Arabic Language and Shi'ites

The first one to fourmulate the principles of syntax in Arabic, according to concurrence of opinions of scholars, was Amir-ul-Mu'minin Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib(A.S.). He gave the basic idea to Abul Aswad Ad-Du'ili, (Zalim Bin 'Amr) who was one of the prominent. Tabi'ites and who added to those basic ideas and expanded them at the instance and under the insturctions of Amir-ul-Mu'minin Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib(A.S.). From Abul Aswad, the science of An-Nahw was learnt by his son 'Ata' who further taught it to Yahya bin Ya'mar al-'Adawani, about whom Ibn Khallakan says that he was a Shi'ite and a scholar of An-Nahw and various dialects of Arabic which he learnt from Abul Aswad.

Another scholar of An-Nahw was abn Bin Taghlab. An-Najashi says about him that he was well-versed in every branch of knowledge including literature, language and syntax (An-Nahw). Ash-Shaikh says in his Al-Fahrist that he was profound linguist who has heard the Arabs and had talked about them. He died in 141A.H.

Similarly, Hamran bin A'yun was among such scholars. Writing the life account his brother Zararah bin A'yun, Ash-Shaikh says in his Al-Fahrist that Hamran was a grammarian. He died during the second century. Those who were the pioneers in the field of An-Nahw and simplified as well as developad it in Basra and Kufa were the Shi'ite scholars. They were: 1. Al-Khalil bin Ahmad al-Farahidi al-Basri was the teacher of Sibwaih and the Shaikh of the grammarians of Basra. He was the person who first polished up this branch of studies, expanded it and outlined the reasons for such a study. He taught it to Sabiuyah who wrote a book which has none to compare with.

According to Ibn-un-Nadim Saibuyah learnt An-Nahw from Al-Khalil who was his teacher and who prepared a book which had none to compare with which already existed or written afterwards. Ibn Nadim says that he read that book copied by Abil Abbas Ath-Tha'lab. The note on the life of Amr bin Uthman Sibwaih in Bughyat ul-Wi'at tells us that Sibwaih compiled a book of about 1000 sheets which was based upon the information received from Al-Khalil. Ibn-un-Anbari has said, «Al-Khalil is the master of the letters, firm in his learning and piety and very precise in his inference and deduction grammatical principles. His way of argument was taken by Sibwaih. According to the statement in 'Aamatul Hikayat about the book of Sibwaih reported from al-Khalil, al-Khalil was the first one to systematize the language and based it upon the poetry of the Arabs. As-Sairafı has said, "Al-Khalil was too much devoted to the deduction of grammatical principles and arriving at correct inferences and prepared for the first

time Kitab-ul-'Ain which is quite well known. Through this book he systematized the language. He was the teacher of Sibwaih whose method was based upon Al-Khalil's information and data. Whenever Sibwaih says, "I asked him" or tells something without mentioning the name of the person who said, you should take him to be Al-Khalil." Ibn-un- Nadim says in his Al-Fahrist," Al-Khalil was very much devoted to the deduction of grammatical principles and arriving at the correct inferences,"

Ibn Khallakan declares him to the Imam of An-Nahw. In Khallakan then talks about Hamze bin al-Hasan al-Asbahani who said that al-Khalil created what no one had since the creation of the universe. He laid the foundations of grammar in his book Kitab-ul-'Ain which save the language of the community from the influences of other communities. Then he helped Sibwaith learn An-Nahw wrote later on a book which is an ornament of the Islamic State. Similarly, As-Suyuti sates in his book Al-Awa'il that Al-Khalil was the first one to base the language upon words. Among his writings on An-Nahw is Al-'Awamil which has been mentioned by Ibn Khallikan, Al-Jumul which has been referred to by As-Suyuti and Ash-Shawahi which has been mentioned by both as well as Ibn-un-Nadim. He died in 175 A.H.

2. Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin al-Hasan bin Abi Sarah Ruwasi al-Kufi. He was an inhabitant of Kufa and according to An-Najashi, reported the traditions from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir(A.S.) and Imam Ja'far Sadiq(A.S.). He was a cousin of Ma'adh bin Muslim bin Abi Sarah. It was due Ma'adh and Muhammad that Al-Kisa'i organized the Arabic studies. Both Al-Kisa'i and Al-Fira' often write in their books," Abu Ja'far Ar-Ruwasi Muhammad bin al-Hasan said". Similarly Al-Anbari has reported a statement of Tha'lab that Ar-Ruwasi was the teacher of both Al-Kisa'i and Al-Fira'.

But according to Nazhat-ul-Alba' and Bughyat-ul-Wu'at, Ar-Ruwasi was a nephew of Ma'adh. If this is correct then his name should be read as Muhammad bin al-Hasan ibn Muslim bin Abi Sarah, and Abu Sarah was therefore, his great-grand-father, not his grand-father as reported earlier. The referece to the grand-father is not very much desired in such statements and this is why An-Najashi thought him to be a cousin of Ma'adh. Ibn-un-Nadim has stated in the Al-Fahrist that Ar-Ruwasi was the first among the Kufites to write a book on An-Nahw. This has also been supported by Ibn-ul-Anbari through Tha'lab and Al-Muzahhir. As-Suyuti states the name of his book as Al-Faisal. He died during the second century.

3. Abul Hasan Ali bin Hamza al-Kisa'i. He was the leader of the Kufite in syntax and linguistics. He was considered to be the most well-informed of all the people on these subjects and unique among them. According Bughyat-ul-Wu'at, "Ibn-ul-'A'rabi has said that al-Kisa'i was the most scholarly of all in respect to the Arabic language, and Al-Khatib says that he learnt

syntax when he was quite grown up. He came to a group of people when he was tired. He said to them,'I am without power'. They said, «You sit among us and speak incorrect Arabic. If you have lost all your power, say "Giyat"and if you are tired then say 'Agiyat'.

He got up from there and went straight to Ma'adh. When he had received all what Ma'adh could teach him, he went to join the company of al-Khalil and asked him as to the source of all his knowledge, al-Khalil told that he had learnt all his grammatical knowledge from the valley of Al-Hijaz, Najd and Tihamah. He left (for those areas) and came back. During that period, he emptied fifteen bottles of ink in writing the idioms of the Bedouins in addition to what he had committed to his memory. He went to Basra and found that al-Khalil had died and in his place was Yunis. A discussion on different problems ensued between them.

On some issues he agreed what Yunis said and in some others Yunis submitted to him. Al-Farra' was asked once as to why he was against Al-Kisa'i although both were equal in the knowledge of grammar. He replied,"I took pride in myself and entered into a discussion with him during which I was just like a bird who takes a drop of water in its beak from an ocean." Al-Kisa'i and Muhammad bin al-Hasan (Ar-Ruwasi) died on the same day. Ar-Rashid said, "Jurisprudence and An-Nahw were buried on the same day." He is the author of Al-Mukhtasar Fin Nahw and Masadir-ul-Huruf. His death occurred in 182 A.H.

4. Ma'adh Bin Muslim al-Hira' al-Kufı an-Nahwi.

He was a famous grammarian. Bughyat-ul-Wu'at records that he was one of the oldest grammarians and had written books on An-Nahw. The same books further reports that he used to report the traditions from Imam Ja'far Sadiq(A.S.) and was a Shi'ite. Ibn-un-Najjar has written in the Appendix of Tarikh-e-Baghdad that he was a leading grammarain and many persons learnt An-Nahw from him including Al-Kisa'i. Ibn-un-Nadim has said that none of his books is known, as if he never read about his books mentioned in Bughyat-ul-Wu'at. He died in 187 A.H.

5. Muhammad bin al-Mustanir bin Ahmad who is known as Qutrab-un-Nahwi (Grammatical genius), has been mentioned by Sayyid Mahdi Bahr-ul-'Ulum in his Rijal that he was Shi'ite. He is the author of Al-'Ilal Fin Nahw, Al-Ad-dad, Al-Humuz, Al-Muthallath, and Al-Musannaf-ul-Gharib Fil Lughah. He died in 206 A.H.

