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A Review of Arabic Linguistic Argumentations and their Misconceptions

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ABSTRACT

Formulations of grammatical rules had been a major preoccupation of Arab grammarians of earlier times. They formulated these rules by drawing from primary sources, such as the anomalous recitation (Qira'at Shaz) of the Qur'an and archaic Arabic poetry of unknown origin. The issue discussed here is centred upon several questions: why were grammatical rules derived from Qira'at Shaz and archaic poetry accepted? Why was linguistic evidence from Hadith al-Nabawi refuted? And why did some of them abstain from drawing linguistic evidence from the Qur'an? This study looks at a cross-section of the views of early grammarians to provide an analytical approach in discussing and clarifying different views and misconceptions around the issues.

1. Introduction

Some scholars held that there were grammarians of earlier time who rejected hadith of the prophet (pbuh) in drawing or establishing grammatical rules. They preferred to use non-standard or anomalous Quranic recitations (Qira'at Shaz) and archaic poetry of unknown author (al Shi'ru al Majhul). These notions had caused certain intellectual rift among scholars and grammarians resulting in lots of criticism being thrown around towards certain schools of thought. It is therefore important to view the issues within the context of development in the writing of Arabic grammar so that misconceptions on the issues could be clarified. The different modes of enunciations in reciting the Qur'an serve as the principal source to study Arabic dialects or accentual differences in Arabic [10]. It had been established that there were differences in enunciations among the companions of the prophet (saw) when reciting the Qur'an. The most prominent group were represented by migrants from Mecca (Muhajir) comprising ibn Umar, ibn Abas, Aishah, Habsah, Ummu Salmah and others. The other group comprised the original inhabitants of Madinah (Ansr) represented by personalities such as Ibn Ka'ab, Abu Dardar, Zaid ibn Thabit and Anas ibn Malik and others [11]. The prophet

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(pbuh) had affirmed the differences and approved them in their reciting the Qur'an as stated in authentic hadith (mutawattir): "That the Qur'an had been revealed in seven accentual images, so read in whichever utterance that makes reading easy" [14]. Some Arab scholars in their interpretation of the hadith of the prophet (saw) tended to exaggerate the differences. As-Suyuti even made the claim in his book that there were forty utterances or accentual images in the recitation of the Qur'an [11].

The most predominant views were from Ibn Qutaibah who said, "I have studied the differences in recitation and I found seven distinctive styles" [19]. We observed that the starting point in refusal to contrive rules of grammar among early grammarians from Qira'at Shaz stemmed from lack of agreement on the use of the Qur'an of Uthmaniah version or implying it. The fact shows that refusal of Qira'at Shaz as mentioned earlier – could not be found in the book of Sibawaih. So, what was stated on the matter was merely an unfounded allegation against the Basrah school. Many believe that the major reason for differences in utterances in reading the Qur'an was due to the differences of Arabic dialects [1].

According to Ibn Qutaibah, "Each of the groups in this matter will hold on to their own language as this had flowed into them naturally as a child and as they grow up and become old. So, the language is strengthened in them through their long use of it and could not but become habituated and established in their speech [15]. This is the factor that account for the differences between the standard recitation (mutawatir) and the Qira'at Shāz. There had been serious attempts to identify and to differentiate between correct recitation and Qira'at Shāz since the time of imam ibn Mujahid. As a result, some criteria had been put in place to identify the correct recitation: A recitation was considered correct if it complied with all the three conditions without excluding any one of them. The three conditions to verify the correctness of recitation were as follows: [14] that the recitation was in proper and acceptable Arabic forms, the recitation was in accordance with the Uthmaniah version of the Qur'an, the recitation was supported by verified narratives (sanad) traceable to the prophet (pbuh). The application of these rules would verify correctness of the recitations.

So, once it was established that the recitation fitted with Arabic language and its accentual images fitted with the Uthmaniah version or implying it and with correct narratives (sanad) they were considered correct and on that basis these recitations were not to be opposed or denied. These recitations were considered to belong to the seven accentual forms which were revealed to the prophet (pbuh). It was incumbent upon humankind to accept them regardless from any one of the seven authorities or ten or others regarded as authorities in this matter. Only when one of the rules as mentioned above was abrogated then the recitation was not acceptable considered weak or irregular or void [14].

