūti, *al-Muzhir fī 'ulūm al-lughā ve envāihā* (Mısır: Mektebetu al-Me'arif, n.d.), 2/397.

³³ Suyūti, *al-Muzhir*, 2/397.

³⁴ İbn Jinnī, *al-Khasāis*, 2/8; Bahşi, "Arapça'da "Lahn"ın İlk Dönem Dil Çalışmalarına Etkisi", 600.

³⁵ Muhammed al-Tantāwī, *Neshe'tu al-nahw ve tārikhu eshheri al-nuhāt* (Cairo: Dār al-Me'arif, 1416/1995), 24; Simona Olivieri, "Classification of the Parts of Speech in Arabic A Discussion on Origins, Theories, and Definitions", *Old World: Journal of Ancient Africa and Eurasia* 24/1 (2021), 11-12.

³⁶ For detailed information on translation activities please see here: Muhittin Macit, "Tercüme Hareketleri", *Türkiye Diyânet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV. Yayınları, 2011), 40/498-504.

many concepts to their own language studies. However, in addition to being so influenced by the Greeks, the Syriacs also introduced their own original rules such as punctuation and capitalization of letters.³⁷

One of the claims about the influence of Syriac in the determination of Arabic grammatical rules is that Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī, who is considered to be the founder of Arabic grammar, borrowed from Syriac while determining the rules of grammar. The reason for this is that Basra, the city where Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī lived, was a place where Persian, Syriac, and Indian linguistic scholars met, and al-Du'alī may have been influenced by them. Yakub al-Ruhāwī, who was a contemporary of al-Du'alī, learned Syriac and received a detailed education in grammar and wrote a work on Syriac grammar. It is also claimed that Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī may have been influenced by Ya'qub al-Ruhāwī since the two were contemporaries and lived in the same environment.³⁸

It is understood that these allegations about al-Du'alī are mere assumptions. This is because there is no concrete evidence on this issue. Even if we accept that these claims about al-Du'alī, who systematically initiated the study of Arabic grammar, are true, we should not ignore the fact that it is known that he continued these studies based on the notes he took from Ali.³⁹ However, there is no evidence that Ali and Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī knew Syriac or had direct contact with Syriacs.

Another point suggesting Syriac influence on the emergence of Arabic grammar is the claim that Khalil b. Ahmad al-Farāhidī, who initiated alphabetic lexicography in Arabic, was related to the Syriac Hunayn b. Ishaq, who initiated translation activities.⁴⁰ However, this claim is refuted by the fact that the birth and death dates of Khalil b. Ahmad al-Farāhidī and Hunayn b. Ishaq (b. 194/810 d. 260/873) show that they did not live in the same time period.⁴¹

In addition to these, there is also the claim that various translation activities were carried out through Syriac translators in the early Abbasid period and that there was an influence in this way. However, there is no clear information that these translators translated related to the science of grammar.⁴²

The fact that Syriac grammar and Arabic grammar resemble each other in some structures and idioms is thought to bring up the claim that there may have been an influence between them. However, despite such similarities between the two languages, their grammatical traditions are different from each other. Another striking claim put forward in this regard is that there was an influence in the opposite direction, that is, Arabic grammar had an influence on Syriac grammar.⁴³

When we examine the systematization process of Arabic grammar, we see that unlike Greek and Syriac grammars, it was organized on the basis of certain sources. These sources are verses, hadiths and classical Arabic poetry. When the early language scholars determined a grammatical rule, they took into account the usage of the bedouins who lived in the past or lived in the same period with them, whose language was not corrupted. In particular, they accepted the poetry of poets who lived during the period of Jahiliyyah as evidence.⁴⁴

4. Examples of Attesters Used in Determining the Rules of Nahw

The method of *istishhād* is accepted as a solid basis for determining the rules of the science of *nahw*. The sources subject to *istishhād* are the Qur'an, hadiths, Arabic poetry and prose. Among these sources, the Qur'an and poems are cited as attester more than the other two sources.⁴⁵ So much so that 'Abd al-Qādir al-

³⁷ Ibrahim al-Sāmerrāi, *Dirāsāt fī al-lughateyni al-Suryāniyye ve al-'Arabiyye* (Beyrūt: Dār al-Jil, 1406/1985), 7-30; 'Omer, *al-Baḥthu al-lughavī*, 65; Çıkar, *Nahivciler ile Mantıkçılar Arasındaki Tartışmalar*, 26.

³⁸ Fevzi 'Abd al-'Aziz Mes'ūd, *Sıbeveyh: jāmī' al-nahwi al-'Arabī* (Mısır: Heye't al-Mısıriyye al-'Āmme li al-Kitāb, 1407/1986), 13; Simona Olivieri, "Pathways of Knowledge Transmission: From the Greek to the Arabic Tradition", *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 46/2 (December 2024), 75-77.

