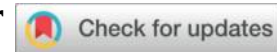




## Method of Arab Grammarians in Using Fabricated and Forged Narrations as Evidence in Arabic Grammar



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### **Abstract :**

This article examines the methodology of Arab grammarians in dealing with poetic evidence, particularly poetic citations employed as grammatical evidence whose authenticity was subsequently questioned or which were accused of being fabricated. Particular attention is given to the poetic evidence cited in Sībawayhi's Kitāb and to the positions of scholars concerning it. The study begins with a fundamental problem: the fact that a poetic citation conflicts with an established grammatical rule is not, by itself, sufficient grounds for declaring it fabricated or spurious. Rather, the authenticity of the citation must first be investigated through its chains of transmission, the reliability of its transmitters, the multiplicity of its routes of transmission, its conformity with Arabic usage, and the existence of other supporting evidence. The study presents examples of disagreement among grammarians, particularly between Sībawayhi and al-Mubarrad, showing that some of the poetic citations criticized by al-Mubarrad and described by him as fabricated cannot simply be rejected on the basis of this judgment, especially where other reports or corroborating evidence exist. The article also examines the well-known report through which the authenticity of one of Sībawayhi's poetic citations was challenged, and points out that al-Mubarrad was the sole source for some of these critical reports, which calls for greater caution in accepting them. The study further addresses the issue of the reliability of transmitters, examining scholarly positions concerning transmitters of poetry such as Ḥammād al-Rāwīya, al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī, and al-Lāḥiq. It demonstrates that the evaluation of a report should be based on an examination of the transmitter's reliability and on the totality of scholarly judgments concerning him, rather than on a single report or isolated criticism. It also emphasizes that the existence of a weak or fabricated report attributed to a particular transmitter does not necessarily entail the rejection of all his transmissions. The article stresses the importance of distinguishing between the authenticity of a poetic citation and the validity of the grammatical argument derived from it. A citation may be authentic while scholars nevertheless disagree about its grammatical interpretation or about the manner in which it is used as evidence. Moreover, the existence of multiple

independent citations supporting a particular linguistic phenomenon strengthens the evidentiary basis for that phenomenon and makes the rejection of a single citation insufficient to undermine the grammatical rule itself. One of the important issues discussed in the article is the possibility of methodological circularity when a grammarian establishes a rule in advance and subsequently rejects a citation because it conflicts with that rule, although the rule itself is supposed to have been derived from linguistic evidence. The article therefore calls for returning to the transmitted linguistic material and examining the speech of the Arabs and its evidence before formulating grammatical rules, rather than treating the established rule as the sole criterion for accepting or rejecting a citation. The article concludes that a balanced scholarly methodology requires neither indiscriminate acceptance of poetic citations nor haste in declaring them fabricated. Judgment concerning a citation should be based on a combination of criteria, including the authenticity of its transmission, the reliability of its transmitter, the multiplicity of transmission routes, its conformity with Arabic usage, its compatibility with the period to which it is attributed, and the existence of corroborating evidence. The study thus emphasizes that the study of the grammatical heritage requires both criticism of transmission and criticism of grammatical rules, without giving absolute precedence to either one.

**Keywords:** Poetic Evidence; Grammatical Argumentation; Fabrication in Poetry; Arabic Grammar; Transmission of Poetry; Criticism of Transmission; Transmitters; Grammatical Rule; Samāʿ; Analogy; Methodology of the Grammarians.

## **Introduction:**

No branch of knowledge, as far as we know, has remained free from the fabrication of fabricators, the deception of deceivers, and the falsification of facts by those acting with ulterior motives. The sciences of language and grammar are no exception to this phenomenon. In particular, this field was affected by the insertion of material that did not genuinely belong to the Arabic language, especially with regard to the transmission of poetry from the Arabs. Ibn Fāris (d. 395 AH) said: «ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm narrated to us from al-Maʿdānī, from his father, from Maʿrūf ibn Ḥassān, from al-Layth (d. c. 175 AH), from al-Khalīl (d. 170 AH?) who said: Indeed, the eminent grammarians would sometimes introduce into people's knowledge what was not part of the speech of the Arabs, with the intention of causing confusion and difficulty». Ibn Sallām (d. 231 AH) said in his *Ṭabaqāt*: «..There is much fabricated, contrived, and forged poetry in which there is no good, and which cannot serve as evidence for Arabic..». Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322 AH) said: «In former times, the transmitters differed concerning it -that is, poetry- they would add to it and omit from it, and attribute to a poet poetry that was not his, because of their command of the language, their mastery of the

speech of the Arabs, their knowledge of the poets' ways, and the proximity of that period to their own days, as well as the similarity of their natural dispositions».

Nevertheless, God raised eminent scholars who served as guardians of the Arabic language and exerted themselves in scrutinizing the narrations, criticizing the forged material in distinction from the authentic, and separating the worthless from the sound. The impact of their efforts is evident in their works. Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH) reported a statement by al-Qālī (d. 356 AH), who said: «Abū 'Alī al-Qālī said in his *Amālī*: Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Abī al-Azhar (d. 325 AH) narrated to us; al-Zubayr [ibn Bakkār] (d. 256 AH) narrated to us; Muḥammad ibn Sallām al-Jumāḥī narrated to us; he said: Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān (d. 198 AH) narrated to me. He said: The transmitters of poetry are more discerning than the transmitters of ḥadīth, because the transmitters of ḥadīth transmit a great deal of fabricated material, whereas the transmitters of poetry, when they hear fabricated poetry, criticize it and say: This is fabricated».