6. Al-Farra', Yahya bin Ziyad al-Aqta' al-Kufı. He is called Al-Farra' because he used to play with the words. He was a pupil of Al-Kasa'i. As-Sam'ani says that al-Farra' was called as Amir-ul-Mu'minin of An-Nahw. He has also quoted Tha'lab having said that there would have been no Arabic but for Al-Farra' because he polished it and got it rid of foreing elements. Has he not been alive Arabic would have got corrupted. According to Bughyat-ul-Wu'at, he was the

Imam of An-Nahw among the Kufites, after al-Kisa'i. Similarly, As-Sayyid Mahdi Bahr-ul-'Ulum Tabataba'i has mentioned him in his Rijal, while the author of Riyad-ul-'Ulama' has testified his being a Shi'ite. Bughyat-ul-Wu'at states that he liked al-Kalam and was inclined to the Mu'tazilite creed. But this statement is based upon a confusion between the Shi'ite doctrines and those of the Mu'tazilites, as the author of Riyad-ul-'Ulama' has pointed out. This confusion is so usually found that even Adh-Dhahabi declared Al-Murtada to be a Mu'tazilite in his Mizan, despite the fact that Al-Murtada many a time gave refutations to the Mu'tazilite doctrines. Many Shi'ites have been treated as Mu'tazilites on account of this confusion. Al-Farra' died in 209 A.H.

7. Ahmad bin Ibrahim bin Isma'il bin Hamdun. He was a grammarian and a coutier of Al-Mutawakkil. Ash-Shaikh (in Al-Fahrist) and An-Najashi have said about him that he was the Shaikh of Linguistics and the teacher of Abil Abbas Tha'lab. He died during the third century.

8. Ibn-us-Sukait, Ya'qub Bin Ishaq. He is the author of many books including Islah-ul-Mantiq. According to the statement of Al-Mubarrad, no book has crossed the bridge of Baghdad which could be compared with it in respect to linguistics. Tha'lab has said that after Ibn-A'rabi, no one has accomplished such a mastery of language as Ibn-us-Sukait has. He was beheaded by Mutawakkil for being a Shi'ite. This happenened in 244 A.H.

9. Abu Uthman al-Mazini Bakar bin Muhammad bin Habib. According to the statement of Bughyat-ul-Wu'at he was leading figure in respect to Arabic language. According to Al-Mubarrad, no one knew An-Nahw more than Abu Uthman except Sibwaih. Ibn-un-Nadim and As-Suyuti have mentioned a number of books written by him on grammar (An-Nahaw). Similarly, Ibn Khallakan declares him to ne the Master of An-Nahw and Literature in his period. An-Najashi too calls him in the same way and that he was in the front ranks of the scholars in Basra. An-Najashi has also quoted a statement of Al-Mubarrad telling that he was one of the Imamite scholars, his name being Abu Uthman Bakr bin Muhammad, and one of the servants of Isma'il bin Maitham. He has also mentioned his books. His death occurred in 248 A.H.

10.Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Khalid al-Barqui wrote a book on An-Nahw.

11. Abul Abbas Muhammad bin Yazid al-Mubarrad. According to Bughyat-ul-Wu'at? He was the Imam of Arabic in Baghdad during his age. His books are (i) Al-Maqsur Wal Mamdud, (ii) Ar-Radd-u-'Alas-Sibwaih, (iii) Sharh-u-Shawahid-il-Kitab, and (iv) Ma Ittafaqa Lafzahu Wa Ikhtalaf Ma'nahu. According to the statement of Riyad-ul-'Ulama', he was a leading figure, grammarian, linguist, scholar, Imamite, masterly and author of Al-Kamil. There are reports about him and Imams from the Ahlul Bayt(A.S.) which testify his being a Shi'ite.One of such reports has been quoted from Tarikhul Baladhari in Lawa'ij-ul-Ashjan and is about the virtues

of Imam Husain (A.S.)

He died in 285 A.H.

12. Muhammad bin Ahamd bin Ibrahim al-Kufi.

He was called as As-Sabuni. He was one of the companions of Imam Ali al-Hadi (A.S.) and the author of Al-Fakhir Fil Lughat. He died in 300 A.H.

Source: Hasan al-Amin,Shorter Shi'ite Encyclopaedia