

IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY  
ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS INSTITUTE  
DEPARTMENT OF CIVILIZATION STUDIES

MASTER'S THESIS

**THE ISSUE OF THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE  
IN IBN JINNĪ'S AL-ḤAŞĀ'İŞ**

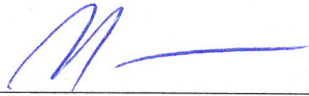
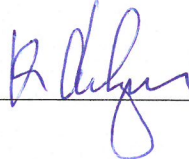
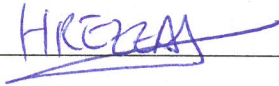
HATİCE SAK

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Tez Jürisi Üyeleri:

(Unvanı Adı ve Soyadı)	KANAATİ	İMZA
Dr. Öğr. Nagihan HALİLOĞLU (Tez Danışmanı)	<u>Kabul</u>	<u></u>
Prof. Dr. Alparslan AÇIKGENÇ	<u>Kabul</u>	<u></u>
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Heba Raouf EZZAT	<u>Kabul</u>	<u></u>

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# ABSTRACT

## THE ISSUE OF THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE IN IBN JINNĪ'S AL-ḤAŞĀ'İŞ

SAK, HATİCE

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The issue of the origin of language was meticulously studied by both theologians and scholars of language in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> centuries of Islamic civilization. Inasmuch that the issue was widely disputed in the theological discussions at the time. As a scholar of language, Ibn Jinnī tackles this issue in his book *al-Ḥaṣā'īş*, which has an important role in the disciplinization of the science of grammar in the Islamic scientific tradition. In modern literature, the issue of the origin of language has been studied in detail with regards to its importance for the field of theology; however, the wider implications of this issue in the field of philology have been largely glossed over. Similarly, there is a lack of an overall study of the philological implications of Ibn Jinnī's views of the origin of language in contemporary scholarship. The goal of this thesis is to fill this gap in the literature by presenting a comprehensive study of the topic. In other words, it aims at examining how his view of the origin of language serves as a theoretical basis for his general study of Arabic language and philology. To fulfil this aim, we looked for the answers to following questions: What is Ibn Jinnī's view of the origin of language? How much is Ibn Jinnī's account of the issue representative the wider discourse of his time? Where is Ibn Jinnī positioned among the existing sides of the theological discussions.

To address these questions, we conduct a close reading of the relevant a chapter in *al-Ḥaṣā'īş*, preceded by an account of the historical development of the Arabic grammatical tradition and of the wider discourse of the issue of the origin of language. Based on our textual analysis, I have found that Ibn Jinnī's text does not aim at joining the wider discussions of the origin of language in the field of theology; rather, he is interested in establishing a theoretical framework for his study of the language. We

may observe this in his discussions of the priority of nominals over verbs, of language change, and of sound symbolism in Arabic.

By focusing on the complex issue of the origin of language which has a theoretical place in the discipline of grammar in the Arabic literary tradition, we hope our study of Ibn Jinnī's text may, as a case study, benefit investigations of Arabic linguistics and philology from the perspective of the scientific approach of Islamic civilization.

Key words: Ibn Jinnī; origin of language; Arabic grammatical tradition; *al-Ḥaṣā'is*; foundations of grammar; *uṣūl al-naḥw*; language change; sound symbolism

## ÖZ

### İBN CİNNİ'NİN AL-ĤAŞĀ'İŞ'İNDE DİLİN KAYNAĞI MESELESİ

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4./10. yüzyıl İslam medeniyetinde, dilin kaynağı meselesinin hem dil alimleri hem de kelâm alimleri tarafından ciddi bir şekilde ele alındığı gözlemlenmektedir. Hatta o dönem kelâmî tartışmalarında bu mesele hakkında geniş fikir ayrılıklarına rastlamak mümkündür. Bir dilci olan İbn Cinni ise, İslam ilim geleneğinde nahiv ilminin müstakil bir disiplin haline gelmesinde önemli rolü bulunan kitabı *al-Ĥaşā'îş*'te bu meseleye yer vermiştir. Ancak dilin kaynağı meselesi, günümüz literatüründe kelâmî önemine nispeten detaylıca çalışılmış olsa da zamanının gramer ve dil çalışmalarına dair yaptırımları büyük ölçüde göz ardı edilmiştir. Aynı şekilde İbn Cinni'nin dilin kaynağına dair görüşlerinin onun gramer ve dile yaklaşımına etkisiyle ilgili ciddi bir çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Bu araştırmanın amacı, literatürdeki bu boşluğu kapsamlı bir çalışma sunarak doldurmaktır. Bir başka ifadeyle, İbn Cinni'nin dilin kaynağı meselesi hakkındaki görüşü Arap dil çalışmalarına nasıl nazari bir temel teşkil ettiğini incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Bu amacı yerine getirebilmek için şu temel soruların cevapları aranmıştır: İbn Cinni'nin dilin kaynağına dair görüşü nedir? İbn Cinni'nin bu meseleyi işleyişi zamanının gramer ve dil söylemlerini ne kadar yansıtır? İbn Cinni kelâmî tartışmaların mevcut tarafları arasında nerede konumlanmıştır?