The transmitters of poetry referred to here were themselves the leading authorities of Arabic. They exerted themselves in scrutiny and critical examination, and established foundations and criteria for distinguishing everything that was forged, fabricated, or falsely attributed. The most important of these may be summarized as follows:

#### **A. Warning Against Taking Material from Written Sheets:**

The leading authorities did not regard as reliable the knowledge of one who acquired his learning merely from written sheets, nor did they rely on his transmission or recitation, because of the possibility that fabricated and forged material might have been inserted into what had been written down, and because such a method deprived the learner of the opportunity for direct oral transmission and face-to-face learning, whether from a teacher or from an eloquent speaker whose command of Arabic was trusted.

It appears that Ibn Sallām al-Jumāḥī was among the earliest scholars to formulate this idea in a precise and systematic manner. He said: «..There is much fabricated, contrived, and forged poetry in which there is no good, and which cannot serve as evidence for Arabic.. Some people transmitted it from one book to another.. Yet if the people of knowledge and sound transmission have unanimously judged something from it to be invalid, no one may accept it from a written sheet, nor may it be transmitted from a person who relies upon written sheets».

An example of material inserted into the diwans of poetry is the report cited by Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322 AH), who said: «It was narrated that Bilāl ibn Abī Burda (d. c. 126 AH) asked Ḥammād al-Rāwīya (d. 155 AH) to recite [a poem]. He recited to him the poem attributed to al-Ḥuṭay'a (d. c. 45 AH) in praise of his grandfather, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (d. 44 AH?). When he reached the following line:

[The Arabic source contains the verse here; the text extraction does not preserve the verse itself clearly enough to reproduce it accurately.]

Bilāl said to him: Who composed it? He replied: Al-Ḥuṭay'a. Bilāl said: Woe to you! Al-Ḥuṭay'a praises Abū Mūsā with poetry that I do not know, while I am the transmitter of al-Ḥuṭay'a's poetry?! Nevertheless, let it circulate among the people». Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī said: «This poetry, and the like of it, even if it was falsely attributed to him, was nevertheless attributed to him, recorded among his poetry, and transmitted as part of his poetry because it resembled that style and was comparable to his poetry».

Whether or not this particular report is authentic, the occurrence of such cases in the Arabic heritage is something about which there can be little disagreement.

### **B. The Presence or Absence of Parallels in the Speech of the Arabs:**

The leading authorities also employed this scientific criterion to distinguish what was authentic from what was forged. An example is what Ibn Durayd (d. 321 AH) mentioned in *al-Jamhara*, where he said: «..As for *fa'lil*, it occurs only in *narjis*, which is a Persian word arabicized. The grammarians have mentioned it among the morphological patterns, but it has no parallel in Arabic speech. Thus, if you encounter a form on the pattern *fa'lil* in ancient poetry, reject it, for it is fabricated. If a later speaker constructs this pattern and uses it in poetry or speech, rejection is more appropriate».

We shall see below that some eminent scholars proceeded to reject certain pieces of evidence on the assumption that they were fabricated, yet their position was challenged by citing parallels for those forms in the speech of the Arabs.

An exception to this criterion is represented by those whose eloquence had already been firmly established, such as al-'Ajjāj (d. c. 90 AH), Ru'ba (d. 145 AH), and Ibn Aḥmar (d. c. 65 AH). Such poets might occasionally employ expressions for which there were no parallels in the speech of the

Arabs; nevertheless, their speech was considered reliable and could be used as evidence. Ibn Jinnī (d. 392 AH) said: «..When a Bedouin's eloquence becomes firmly established and his natural disposition rises to a high level, he acts spontaneously and coins expressions that no one before him had used».

### **C. Resorting to Pure-Blooded Bedouin Arabs:**

The leading authorities made knowledge possessed by pure-blooded Bedouin Arabs concerning whether a given poem belonged to the authentic poetic tradition or not a scientific criterion for distinguishing genuine poetry from fabricated poetry. This was because such Arabs were familiar with the poetic conventions of the Arabs and with the established patterns of their speech.

An example of this is the report cited by al-Suyūṭī, who said: «Abū ‘Ubayda (d. 209 AH) recited in his book *Ayyām al-‘Arab* a poem attributed to Hind, daughter of al-Nu‘mān (d. 74 AH?):

[The poetic passage follows in the Arabic article; the source text available here does not preserve all of its verses reliably enough for an exact English rendering.]

Abū ‘Ubayda then said: It is fabricated. Abū Burda, Abū al-Za‘rā’, Abū Firās, Abū Surayra, and al-Aghṭash did not know it. I asked them about it two years before the departure of Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abd Allāh [ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib] (d. 145 AH), and they knew nothing of it. Moreover, it is a counter-poem taken from Ḥammād al-Rāwīya».