³⁹ Tantāwī, *Neshe'tu al-nahv ve tārikhu esheri al-nuhāt*, 24.

⁴⁰ Bekkum vd., *The Emergence of Semantics in Four Linguistic Traditions Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, Arabic*, 252-253; Çıkar, *Nahivciler ile Mantıkçılar Arasındaki Tartışmalar*, 164; Rafael Talmon, *Arabic Grammar in its Formative Age Kitāb al-'Ayn and its Attribution to Halil b. Ahmad* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 36-38.

⁴¹ Çıkar, *Nahivciler ile Mantıkçılar Arasındaki Tartışmalar*, 164; Benli, *Sıbeveyhi'nin el-Kitāb'ı Çerçevesinde Dil Çalışmalarının Doğuşu*, 49.

⁴² Sihām Fureyh, "al-Suryān ve Devruhum fī Nakl al-Theqāfeti al-Yunāniyye ilā al-'Arabiyye", *Mejellelu Kulliyāt al-Ādāb Jāmī'atu 'Ayn Shems*, 2/23 (1995), 72; Benli, *Sıbeveyhi'nin el-Kitāb'ı Çerçevesinde Dil Çalışmalarının Doğuşu*, 49.

⁴³ Troupeau, "Neshe'tu al-Nahw al-'Arabī fī Dav'i Kitābi Sıbeveyh", 133; Zakiye Rāshid, "Tārikhu al-lughati al-Suryāniyye", *Mejellelu Kulliyeti al-Ādāb Jāmī'atu al-Qāhire* 23 (1961), 134; Çıkar, *Nahivciler ile Mantıkçılar Arasındaki Tartışmalar*, 164; Benli, *Sıbeveyhi'nin el-Kitāb'ı Çerçevesinde Dil Çalışmalarının Doğuşu*, 49.

⁴⁴ Jelāl al-Dīn al-Suyūti, *al-Iqtirāh fī 'ilmi 'usūli al-nahw* (İskenderiye: Dār al-Ma'rife al-Jāmī'iyye 1427/2006), 15; 'Abd al-Qādir b. 'Umar al-Baghdādī, *Khizānetu al-adab ve lubbu lubābi lisāni al-'Arab* (Cairo: Mektebet al-Khānjī, 1418/1997), 1/15; Bahşi, "Arapça'da 'Lahn'ın İlk Dönem Dil Çalışmalarına Etkisi", 600.

⁴⁵ Suyūti, *al-Iqtirāh*, 15.

Baghdādī emphasizes the importance of poetic evidence by using the expression “poetry and others” for the evidence presented as attester.⁴⁶

4.1. Examples from the Verses

It is stated that the verb muzari following the word “حَتَّى” in a verse that is used as an attester in determining the rules of Arabic grammar should be nounced by the grammarians. According to the Basrites, it is “أَنْ” which is hidden as wajib after “حَتَّى”. According to the Kūfahites, it is “حَتَّى” itself that nounizes this verb.⁴⁷The verse cited as an attester is as follows:

قَالُوا لَنْ نَبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفِينَ حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ إِلَيْنَا مُوسَى⁴⁸

While the Kūfahites did not consider it permissible to present “لَيْسَ” in front of its news and its ma'mūl, the Basrites considered it permissible and presented the following verse as evidence. According to them, the sentence “يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمْ” in the verse is the ma'mūl of “مَضْرُوفًا” and did not cancel the action of “لَيْسَ”. If the presentation of the ma'mūl of the news does not cancel the deed of “لَيْسَ”, then the presentation of the news does not cancel the deed at all.⁴⁹

أَلَا يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمْ لَيْسَ مَضْرُوفًا عَنْهُمْ⁵⁰

According to the Basrites, it is not permissible to present the ma'mūl of the words of ijra, but according to the Kūfahites, it is permissible. According to them, the phrase “كِتَابَ اللَّهِ” in the verse preceded its imperative “عَلَيْكُمْ” and “عَلَيْكُمْ” acted despite this.⁵¹

كِتَابَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ⁵²

It is known that the Qur'ān al-Kerīm was immobilized by Abū al-Aswad al-Du'ālī⁵³ and that translation activities had not yet begun at that time.⁵⁴This information and the *istishhād* with the verses show us that there is no possibility that there was any influence from Greek and Syriac grammars during the birth of Arabic grammar.