These rules emphasized not only the enunciations used in reading the Qur'an but the reading must be based on the Uthmaniah version. As for the recitation modes it must comply with the seven modes of reading of the authentic sources. Only these seven standard modes are deemed authentic and truthful. These are the bases for the approved and acceptable enunciations in reading the Qur'an [1]. During this time there was a consensus in the acceptance of the rules among Qur'an readers and scholars. The irregular or anomalous enunciations (Qira'at Shāz) did not comply with the three conditions enumerated above especially on its lack of textual sameness with the Uthmanish version of the Qur'an. This condition ensured that there would be no differences in enunciations as a result of textual differences arising from their incorporating words or linguistic features exclusive to their own specific community. Even if the irregular enunciations (Qira'at Shāz) came with supporting narratives tracing it back to the early time of Islam, reciting using these enunciations was not allowed either in prayer (solat) or supplications or for any other purposes in invocation to God.

2. Methodology

The study is analytical and critical. The collection of data is mostly from Arabic primary sources. Focusing on the argumentation of the misconception of the system's authentic Arabic linguistic approach.

3. Discussions

3.1 *The positions of Grammarians' Inferences of Rules of Grammar from Qira'āt Shāz and Archaic Poetry of Unknown Origin*

What are the positions of grammarians on Qira'āt Shāz? It has been seen that some language authorities had preferred Qira'āt Shāz and archaic poetry as sources to draw grammatical rules to the extent of refusing the use the hadith of the prophet (pbuh) for the purpose. This is somewhat delusional or may even be puzzling. It would be necessary to probe into this issue to have a picture of the background of the authorities concerned and the state of play as it was in the history of the development of Arabic grammar and the involvement of language authorities of Arabic descent as well as naturalized (arabised) non -Arabs.

It is important to know the attitude and intellectual position of the authorities concerned towards Qira'āt Shāz. An authority that can be singled out to have voiced his position on Qira'āt Shāz was al-Ahkfash al-Awsat. He presented his comment on Qira'āt Shāz with respect to the work of al-Kisai and al-Farra'. His views could be regarded as providing a basis for understanding the notion of some authorities towards Qira'āt Shāz and for evaluation of the work of the Kufan scholars in this respect. The views put forward Shawqi Daif reflected the notion of some authorities who hold the position that Qira'āt Shāz were wrong modes of recitation. He claimed that this was a departure from the hadith of the prophet (pbuh) as they were motivated by different reasons or had their own hidden agenda. He made this claim saying, "They do not need the hadith of the prophet (pbuh) and so they do not take them or make them a priority or to deliberate (tawil), they go along a path as they may have certain intention behind all this [12].

A pertinent question here is why did the Arabs in the later part of the second century did regard hadith of the prophet (pbuh) as an important source of knowledge? It could probably be that the hadith in unwritten form were regarded pure and untainted. Hadith were written 200 years after Hijrah (102H). An issue cropped up with the writing of hadith. The authenticity of some of them became questionable. Criticisms were thrown on hadith which were considered to have been meshed with opinions and perception of non-Arab writers. This clouded the issues regarding acceptability of hadith among scholars.

The issue appears not so clear cut with regard to acceptance of Qira'āt Shāz among Arab scholars of true Arab origin and the naturalized (arabised) Arabs. The Arabs of true Arab origin generally accepted Qira'āt Shāz as authentic because they knew it could be traced to the time of the prophet (pbuh) in Medina. On the other hand, there were arabised or naturalized Arab scholars who did not acknowledge the Qira'āt Shāz and rejected them. Among them a scholar, al-Kisai, who went a step further to claim that Qira'āt Shāz was erroneous [12]. Al Farra' expressed his disapproval of Qira'āt Shāz in his book "ma'ani al Qur'an". He came up with this notion towards Qira'āt Shāz based on his interpretation of a couple of verses from the Qur'an.