It is worth noting that Abū ‘Ubayda's consultation of a considerable number of Bedouins strengthened the judgment he reached. If one of them happened to be unaware of the poem while another knew it, that would be conceivable; but it is highly unlikely that all of them would be unaware of it -or all of them would know it- by mere coincidence. The passage also points to another methodological principle: refraining from relying upon or transmitting material from *akhbārīs* and storytellers, foremost among whom was Ḥammād al-Rāwīya (d. 155 AH), of whom it was said: «Some of them were among those who fabricated poems and reports, added to them, or attributed them to someone other than their actual author».

Ibn Sallām (d. 231 AH) said: «There is much fabricated, contrived, and forged poetry in which there is no good, and which cannot serve as evidence for Arabic.. Some people transmitted it from one book to another; they did not take it from the people of the desert, and they did not submit it to the scholars».

The statement of Ibn Sallām, «they did not submit it to the scholars», includes every scholar possessing knowledge of poetry, such as the leading authorities, the pure-blooded Bedouins, and the elders of the tribes. Ibn Sallām said elsewhere: «Poetry has a craft and a culture known to the people of learning, just as all other branches of knowledge and crafts have their specialists. (...) Frequent study enhances one's mastery of knowledge; likewise, poetry is known by those who possess knowledge of it. Khallād ibn Yazīd al-Bāhilī (d. 220 AH) said to Khalaf ibn Ḥayyān Abū Muḥriz (d. c. 180 AH) -and Khallād possessed extensive knowledge of poetry, transmitting and reciting it-: By what do you reject these poems that are being transmitted? He replied: Is there among them anything that you know to be fabricated and worthless? He said: Yes. He then asked: Do you know anyone among the people who is more knowledgeable about poetry than you? He replied: Yes. He said: Then do not deny that they may know more about it than you do».

#### **D. Criticism of the Content of a Narration in Light of Its Historical Period:**

Another important criterion to which a number of scholars drew attention -and which is a scientific criterion par excellence- is examining the content of a narration in relation to its historical period. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥājj Ṣāliḥ explained this principle by stating: «Examining the content of a poem necessitates comparing what the poet says with the period in which he lived. If he refers to something that did not occur until after his own time, this constitutes evidence that this poetry could not have existed except...».

Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 AH) provides an example of applying this criterion in *al-Ḥayawān*, where he discusses several examples of fabricated poetry. He states:...It cannot be accepted in such a case... and then proceeds to establish the impossibility of attributing such material to the period in which the alleged poet lived. Among the examples he discusses is a poem attributed to Bishr ibn Abi Khazim, in which expressions occur concerning the movement of celestial bodies and meteors. The critics observed that such descriptions did not accord with the beliefs and terminology of the period to which the poem was attributed. The narration consequently becomes suspect on chronological grounds. Thus, the chronological incompatibility of the content with the period of the alleged poet constitutes another strong indication that the poem is fabricated. The argument is methodological in nature: if a text contains an idea, description, or terminology that demonstrably belongs to a later period, the attribution of that text to an earlier poet cannot be accepted without compelling evidence.

It is evident that these criteria, among others, constitute a highly systematic critical methodology adopted by the leading scholars in the Arabic linguistic tradition. Some scholars,

however, went beyond the appropriate limits of criticism, at times constructing grammatical rules on the basis of a single poem, and at other times declaring poetry fabricated merely because it conflicted with a particular scholarly position.

There is considerable detail to this issue, particularly concerning the evidence cited by Sībawayhi (d. 180 AH) in this field. Among the examples is the verse beginning:

«حَذِرْ أُمُورًا لَا تُخَافُ وَآمِنُ»

Al-Mubarrad (d. 286 AH) commented on it: «This is a fabricated verse, and the grammarian should not use this kind of evidence or anything similar to it». Al-Zajjājī (d. 337 AH) likewise transmitted a statement to the effect that the grammarians had judged the construction in question unacceptable in the speech of the Arabs.

The discussion then turns to the transmission of this verse through earlier authorities, including Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī (d. 215 AH), al-Akhfash (d. 215 AH), and others. The relevant report indicates that Sībawayhi himself had asked about a grammatical construction found in the verse and sought supporting evidence for it.

The narration is subsequently given with its chain of transmission. Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH) also cites this account, as does al-Jurjānī (d. 471 AH) in his *al-Muqtaṣad*. The latter reports: Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Jurjānī said: Abū Muḥammad told us: several of the companions of Ibn al-Sarrāj narrated to us from Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Sulaymān al-Akhfash (d. 315 AH), from Abū Bakr ibn al-Anbārī (d. 328 AH), from Abū ‘Amr al-Zāhid (d. 345 AH), from Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388 AH), from ‘Alī ibn Ja‘far al-Narṣī, from Muḥammad ibn Yazīd al-Mubarrad (d. 285 AH), who said: Sībawayhi asked me: Do you remember what al-Khalīl said? He said: I heard the Arabs say this verse:

[The verse is reproduced in the Arabic source, but the extracted text is corrupted; I therefore retain the quotation without reconstructing its wording.]».