4.2. Examples from the Hadiths

The Basrites claimed that “لَا”, which nullifies the genus, acts when it appears at the beginning of the nouns in nakra, but not when it appears at the beginning of the noun in ma'rifa. The Kūfahites opposed this claim and argued that it works in the mufrad realm and cited the following hadīth as an attester to this.⁵⁵The words “كَسْرَى” and “فَيْصَر” in the hadith, which are ma'rifa because they are mufrad realms, came as the name of “لَا” which negates its genus, and “لَا” which negates its genus acted on these words.

إِذَا هَلَكَ كَسْرَى فَلَا كَسْرَى بَعْدَهُ، وَإِذَا هَلَكَ فَيْصَرُ فَلَا فَيْصَرُ بَعْدَهُ.⁵⁶

The Kūfahites said that the attribution of the letter “أَوْ” after nafi or nahī means “و” and cited the following hadīth as an attester.⁵⁷

أَشْكُرُ جِرًا فَمَا عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا نَبِيٌّ أَوْ صِدِّيقٌ أَوْ شَهِيدٌ.⁵⁸

While dealing with the subject of adjective-mawsūf, linguists have stated that the adjective is used in the meanings of praise, reproach, remembrance with mercy, explanation, reinforcement, generalization, particularization and elaboration. They brought the following hadīth as an attester to its use in the sense of

⁴⁶ Baghdādī, *Khizānetu al-adab*, 1/15.

⁴⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sherhu qatru al-nedā ve bellu al-sadē* (Beyrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyye, 1425/2004), 77.

⁴⁸ Tāhā 20/91.

⁴⁹ Abū al-Barakāt al-Anbārī, *al-Insāf* (Beyrūt: Dār al-Fikir n.d.), 1/162.

⁵⁰ Hūd 11/8.

⁵¹ Abū al-Beqā' al-'Ukberī, *al-Tabyīn 'an medhāhibi al-nahwiyyīn al-basriyyīn va'l-kūfiyyīn* (Beyrūt: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1407/1986), 374.

⁵² al-Nisā 4/24.

⁵³ Çıkar, *Nahivciler ile Mantıkçılar Arasındaki Tartışmalar*, 34-35.

⁵⁴ Muhammed 'Abd al-Qādir Hureysāt, “Hālid b. Yezīd b. Muāviye”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1997), 15/292-293.

⁵⁵ Jelāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, *Hem' al-hevāmi' fī sherhi jem' al-jevāmi'* (Beyrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyye, 1419/1998), 1/463.

⁵⁶ Suyūtī, *Hem' al-hevāmi'*, 1/463.

⁵⁷ Suyūtī, *Hem' al-hevāmi'*, 3/174-175.

⁵⁸ Suyūtī, *Hem' al-hevāmi'*, 3/174-175.

generalization.⁵⁹ The words “الأُولَيْنِ” and “الآخِرَيْنِ” in the hadith come as adjectives of the word “النَّاسُ” and generalize the meaning of the word “النَّاسُ”.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْشُرُ النَّاسَ الْأُولَيْنِ وَالْآخِرَيْنِ.⁶⁰

The fact that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) warned people about *lahn* shows us that the foundations of grammatical studies were laid at that time, even if they were not named.⁶¹ The fact that the Prophet's words were accepted as direct evidence in determining the rules of grammar shows that there was no influence on the birth of Arabic grammar. This is because the Prophet's hadiths were not later on romanized and were narrated in the way he spoke.

4.3. Examples from Poems

While the Kūfahites claimed that the letter “ن” at the beginning of “لَعْلُ” is the original letter of “لَعْلُ”, the Basrites argued that this letter is zāid. They stated that the use of the form “عَلْ” in Arabic poetry is extremely high and that there can be no tasrif in letters. One of the poems they cited as a witness to prove that this letter is dhāid is the following couplet by al-Adbat al-Sa'dī, one of the poets of the Jahiliyyah period.⁶²

وَلَا تُهَيِّنِ الْفَقِيرَ عَلَّكَ أَنْ تَزْكَعَ يَوْمًا وَالِدَهُ قَدْ رَفَعَهُ⁶³

The Kūfahites claimed that the form “أَفْعُلُ” used for taajjub is a noun. The Basrites, on the other hand, claimed that this phrase denotes both the ma'rifa and the nakra, whereas the noun “أَفْعُلُ” denotes only the nakra and is a verb. In support of this claim, they brought the following poem of al-Nābīqa al-Zubaynī as a witness. The word “أَجَبَ” in the couplet nounizes the word “الظُّهْرُ” which is a ma'rifa.⁶⁴

وَنَأْخُذُ بَعْدَهُ بِذَنَابِ عَيْشٍ أَجَبَ الظُّهْرَ لَيْسَ لَهُ سَنَامٌ⁶⁵

The Basrites claimed that “مِنْ” can only be used for the beginning in space, but not for the beginning in time. The Kūfahites, on the other hand, argued that it is permissible to use “مِنْ” for the beginning in both space and time and cited the following poem by Zuheir b. Abī Sulmā as a witness. The two letters “مِنْ” used in the poem both signify a beginning in time.⁶⁶