Another question is important in connection with the issues raised. How did Qira'āt Shāz become an enduring feature in the enunciation of the Qur'an? There was no objection and no question asked surrounding Qira'āt Shāz during the Mecca period; this was because it was the beginning stage of Islam. Those who embraced Islam were small in number and a large majority of them were speaking

a single Quraish dialect. This situation changed with the migration (Hijrah) of the prophet (pbuh) to Medina. In Medina Islam attracted a much bigger number of people into its fold. A motley group of people of different tribes who embraced Islam at this time spoke varieties of distinctive dialects of their own. This had resulted in different groups enunciating the Qur'an in their own respective dialects. They recited the Qur'an in the accents and pronunciations they had been habituated with. There was no problem with this as the dialectic differences in their recitation was approved by Islam as affirmed by the prophet (pbuh) as in his words 'Indeed, I was sent to the people of faith, of whom are youths, servants, and the olds' [2].

A well-known authority Sibawaih in his "al-Kitab" did not throw cold water on Qira'āt Shāz wholesale. In his book it can be found his approval of several mode of reading the Qur'an. This was even elaborated upon by al-Akhfas al-Awsat [21]. It was clear that Sibawaih accepted a lot of Qira'āt Shāz and had drawn some parallel and likeness between them to the extent acknowledging that "Modes of enunciations in the recitation of the Qur'an do not in itself result in contradictions as they are from the Prophet (sunnah)." [20] As-Suyuti could be regarded as an advocate of Sibawaih's position towards Qira'āt Shāz and upon the model as expounded by Sibawaih he said in his kitab "The people put a lid on objection to Qira'āt Shāz in Arabic so that there is no contradiction to known standard even if there are differences, they are in a sense desired" [10].

As for as-Suyuti his position with regard to Qira'āt Shāz and hadith of the prophet (pbuh) seemed to lack consistency. It is rather problematic to understand his position. On the one hand he did not disapprove the Qira'āt Shāz as the modes of recitations as he certainly knew they were affirmed as correct by the prophet (pbuh). On the other hand, he turned down prophetic hadith for the purpose of drawing up rules of grammar on the ground that its authenticity could not be determined

As for Sibawaih he demonstrated a very strong inclination and fondness towards archaic poetries of unknown origin. This can be gauged from the commentary of the treasure house of literature AL Baghdadi. He expressed his views saying, "The poetic verses written by Sibawaih stood as a witness of his contriving upon archaic poetries to the time of earlier predecessors and beyond while the originators were unknown" [3]. This showed Sibawaih had no qualm to be identified with these sources knowing that his work would be wide spread, got into the hands of many lay people and scholars. He as one of the custodians of knowledge in language had viewed and examined these poetries but did not reject them but rather rectify them in his own ways. There was no comment from any of the earlier scholars towards him though it could be expected they would have reprimanded him for bringing to light deficient poetries imprinted in his books in some strange language features which could not be shared by many other language authorities of his time. Perhaps because his stature as a linguist was monumental none questioned even a single word in there.

Another comment on Sibawaih came from al Mazini. He said, "I viewed the writing of Sibawaih, I found some of his one thousand and fifty verses rather weird. For the thousand I know the originators and the bases of them but for the fifty others I don't know the name of their originators." Al Mazini saw some weak points in the writing of Sibawaih but ventured no criticism proving that he had a high regard of Sibawaih as an authority in language.

As for Baghdadi in his book "Khazanah al Adab" he said "the truth requires protection by ensuring the use of the correct exact words of hadith of the prophet (pbuh) and matched to the narration of the companions or close family members of the prophet" [3]. He refuted the hadith rejecters with a question; the grammarians accepted the archaic poetry of unknown origin for drawing of rules of grammar, so why did they pour cold water on hadith of the prophet (pbuh)?

Al Damamini (827 h) advanced his comment on the classification of Baghdadi endorsing Baghdadi's use of imagery and deep meanings beyond the surface meaning of words used. He objected comments made Abu Hayan towards ibn malik with respect to drawing rules of grammar

on the evidence from the hadith of the prophet of the prophet (pbuh). He disagreed with Abu Hayan [5]. He elaborated his comments on Abu Hayan saying, "Even, if he (abu hayan) provides supporting narratives they are not complete. He contended that taking the hadith of the prophet (pbuh) on its representation of meaning cannot satisfy the requirement for authenticity which requires the exact words of the prophet (pbuh)" [3]. In addition to that he said, "So the work of Ibn Malik circulated among our grammarians and his approach was sound and he was right in the way he did [3].