The report then states that Sībawayhi used the verse as evidence for the grammatical construction under discussion.

The majority of grammarians, however, rejected this narration and the transmission attributed to al-Khalīl, offering a number of arguments in support of their position. These arguments include the following:

#### **A. The Reliability of Sībawayhi:**

Ibn ‘Uqayl (d. 769 AH) held that the correct position was the one adopted by Sībawayhi, namely that the construction was supported by analogy. He argued that Sībawayhi was a trustworthy authority and that he had transmitted the usage from some of the Arabs. Accordingly, there was no reason to reject his testimony.

Ibn al-Nāẓim (d. 686 AH) likewise maintained that the report attributed to Sībawayhi should be accepted because of his established reliability. He argued that Sībawayhi would not have attributed a linguistic usage to the Arabs without having heard it from them.

Al-Mubarrad, however, questioned the report and rejected the attribution, while other scholars maintained that the verse had indeed been transmitted through a reliable chain. The disagreement therefore concerns not merely the grammatical rule itself, but also the reliability of the report through which the linguistic evidence reached the grammarians.

#### **B. The Grammarians' Criticism of al-Lāḥiqi's Reliability:**

Another reason for rejecting the narration was the grammarians' criticism of the reliability and integrity of its transmitter. The convergence of their judgment concerning his fabrication of reports constituted, for them, a sufficient reason to reject his narration.

Ibn Maqqūla (d. 475 AH) reports that Sībawayhi had said that Abū Yaḥyā al-Lāḥiqi had claimed that the verse was used as evidence for the construction *fa ‘il*. Sībawayhi then questioned him concerning his source. The report portrays al-Lāḥiqi as a person of questionable reliability and suggests that someone who had already demonstrated dishonesty could not be trusted with the transmission of authentic linguistic evidence.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥājj Ṣāliḥ comments on this point, indicating that Ibn Sīda's statement supports the stronger interpretation: when a transmitter admits to having lied, this admission itself constitutes an important reason for questioning his subsequent reports.

The argument can therefore be summarized as follows: a narrator whose dishonesty has been established cannot be relied upon for linguistic testimony, particularly when that testimony is being used to establish a grammatical rule.

### **C. The Scholars' Testimony Concerning al-Lāḥiqi:**

The article then presents several statements by scholars who criticized al-Lāḥiqi's religious and personal reliability. Among those mentioned are al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 AH), Maṭī' ibn Iyās, Munqidh ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥimyarī, Ḥafṣ ibn Wardān, Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb, Ḥammād ibn 'Ajrād (d. c. 150 AH), 'Alī ibn al-Khalīl, and others. The accounts portray these figures as gathering for drinking and poetry recitation, and they attribute to al-Lāḥiqi conduct that led the scholars to question his religious commitment and reliability. Al-'Aynī (d. 855 AH) also records statements to this effect. For the sake of fairness, the article then notes that another tradition must also be taken into consideration. Khalaf ibn Khālif, in *al-Awrāq*, transmits material indicating that Abān al-Lāḥiqi was in fact a learned man, knowledgeable in jurisprudence and a memorizer of the Qur'ān. The report further records statements praising his religious devotion.

This conflicting testimony is important because it demonstrates that the judgment concerning a transmitter cannot necessarily be reduced to a single isolated report. Rather, the competing testimonies concerning his character and reliability must themselves be examined critically.

### **D. Disagreement over the identity of the person who fabricated the account is evidence of its spuriousness:**

Another indication of the weakness of the account is the disagreement over the name of the narrator or transmitter associated with the story. The article notes that the verse is also reported as having been transmitted by Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 142 AH), which raises doubts about the stability of the narration itself.

Ibn Mālik (d. 672 AH) regards this disagreement over the identification of the narrator as sufficient to undermine the story at its foundation. He argues that it is unlikely that Sībawayhi would have relied upon such a witness in establishing a grammatical rule. Consequently, the occurrence of a discrepancy in the attribution of the verse constitutes a further reason for questioning its authenticity.

The same general point is reinforced by later scholars, who suggest that the claim that the verse was fabricated may itself have arisen from hostility or envy toward the person to whom it was attributed. Thus, the issue is not simply whether the verse is genuine or fabricated, but also who fabricated it, why it was fabricated, and why it came to be attributed to a particular authority.

The fact that the narration has an apparently connected chain does not, however, necessarily establish its authenticity. There is also evidence that Sībawayhi did not transmit the report directly, but rather received it through a trustworthy intermediary.

Ibn Bābshādh (d. 469 AH) offers an interpretation of the wording found in the account. He suggests that the statement attributed to Sībawayhi «I placed this verse as evidence» may not mean that Sībawayhi himself regarded the verse as an authentic piece of ancient Arabic poetry. Rather, it could have been intended in another sense. The article nevertheless considers such an interpretation remote and argues that the transmission of the story itself is preferable to an unnecessarily far-fetched interpretation.

#### **E. The Reliability of al-Mubarrad as a Source for the Story:**

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥājj Ṣāliḥ draws attention to an important point concerning the account: the strongest evidence against its authenticity is that al-Mubarrad (d. 285 AH) is the sole source through whom the story is transmitted. He says, in substance, that al-Mubarrad himself was the only person from whom this story was known, and that the account had not been heard from any other scholar.