Bu soruları cevaplayabilmek için Arapça gramer geleneğinin gelişimi ve geniş çerçevede dilin kaynağı meselesi söylemlerine dair tarihi öncüllerden bahsettikten sonra *al-Ĥaşā'îş*'deki ilgili bölümü yakın bir okumayla inceledik. Bu bölümde, İbn Cinni'nin dilinkaynağına dair kelam alanındaki tartışmalara katılmaktan çok, dil çalışmalarına nazari bir çerçeve inşa etmeyi amaçladığı sonucuna vardık. Bu sonucu

İbn Cinni'nin Arapça'da isimlerin fiillere önceliđi, dilde deđişme ve ses simgeciliđi bahislerinde gözlemlemekteyiz.

Arap edebiyat geleneđindeki nahiv ilmine nazari bir katkıda bulunan İbn Cinni'nin dilin kaynađı konusunu işlediđi bu metni analiz ederek, İslam medeniyetinin bilimsel yaklaşım bakış açısına göre dil meselelerinin incelenmesine bir örnek çalışma teşkil etmesini ummaktayız.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İbn Cinni; dilin kaynađı; Arapça gramer geleneđi; *al-Haşā'iş*; *uşūl al-naħw*; dilde deđişim; ses simgeciliđi

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## INTRODUCTION

The origin of language was widely debated among Muslim philologists, theologians and legal theorists alike in the ninth- and tenth-century Arabic literary tradition. The issue was located at a critical point in the midst of all these disciplines. For grammarians, in accordance with the nature of their epistemology, the theory of the origin of language was founded upon their study of the language and it was designed to make sense of the linguistic data they were working with.

The issue was mainly controversial in the field of theology. It had direct ramifications for theological questions such as the Qur'an's status as God's uncreated Speech, or the ontological status of the Divine Names, which were matters of disagreement between the theological schools of the Mu'tazilites and the traditionalists (*Ahl al-Sunnah*).<sup>1</sup> Scholars from both sides of this tension developed hypotheses for the origin of language that mainly aimed to support their theological arguments. Traditionalists, including later Ash'arites, argued that the origin of language is divine revelation, i.e., that language was imparted to humans by God. This revelationalist view was used in support of their argument that the Qur'an is the uncreated speech of God. The terms used to designate this position are *tawqīf* (instruction), *wahy* (revelation) and *ilhām* (inspiration).<sup>2</sup> On the other side of the spectrum, most Mu'tazilites, who argued that the Qur'an was created speech of God and that the Divine Names were coined by humans, contended that language came into existence through human invention, and is established through mutual agreement about its usage, in other words through human convention.<sup>3</sup> They referred to this view by the terms *iṣtilāḥ* (agreement), *tawādu'* (mutual agreement) or *muwāda'a* (institution).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Abu l-Hasan al-Ash'ari departing from the Mu'tazilite school contributes to the traditionalist position with his arguments later on.

<sup>2</sup> L. Kopf, "Religious Influences on Medieval Arabic Philology." *Studia Islamica*, no. 5 (1956), 55-56. See chapter two of this thesis for an explanation of the nuanced distinctions in the respective terms' meanings.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> This dichotomy of the views around the origin of language can be clearly observed in Ibn Jinni's framing of the discussions as divine instruction, *tawqīf*, vs. human convention, *tawādu'*, (Abū l-Faṭḥ 'Uṭmān Ibn Jinni, *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, Ed. Muhammad Ali al-Najjar, Volumes I, Dar al-Huda li at-taba'a wa n-nashr, 1952, Beirut, 40) as well as in *al-Sāhibī* (Ebū'l-Hüseyin Ahmed b. Faris b. Zekeriyâ Ibn Fâris, *al-Sāhibī fi fikhu'l-luga ve sūneni'l-'Arab fi kelâmihâ*, Ed. 'Umar Faruq al-Tabba', Maktabat al-Ma'arif, Beirut, 1993, 6). The development of these views is documented meticulously by al-Suyuti (al-Suyūṭī,

Abū l-Faṭḥ ‘Uṭmān Ibn Jinnī (d.392/1002), a Mu'tazilite grammarian established in Baghdad, was among those who contemplated the origin of language. As an active grammarian at the end of the disciplinary stage of the science of grammar, Ibn Jinnī addresses this issue in his book *al-Ḥaṣā'is*,<sup>5</sup> which aims at presenting theoretical and methodological foundations for the study of Arabic grammar (*uṣūl al-naḥw* in Arabic).<sup>6</sup> The aim and scope of this book inspired us to read his chapter on the origin of language with regards to how it offers such a foundation for the general study of the Arabic language and grammar.