Baghdadi's reply to Abu Hayan on his comment towards Kufan and Basrah scholars with regard to their refusal to draw rules of grammar from the evidence of hadith of the prophet (pbuh) and he said that it was not necessary to show evidence in order to still be considered invalid [3]. In addition to that he said that the writing of hadith of the prophet (pbuh) and narrations and a great deal of tales issued at earlier time before the adulteration of Arabic were acceptable but later the words were changed by writers who posed objection against them [3] and to strengthen his argument al Baghdadi came up with the argument that the originators of the poetries were not known. This was qualified by Ibn al-Nahas in his commentary on the Kufians permitted the pronunciation of "أُن" after "ي" and cited as evidence the words of the poet:

أردت لكىما أن تطير بقربى فتركها شناً بيداء بلقع [3]

He said: The answer is that the author of this verse is not known, and if it were known, it would be possible that it is a poetic necessity. He also said: The Kufians allowed the entry of the lam (ل) in the predicate of (لكن). However, they argued with his saying: "But I am support this" [3]. The answer is that the author of this verse is not known, and nothing has been mentioned of it except this, and no one who is trustworthy in the language recited it, nor was it attributed to someone famous for precision and mastery [3].

Al Baghdadi expressed his displeasure to those who objected citing the evidence for hadith of the prophet (pbuh) yet accepted as proof citations from unknown originators "Since it emanated from what is believed with certainty and whatever that relied on it is accepted and why not" [3]. It can be taken that a benchmark could be drawn from the work of Sibawaih viewing his analogies and imageries as shown in his book al Kitab. In it were written 1050 verses and fifty of which from unknown originators [3] which many language authorities were indifferent towards them and had no knowledge of them. However, they did not object to a single word in there [3].

In the context of Sibawaih's work al Jarimi stated that "I viewed in Sibawaih's book and found 1050 verses and 1000 of them the names of originators are known and thus confirmed their origin but for the 50 others I do not know the names of the originators" [3]. And so there were various types that had been derived from confirmed hadith (mutawatir) or whether regarded as known (mashur) or isolated (ahād) or even shāz? A hadith must be from the words of the prophet (pbuh) - acceptable for drawing of rules of grammar as established by the academy of Arabic language in Cairo after a deliberation by Sheikh Muhammad al-Khadir Hussin [17,18]. In this connection Abu Hasan bin ad-Dai` his elegant lecture said: "My contention is over acceptance of narrations based on meaning. That is why I left alone an authority such as Sibawaih and others who use citations proving certain aspect of language as correct based only on verbal forms. I depend on the Qur'an for this and from clear transmission from the Arabs. Even if the statements of scholars are not based on transmission based on meanings it is permissible if it is based on the pure standard speeches of the prophet (pbuh), as this the purest Arabic." It is clear that Ibn ad-Dai` did not ascribe to acceptance of narration of hadith of the prophet (pbuh) based alone on meaning. In addition to that, Al Qadi Badrudin ibn Juma`ah expressed objection in a question to Ibn Malik: "Dear sir, those hadith were narrated by non-Arabs and within it are narrations unknown and cannot be worth a pinch of salt" [3].

Nevertheless, Abu Hayan had advanced his views to string together the ideas of Ibn ad-Dai` and Badrudin Ibn Juma`ah with regard to prohibition of objection to the hadith of the prophet (pbuh) saying, "I have studied closely the talks on the problem which expose that there was no sense of care among grammarians in making inferences from the speech of the Arabs. These people comprise Muslims and infidels, they do not make inferences to do justice to Bukhari and Muslims but instead ignored them? What I said expose my feelings on the matter not my reason why the grammarians did not make inferences from the hadith" [3].