Accordingly, if al-Mubarrad is the sole source of a story whose purpose is to discredit Sībawayhi's testimony, there is a methodological reason to exercise caution. The article emphasizes that the existence of a continuous chain of transmission does not, by itself, resolve the problem when the entire account ultimately rests upon a single source.

The author compares this with another report preserved in *Majālis al-ʿUlamāʾ*, in which Abū Muḥammad al-Yazīdī (d. 202 AH) recounts a similar incident involving al-Mahdī (d. 169 AH). The parallel is presented as an indication of the circulation of such reports among scholars and of the need to examine carefully the manner in which they were transmitted.

#### **F. The Methodological Principle Involved in the Narration:**

A significant methodological observation follows from the wording of the report. The expression attributed to Sībawayhi «Sībawayhi asked me about...» does not accord well with the normal procedure of the leading grammarians in establishing grammatical rules. Their practice was not simply to formulate a rule first and then search for a poetic witness to support it. Rather, they examined transmitted evidence and, from it, established or confirmed grammatical principles.

This is a crucial point in evaluating the account. If Sībawayhi had already formulated a grammatical rule and then deliberately sought a verse merely to validate it, the narration would depict his method in a way that conflicts with the broader methodological practice attributed to the early grammarians. The article therefore treats this feature as another reason for doubting the story's authenticity.

### **G. Analogy as Supporting Evidence:**

The grammatical rule in question was not dependent upon this single poetic witness. Other evidence and analogy supported the same grammatical conclusion. Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436 AH) notes that the existence of a grammatical analogy means that the disputed poetic witness does not carry the entire burden of proof.

The presence of other witnesses in the same grammatical chapter is even more significant. If the rule is independently supported by additional examples, the rejection of one particular verse does not invalidate the grammatical principle itself. Rather, it merely removes one piece of evidence from a larger body of evidence.

Al-Shāṭibī (d. 790 AH) explicitly points to this fact. He states that the expression under discussion is transmitted from Sībawayhi through a reliable chain, and that it is also reported from authorities such as al-Akhfash (d. 215 AH), Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb (d. 182 AH), al-Khalīl (d. 170 AH?), Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī (d. 215 AH), and others. Consequently, the existence of independent transmissions strengthens the evidence and makes it difficult to dismiss the grammatical usage solely because of doubts concerning one particular narration.

### **H. Additional Poetic Evidence:**

The article further cites additional examples of poetic usage that support the grammatical interpretation. Among these is a verse attributed to Zayd al-Khayl (d. 9 AH), transmitted through a

trustworthy chain. Sībawayhi also employs another poetic example in the same grammatical discussion.

The author therefore argues that the question should not be reduced to the authenticity or fabrication of one isolated verse. The broader body of poetic evidence must be taken into consideration before a grammatical judgment is made.

### **The Problem of Excessive Criticism of the *Kitāb*:**

The article then turns to the broader phenomenon of excessive criticism of the poetic witnesses cited by Sībawayhi (d. 180 AH) in his *Kitāb*. One of the most prominent figures who attempted to challenge some of these witnesses was al-Mubarrad (d. 285 AH), whose criticism was subsequently followed or reinforced by his student al-Akhfash (d. 215 AH).

The author suggests that many of al-Mubarrad's objections amount to excessive scrutiny rather than decisive refutation. This tendency is illustrated by examples discussed by Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī (d. 745 AH), who records cases in which an attempt was made to reject a grammatical construction despite evidence for its occurrence among Arab tribes.

The article also cites Ibn Durayd (d. 321 AH), who discusses a verse and the linguistic usage found in it, as well as a number of other poetic examples used by the grammarians. These examples demonstrate that a construction regarded by one scholar as irregular or unacceptable could nevertheless be supported by transmitted evidence from Arabic poetry.

The conclusion emerging from this discussion is that the mere fact that a poetic witness conflicts with a grammarian's preferred rule is not sufficient grounds for declaring the witness fabricated. Such a judgment requires stronger evidence: examination of the chain of transmission, the reliability of its transmitters, the linguistic form of the testimony, its conformity with established Arabic usage, and the existence -or absence- of parallel evidence.

The article then gives further examples of what it regards as excessive criticism of the evidence in Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*, including verses transmitted by al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ (d. 215 AH) and others. These examples are intended to demonstrate that some objections to poetic evidence arose from grammatical interpretation rather than from conclusive evidence of fabrication.

Finally, the discussion records another transmission of the same poetic verse through Abū al-Ḥasan al-Akhfash and other authorities. The variation in its wording and transmission is itself treated as material requiring critical examination rather than as automatic proof that the verse is fabricated.

The same passage is also transmitted in *al-Uṣūl fī al-Naḥw*, where Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mubarrad (d. 285 AH) relates that Abū ‘Uthmān al-Māzinī (d. 249 AH) heard this verse. Yūnus ibn Ḥabīb (d. 182 AH) likewise transmitted it and stated that he had heard it from al-Kirmānī in another context.