لِمَنِ الدِّيَارُ بَقِيَّةُ الْحَجَرِ أَقْوَيْنِ مِنْ حَجَجٍ وَمِنْ دَهْرٍ⁶⁷

It is known that in the Jahiliyyah period, poets wrote their poems very meticulously and with linguistic rules in order to be liked by the juries in the fairs they participated in. It is also known that the jury members evaluated these poems by paying attention to the rules of language.⁶⁸ In the light of this information, it is understood that the poets in the examples used some grammatical rules while writing their poems. The poets of two of the poems in the examples are mu'allāqa poets. In other words, they were among the poets whose poems were selected as the best poems by the jury members at the fairs. There is no source to suggest that these poets had any connection with either Greek or Syriac grammar. This shows us that poetry's *istishhād* did not have a foreign influence on the emergence of Arabic grammar.

Conclusion

Language studies, which initially started as efforts to understand the Holy Qur'an correctly, were later called the science of nahw and were systematized and continued in a discipline.

According to the sources on the birth of Arabic grammar, some of the linguistic rules observed by the judges in the poetry competitions held at the fairs in the Jahiliyyah period allow us to infer that some grammatical rules were already established at that time.

⁵⁹ Suyūṭī, *Hem' al-hevāmi'*, 3/117.

⁶⁰ Suyūṭī, *Hem' al-hevāmi'*, 3/117.

⁶¹ İbn Jinnī, *al-Khasā'is*, 2/8.

⁶² Anbārī, *al-Insāf*, 1/219.

⁶³ Anbārī, *al-Insāf*, 1/221.

⁶⁴ 'Ukberī, *al-Tabyīn*, 287.

⁶⁵ al-Nābigha al-Zubaynī, *Divān al-Nābigha al-Zubaynī* (Beyrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyye, 1417/1996), 157.; Anbārī, *al-Insāf*, 1/134.; 'Ukberī, *al-Tabyīn*, 287.

⁶⁶ Anbārī, *el-Insāf*, 1/370.

⁶⁷ The expression “وَمِنْ دَهْرٍ” at the end of the couplet appears as “وَمِنْ شَهْرٍ” in the poet's divan. Look here: Zuheyr b. Abī Sulmā, *Divān Zuheyr b. Abī Sulmā* (Beyrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyye, 1409/1988), 54; In *al-Insāf*, it is mentioned as we have written in the text. Look here: Anbārī, *al-Insāf*, 1/371.

⁶⁸ Isfehānī, *al-Eghānī*, 11/6-7; Fākhūrī, *al-Jāmi' fī tārikhi al-adab al-'Arabī*, 49-50.

When we come to the Sadr al-Islamic period, the Prophet's (pbuh) warning people about *lahn*, which no one disputes that the Prophet (pbuh) used the language in accordance with the rules of language and spoke with eloquence, shows that various grammatical rules were applied in this period. The fact that Khulafā' al-Rashīdīn warned people about language mistakes in their dialogues with the people they encountered in the aforementioned period shows that in this period, the application of the rules of the science of grammar, even if it was not named, was treated with sensitivity.

The fact that Ali systematically wrote down some language rules in the Sadr al-Islamic period and gave these works to Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī and advised him to follow his method paved the way for the science of grammar to become a systematic branch of science in this period. There are no sources indicating that neither Ali nor Abū al-Aswad al-Du'alī had any educational contact with Greek grammar or Syriac grammar.

As can be seen in the examples given on the subject of *istishhād* with verses, hadīths, and poetry, the debates between the grammatical schools generally took place over the determined glosses and the status of the words in the position of āmil and ma'mūl.

It is stated in the sources that during the Jahiliyyah and Sadr al-Islamic periods, people whose language was fasīh warned people who made linguistic mistakes about the issues discussed by the grammatical schools. In other words, the fact that the jury members evaluated the poems in the fairs by including the rules of language encouraged other people to pay attention to the rules of grammar.

In the light of these data, to talk about the influence of Greek and Syriac grammar on the emergence of Arabic grammar would be to blindly adhere to a claim put forward by Western obscurantists and to be a Western wannabe. There is no dispute among the later grammarians about the accuracy of the sources used in the method of *istishhād*, which is of great importance in determining the rules of grammar. The fact that the language scholars of later periods accepted these sources themselves as evidence for the rules of grammar is an admission that they are correct. In fact, it is obvious that these *shawāhīd* used in the science of grammar were not written or read by applying Greek and Syriac grammatical rules or inspired by them.

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