It is known that as-Shatibi quoted hadith of the prophet (pbuh) to draw rules of grammar but not much as compared to his quoting the Qur'an. And why was it? Abu Hayan mentioned and by way of simplifying it "that many of the writers taking evidence from the content of hadith of the prophet (pbuh) to put a footing on methodology of a school of thought in analyzing the speech of the Arabs and I don't see any one from the earlier predecessors or from the later generations who had taken the path and with it established grammatical rules rooted in the accepted rules from the articulations in the speech of the Arabs." For example, Amru Ibn Ala`, Isa bin Umar, Khalil Ahmad and Sibawaih among authorities in linguistics of Basrah school, and al-Kisai, Farra`, al-Ahmar and Hisham ad-Dharir were the authorities from Kufah, they didn't do of that (as mentioned above). And the stand has been followed along the more recent path in two groups and the others were grammarians within the territories of Baghdad and Andalus deemed to be among scholars lacking in authenticity by departing from the words of the prophet (pbuh). It is only by proximity with what runs in the Qur'an it is possible to establish the school of thought on clear footing with strong evidence. The two substantive elements; First narratives are acceptable if taken on the basis of meaning, and another is, it can be seen from an event that happened at the time of the prophet (pbuh) though it was not reported in the exact words of the prophet in full as shown in these expressions:

أولاً أنّ الرواة جَوَّزُوا النقل بالمعنى؛ وثانياً وقع اللحن كثيراً في ما رُوي من الحديث لأن كثيراً من الرواة كانوا غير عرب بالطبع". [10]

And so, the citation of prophetic hadith for inferences of grammar rules did yield much or had been rewarding. However, there was ground for rejection of certain aspects of the works of Ibn Malik in particular his attempt at establishing grammar rules from the words of a single prophetic hadith on based on a single narration to draw wide implications and generalization. Based on the examples taken from the hadith of the prophet (pbuh) he contrived some grammatical rules as from the expression:

"كنتُ" فهذه القاعدة مخالفة السَّماع، فمن قبل أن الاتصال ثابت في أفصح الكلام المنثور كقول رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لعمر رضي الله عنه «إن يكنه فلن تسلط عليه، وإن لا يكنه فلا خير لك في قتله». [4]

From the above discussion of issues, we can perceive a clearer picture of the position of some authorities towards the hadith of the prophet (pbuh). Ibn Malik in his book "Shawahid at-Taudih wa At-Tashih Li Mushkilat al-Jami` as-Sahih" provided a method for clarification and verification of hadith of the prophet (pbuh) and not a rejection of them from being used as citations for making inferences on rules of grammar. This method provided Ibn Malik a basis and a yard stick for evaluation to reject any hadith if its authenticity was not to the standard set by him. In this connection we find the arguments of ibn ad-Dai` and Abu Hayan al-Andalusi and as-Suyuti and as-Shalubayn as acceptable.

As for Baghdadi with regard to using archaic poetry of unknown originators as evidence in drawing grammatical rules, he also has his own basis of arguments.

3.2 Arguments in Rejecting Hadith of The Prophet (pbuh) as a Source for Making Inferences on Rules of Grammar

Issues on the objection of hadith of the prophet (pbuh) is the most pertinent point of this research. But when was the starting point for the use of evidence of hadith of the prophet (pbuh)? As mentioned in books such as on Kitab al Anzar an-Nahwiyyah and Ghara'ib al Hadith that argumentation to hadith had been around before the time of Suhaily and Ibn Malik. In connection with the above we observed that Khadijah Hadithi was the earliest of grammarians who expressed displeasure that hadith of the prophet (pbuh) was little used in application to contrive rules on grammar and verbal forms (grammar and morphology) but on the other hand a lot of the hadith of the prophet (pbuh) were used in other areas of Arab knowledge [13].

We understand from here the concern of Suhaily, Ibn Khuruf and Ibn Malik who expressed objection on grammarians who did not draw rules of grammar from hadith of the prophet (pbuh) even though the hadith was evidenced as authentic by acknowledged supporting narratives (sanad). As shown in Mu'jam al-Ain by Khalil Ahmad al-Farahidi and al-Kitab by Sibawaih and Ma'ani al Qur'an by Farra' and other books. However, in the books of Ibn Khuruf and Ibn Malik there were many contestable hadith to the extent that Ibn Malik protested against absolute objection to develop new methods by referring to the arguments of those who had been looked down by earlier grammarians with regard to methods, bases and rules [13].