Such evidence cannot simply be rejected unless there is an explicit admission of fabrication or some other decisive proof of it. This is because the grammarians themselves established standards requiring that accusations of fabrication be supported by evidence, while at the same time maintaining their confidence in the integrity of the major authorities and in the principles they had adopted in dealing with Arabic.

Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (d. 170 AH?) stated, regarding the language of the Arabs, in substance, that they do not introduce something without precedent into their speech. Sībawayhi (d. 180 AH) likewise states that a newly introduced expression should not simply be attributed to the Arabs without evidence. These statements demonstrate the methodological caution exercised by the early grammarians when evaluating linguistic testimony.

Accordingly, we cannot accept the idea that the early grammarians simply invented grammatical rules and subsequently searched for poetic witnesses to support them. Rather, the evidence suggests the reverse: they relied upon transmitted linguistic evidence and then formulated their grammatical generalizations on its basis. Any claim that they proceeded otherwise requires proof.

### **The Possibility of Retracting an Earlier Judgment:**

The article further notes that al-Mubarrad's repeated criticism of Sībawayhi's positions may not represent his final view. There is an indication that, near the end of his life, he recognized the correctness of some positions against which he had previously objected. This is consistent with the scholarly principle that a researcher may revise an earlier judgment when subsequent evidence demonstrates that it was mistaken.

Ibn Jinnī (d. 392 AH) observes that it was common for scholars to follow the grammatical positions of Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mubarrad (d. 285 AH) in their criticism of Sībawayhi. He

reports, however, that Abū al-‘Abbās ibn al-Sarrāj (d. 316 AH) related a statement from al-Mubarrad in which he acknowledged that some matters he had previously regarded as erroneous were in fact correct.

Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH) also transmits from al-Akhfash (d. 215 AH) a statement indicating that what al-Mubarrad had regarded as an error might actually have been a position from which he later withdrew. The important methodological point here is that a later scholarly judgment cannot necessarily be inferred from an earlier objection if there is evidence that the scholar subsequently reconsidered his position.

### **Recognition of the Scholarly Value of Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*:**

The article then draws attention to Ibn al-Sarrāj's (d. 316 AH) remarks in the introduction to *al-Intiṣār*. He acknowledges the value of al-Mubarrad's criticisms but emphasizes that the *Kitāb* of Sībawayhi (d. 180 AH) possesses an exceptional scientific status.

Ibn al-Sarrāj states, essentially, that anyone who wishes to understand the science of Arabic cannot dispense with Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*. Its importance lies not merely in its linguistic material, but also in the author's profound knowledge of Arabic and his mastery of its structures.

This observation is particularly significant for the present discussion. It demonstrates that the authority of Sībawayhi's *Kitāb* was not based solely upon the individual poetic witnesses contained in it. Rather, the book represented a comprehensive body of linguistic knowledge accumulated through extensive engagement with the speech of the Arabs.

### **The Expressions Allegedly Containing Evidence of Fabrication:**

The article next examines several expressions occurring in the *Kitāb* that some scholars have interpreted as later additions or as material suggesting fabrication. Among these are passages introduced by phrases such as: «..وقال الآخر..» «..وقد جاء في الشعر..»

The author argues that the presence of such expressions does not, by itself, constitute evidence that the passages were fabricated.

Some of these passages contain linguistic constructions that appear stylistically different from the surrounding material. This has led certain scholars to suggest that they may have been additions

to the original text of the *Kitāb*. Yet the article stresses that such a conclusion requires stronger evidence than merely noticing a stylistic difference.

Al-Mubarrad (d. 285 AH), for example, opens the discussion of certain verses by saying that Sībawayhi transmitted them and then criticized their grammatical interpretation. However, the fact that al-Mubarrad disagreed with the interpretation does not establish that the verses themselves were fabricated.

The author therefore rejects the assumption that every disputed expression in the *Kitāb* must necessarily have been inserted by a later hand. Sībawayhi was known for his careful selection of poetic evidence, and the scholarly tradition generally recognized his precision in transmitting the authentic linguistic material.

Consequently, the mere association of certain expressions with passages that appear later, or the mere claim that they conflict with the views of al-Mubarrad, is insufficient to reject them. The burden of proof remains with the person making the accusation of fabrication.

#### **The Case of Ḥammād al-Rāwīya:**

The article then returns to the question of the transmitters of poetry, especially Ḥammād al-Rāwīya (d. 155 AH). The early authorities had serious reservations concerning his activity as a transmitter because of reports that he fabricated poems, altered existing poetry, and attributed material to poets who had not composed it.

Al-Aṣmaʿī (d. 216 AH), for example, transmits a report concerning the manner in which poetry was altered and attributed to earlier poets. The report emphasizes that a poem could be linguistically convincing while nevertheless being falsely attributed to a particular poet.

This distinction is essential: linguistic plausibility does not prove historical authenticity. A fabricated poem may perfectly imitate the language and style of an earlier period. Consequently, the grammarians' criticism of transmitters such as Ḥammād al-Rāwīya was not merely criticism of their linguistic competence, but also scrutiny of their reliability as transmitters.

The source continues by reporting a discussion concerning whether a transmitter who has been shown to have made mistakes in narration can still be trusted. The response emphasizes that deliberate

fabrication and ordinary error are not equivalent: a genuine mistake may be corrected, whereas material deliberately corrupted by a narrator cannot simply be restored to reliability.

The discussion then turns to the question of al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī (d. 168 AH?) and the extent to which his transmission of poetry may be relied upon. The text records a number of statements by the leading authorities concerning his knowledge, his mastery of poetry, and the reliability of his transmission.

Al-Akhfash (d. 215 AH) relates that al-Mufaḍḍal transmitted to him a number of poetic passages. Among these was a poem attributed to one of the early Arabs. Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī (d. 255 AH) was subsequently asked about the verses and rejected them, declaring them to be fabricated and stating that they were not attributable to al-Mufaḍḍal.

The author nevertheless points out that this isolated criticism should not lead to the rejection of al-Mufaḍḍal's entire body of transmission. Ibn Sallām al-Jumāḥī (d. 231 AH), for example, considered al-Mufaḍḍal among the reliable transmitters of poetry. He states that he was one of the most knowledgeable people of Baṣra concerning the poetry of the Arabs and their language.

Other authorities likewise praised him. Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī (d. 351 AH) described him as a highly reliable transmitter and noted his extensive knowledge of poetry. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463 AH) also regarded him as a knowledgeable and trustworthy transmitter. Ibn al-Anbārī (d. 577 AH) likewise reported that he was considered reliable by the scholars of Baṣra and that he had acquired his knowledge from the leading authorities of his time.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463 AH), al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH), and other scholars also record favorable judgments concerning al-Mufaḍḍal's scholarship and expertise in grammar, language, and poetry. These testimonies demonstrate that the general scholarly assessment of him was one of trustworthiness and extensive learning, even if individual reports attributed to him could still be subjected to criticism.

The article then cites Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 277 AH), who likewise reports testimony concerning the reliability of al-Mufaḍḍal's transmission. Later scholars, such as al-Ḥasan ibn Qāsim al-Murādī (d. 749 AH), also affirm the strength of his readings and transmissions.

The conclusion drawn from this evidence is important: the existence of an objection to one narration does not justify declaring the transmitter himself unreliable, especially when the overwhelming testimony of the leading authorities confirms his learning and integrity.

### **The Necessity of Examining Narrations Before Building Grammatical Judgments:**

The author consequently emphasizes that anyone dealing with Arabic linguistic evidence must carefully examine the transmitted reports before deriving grammatical conclusions from them. The researcher must distinguish between:

1. the authenticity of the narration itself;
2. the reliability of its transmitter;
3. the linguistic form of the reported material; and
4. the grammatical interpretation subsequently derived from it.

A weakness in one of these dimensions does not automatically invalidate all the others.

The article then introduces a famous story attributed to al-Mubarrad (d. 285 AH), preserved in *Nashwār al-Muḥāḍara*. The story concerns the expression *al-qaba'*, and the author explicitly describes the account as famous but fabricated.

According to the story, al-Mubarrad is said to have claimed that he had memorized the solution to every linguistic problem and that, whenever a difficult question arose, he would resort to his knowledge of the Arabic language and its breadth. He then presented a supposed linguistic problem involving a poetic verse and asked about the meaning of a particular expression.

The interlocutor allegedly asked whether the expression *qaba'* was known among the Arabs. The response attributed to the grammarian involved an interpretation based upon the structure and segmentation of the expression. The story concludes with an appeal to a supposed poetic witness.

The author rejects this report as invalid, arguing that the leading scholars unanimously regarded the person involved as upright and reliable and that such a story is inconsistent with what is known about his scholarly character.

Several authorities are then cited in support of this judgment. Ibn Abī Dāwūd states that the person concerned was not among those who deliberately fabricated material. Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī (d. 351 AH) likewise denies that there was anyone in his period -or after it- comparable to

him in linguistic knowledge. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463 AH) describes him as knowledgeable and reliable in narration.

Other later authorities likewise describe him as eloquent, trustworthy, knowledgeable in Arabic, and distinguished in the transmission of reports. Ibn ‘Aqīl (d. 769 AH) and other scholars praise his mastery of grammar and language, while al-Dhahabī (d. 748 AH) describes him as an eminent authority in Arabic.

**The methodological lesson is therefore clear:** a report that conflicts with the established scholarly assessment of a transmitter must itself be subjected to scrutiny. One should not accept an anecdote merely because it has been preserved in a later source; rather, the entire chain of transmission, the content of the report, and its compatibility with the established historical record must be examined before it is used as evidence in linguistic or grammatical research.

The same criterion is also illustrated by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 AH) in his *al-Ḥayawān*. He cites examples of poetry whose content reveals that it could not have originated in the period to which it is attributed. Among these is poetry containing a description of the movement of the donkey and the body of a celestial object. The transmitters claimed that the Arabs of the pre-Islamic period did not describe the movement of a donkey in terms of the “body of the star,” nor did they describe meteors as the phenomenon in question is described in the poem. Al-Jāḥiẓ therefore regarded this incompatibility between the poem's content and the knowledge or terminology of its alleged period as further evidence that the poem was fabricated.