Ibn ad-Dai' was the first to caution early grammarians not to object to hadith of the prophet (pbuh) taken based on meaning of contents not the exact words of prophet (pbuh) [13]. Abu Hayun al Andalusi clarified such a practice which formed the basis of the book "Manhaj al Salik Fi al-Kalam ala Alfiah Ibn Malik" and make clarifications of the blemishes on the hadith of the prophet (pbuh) included in it while the hadith of the prophet (pbuh) were used to affirm as proof of correctness of the matter discussed saying "Choosing what is not normally chosen or not well known and ignored the normal practice of acknowledged school of thoughts what is not proven to be from the words of the messenger ought to be objected to from being used as references" [1]

Mahdi Makhzumi added another view in this connection saying "the early grammarians established the rules from the speech of the Arabs the later grammarians did not do that, they belonged to two groups [6]. On the contrary the Kufan group objected to the use of hadith of the prophet (pbuh). Al Kisai abstained from proving rules using hadith for proving rules of grammar owing to the influence of the Basrah school as he was in the beginning under the tutorship of the Basrah school- so this was the reason he did not object to it [6].

Generally, non-Arabs did not master Arabic completely as claimed by some critics and this accounted for their inability to use hadith of the prophet (pbuh) to draw rules of grammar - their language contained errors they were not aware of, so in their speech and narratives there were anomalies that departed distinctly from standard usage of the Arabs – the prophet (pbuh) did not speak unless using the best form of speech, the nicest of word composition, acclaimed and lofty. It is normal for one from a different language community to speak in the language of another community to a member of that community and he speaks with difficulties and would appear to be unlearned.

If we turned back through history, it was seen that even original Arabs did commit errors in their speech as spotted during the days of the prophet (pbuh) as narrated by some they spotted errors among Arabs of the time using expression أرشدوا أخاكم فإنه قد ضلّ [8]. Apart from that another narration

can be cited during the reign of Umar al-Khatāb. A book was written with some grammatical errors and Umar commented *أَنْ قَنَّكَ سَوَاطٍ* [8].

As supposed by some researchers that errors in grammar emerged since the coming in of non - Arabs into Islam but that was not so. In fact, the Arabs themselves also made mistakes as seen in the speech of the tribe of al Hutomah who dwelled in the village of Hutomah near Baghdad [12]. With respect to glorifying Arabic the proficient Arabs tried contriving rules of grammar adhering to the standard language and style of the Qur'an This was motivated by the great pride Arabs had for their language.

The fact is the book "Shawahid at-Taudih wa At-Tashih Li Mushkilat al-Jami' as-Sahih" show the system and focus of Ibn Malik not with regard to why he did not use of hadith of the prophet (pbuh) as evidence for grammar rules. He actually used a lot of what had been recorded previously or those following them. Whereas in his contention towards grammarians it was seen that he did not take them very seriously [7]. The grammarians who were seen to be occupied in giving attention to draw rules of grammar from hadith of the prophet (pbuh) were Ibn ad-Dai', Abu Hayan al Andalusi and as-Suyuti. Of the three we saw that Abu Hayan was the hardest critic of Ibn Malik on his use of evidence from hadith of the prophet (pbuh). This is because Ibn Malik used a lot of evidence from hadith without differentiating them.

As for Ibn ad-Dai' and Abu Hayan al Andalusi, we did not see in viewing their works that they had written rules of grammar from hadith of the prophet (pbuh) and this could be regarded as clear proof of their refusal or abstinence from using hadith of the prophet (pbuh) almost absolutely. In this respect Hassan Musa held the same conviction in his book on grammarians and Hadith [20]. Otherwise, the views of Khadijah Hadithi clarified that that Ibn ad-Dai' and Abu Hayan al Andalusi did not abstain from using hadith but instead have been seen to make inferences from hadith on their writing on grammar [13]. She was sure that what Abu Hayan said in his book could not be taken as objection to hadith of the prophet (pbuh) in the absolute sense. In the same way with regard to as-Suyuti on the matter. So, it may be concluded that Ibn Hayan Andalusi and as-Suyuti both embraced hadith accepting them as proofs on grammar and it was wrong to say that he did abstain from taking hadith of the prophet (pbuh) altogether.

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