There is no doubt that these criteria, and others like them, demonstrate the methodological maturity attained by the leading Arab scholars in their treatment of transmitted linguistic material. Nevertheless, some scholars opened the door to excessive criticism: at times they constructed grammatical rules on the basis of a single poetic witness, and at other times they declared a poetic witness fabricated merely because it contradicted a particular grammatical position. The issue requires further detail, especially with regard to the evidence cited by Sībawayhi (d. 180 AH) in this field.

Among the examples is the verse containing the form “ḥadhir”, which Sībawayhi used as evidence for the grammatical issue under discussion. Al-Mubarrad (d. 286 AH) rejected the verse, declaring it to be fabricated and stating that the grammarian should not use such a witness or anything

similar to it. Al-Zajjājī (d. 337 AH) likewise transmitted that the grammarians regarded the construction as unacceptable in the speech of the Arabs.

The report is nevertheless transmitted through a chain involving Abū ‘Uthmān al-Māzinī (d. 249 AH), Abū al-Ḥasan al-Akhfash (d. 215 AH), and others. It states that al-Akhfash asked Sībawayhi about the form “ḥadhir” and about a witness supporting its transitive usage. The report further attributes the verse to the transmission of al-Mufaḍḍal (d. 168 AH?).

Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH) also records the story with its chain of transmission. Al-Jurjānī (d. 471 AH) likewise transmits it through a number of authorities, ultimately reaching al-Mubarrad (d. 286 AH), who reports that Sībawayhi asked him whether he remembered the verse. He then states that he had heard it from the Arabs and had placed it as a witness for the grammatical construction.

### **Conclusion :**

After this presentation, it becomes clear that some of the statements made by certain scholars concerning the fabrication of poetic witnesses require reconsideration, particularly those in which the accusation of fabrication is made without sufficient evidence. The author argues that it is necessary to distinguish carefully between the fabricated witness itself and the grammatical interpretation subsequently based upon it.

The study also shows that a number of the poetic witnesses criticized by later scholars were not necessarily late inventions. Some of them were already present in the period of Sībawayhi (d. 180 AH) and occur in his *Kitāb*. Consequently, it is not methodologically sound to classify them as later fabrications merely because they are not found in some later collections or because a later grammarian regarded them as irregular.

The author further observes that there are numerous grammatical witnesses whose forms may initially appear unusual or inconsistent with the rules subsequently formulated by the grammarians. Nevertheless, their existence in transmitted Arabic requires the researcher to examine the evidence before dismissing them.

The central methodological problem, therefore, is that the rules should not be made the sole criterion by which the linguistic evidence is judged. Rather, the linguistic evidence itself must contribute to the formulation and verification of the rules. When a scholar rejects a witness simply because it does not conform to a previously established rule, there is a danger of circular reasoning:

the rule is used to reject the evidence, and the rejected evidence can then no longer be used to reconsider or refine the rule.

The author accordingly argues for a return to the actual linguistic sources and for examining the speech of the Arabs, especially the eloquent and pure Arabs, as well as the historical circumstances in which the witness arose. The researcher should first establish the linguistic material and then formulate the grammatical rules on its basis, not the reverse.

One of the important observations of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥājj Ṣāliḥ is that the existence of more than one independent witness for the same linguistic phenomenon strengthens its authenticity and reduces the possibility that the phenomenon arose from fabrication or arbitrary attribution. Conversely, the dependence upon a single isolated witness calls for greater caution and more extensive investigation.

### **General Result of the Study :**

The methodology of the early grammarians in dealing with linguistic testimony can therefore be summarized in several principles:

- They did not accept every transmitted poetic witness automatically.
- They examined the transmitters and their reliability.
- They compared a disputed witness with the speech of the Arabs and with parallel linguistic evidence.
- They considered the historical period of the poet and the compatibility of the content with that period.
- They consulted the Bedouin Arabs and specialists in eloquence and poetry.
- They distinguished between a genuine linguistic anomaly and a genuinely fabricated witness.
  - They recognized that the existence of multiple independent witnesses strengthens the reliability of a grammatical argument.
  - At the same time, the study criticizes the tendency of some later grammarians to declare witnesses fabricated merely because those witnesses conflicted with an already established grammatical rule.

Accordingly, the appropriate scholarly position is one of critical balance: neither every transmitted poetic witness should be accepted without examination, nor should every witness that conflicts with a grammatical rule be dismissed as fabricated. The proper procedure is to investigate

the transmission, the transmitter, the linguistic form, the historical context, and the existence of corroborating evidence before reaching a final judgment.

The article's final methodological point is particularly important for the study of Arabic grammar: the authority of a grammatical rule should ultimately rest upon the totality of authentic linguistic evidence, rather than upon the rejection of evidence that happens not to conform to the rule. This approach preserves the integrity of both the transmitted Arabic material and the grammatical system derived from it.

Thus, the study concludes that the Arab grammarians possessed substantial critical mechanisms for identifying fabricated narrations, but that some later judgments concerning fabrication themselves require critical reassessment. The distinction between authentic transmission, weak transmission, and fabricated material must remain fundamental to any scholarly investigation of grammatical evidence.

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