The theories of the origin of language have been meticulously studied by 20th-century scholars, mostly in relation to the dynamics that governed it in the field of theology. However, the wider implications of these theories in the field of philology have been mainly glossed over.<sup>7</sup> By the same token, the philological implications of Ibn Jinnī's theory of the origin of language in specific has only been only partially addressed in contemporary scholarship. One of the goals of this thesis is to address this gap in the literature.

This investigation aims to answer the following questions: (1) How adequate a presentation does Ibn Jinnī's text give concerning the wider discussions on the topic in his era? (2) What are Ibn Jinnī's views of the origin of language? (3) How does he synthesize the different positions of his time?<sup>8</sup> And, most critically, (4) How do Ibn Jinnī's views on the origin of language serve as a theoretical or methodological foundation for his study of grammar? To tackle these questions, we will analyze Ibn

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Jalāl-ad-Dīn. *al-Muzhir fī 'ulūm al-luġa wa-anwā'ihā*. Edited by Muḥammad Aḥmad Jār-al-Maulā Bak, 'Alī Muḥammad Bajāwī, and Muḥammad Abu-'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm., Manshurāt al-Maktaba al-'asriyya, Beirut, 1986, 7-30). Also see. Kopf, "Religious Influences on Medieval Arabic Philology." *Studia Islamica*, no. 5, 1956, 55.)

<sup>5</sup> For this research the main edition of the book we have referred to is the version that is edited by Muhammad Ali al-Najjar. The editor's introduction and footnotes has been vitally helpful in my research. (Abū l-Faṭḥ 'Uṭmān Ibn Jinnī, *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, Ed. Muhammad Ali al-Najjar, Volumes I, II, III, Dar al-Huda li at-taba'a wa n-nashr, 1952, Beirut).

<sup>6</sup>Baalbaki, "Arabic Linguistic Tradition I: Nahw and Sarf", *The Oxford Handbook of Arabic Linguistics*, Ed. Jonathan Owens, Oxford Handbook Series, Oxford Handbooks in Linguistics, Oxford University Press, New York, 2013, 104. This is a definition Baalbaki offers for the science of *uṣūl al-naḥw*, literally translated as "foundations of grammar" which Ibn Jinnī's introduction identifies as the book's scope (*al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 1-2).

<sup>7</sup> Shah, "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the Tawqīf-iṣṭilāḥ Antithesis and the Majāz Controversy — Part I", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), 28.

<sup>8</sup> The positions with regards to the origin of language in the 10th-century Arab world was basically the proponents of the idea of divine origin of language and the proponents of the idea of human origin of language. This will be elaborated in chapter two.

Jinnī's chapter on the origin of language in *al-Ḥaṣā'is* and refer to related chapters in the book as needed.

Analyzing Ibn Jinnī's account of the origin of language through a lens that focuses on its implications in Arabic grammar may provide a new understanding of the framework of the discipline of grammar in the tenth century and draw attention to its universalist character. It also highlights the multidisciplinary nature of grammar in the tenth century. I believe Ibn Jinnī's chapter in *al-Ḥaṣā'is* on the issue of the origin of language, with its universalistic character, can open profitable venues for contemporary cross-linguistic research into the origin of language.

To answer our questions, this thesis will implement multiple research methods. Firstly we will follow the method of textual analysis to examine how the author makes sense of the concept of the origin of language.<sup>9</sup> This analysis cannot be limited to the translation and explanation of the text independent from its intertextual and extratextual surroundings: The former includes his wider body of work, the general historical background, and the nature of the discourse on the origin of language at the time; the latter is comprised of other works that are written on this topic. Our emphasis of the historical framework of the text is in accord with New Historicism's theory of literary analysis, which believes that a literary product both shapes history and is shaped by it, making it necessary to study the culture and historical context in which the literary text was produced, and of the influence of the literary text on the subsequent history of the literature.<sup>10</sup> My analysis will address both the intertextual and extratextual areas in relation to the text to have a deeper understanding of it.

As studying Ibn Jinnī's origin of language theory may fall under the philosophy of language and the history of linguistics, this thesis will approach the question's historical aspects from the framework of the scientific traditions of civilizations also called "the perspective of the scientific approach".<sup>11</sup> The text belongs to a certain stage of the discipline of linguistics or philology in Islamic civilization and its role with regards to certain stages of the discipline, determines the nature of its impact in the

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<sup>9</sup> For textual analysis see Alan Mckee, "Textual Analysis: A Beginner's Guide", Sage Publications, London, 2003, 1-34.

<sup>10</sup> Celene Kusch, *Literary analysis: the basics*, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 55.

<sup>11</sup> Alparslan Açıkgenç, "The Relationship between Language, Epistemology and Science: How to Preserve our Scientific Language?" *Tafhim: IKIM Journal of Islam and the Contemporary World* 12 No. 1 (June 2019), 2.

field of philology. Hence, the perspective of the scientific approach will be our main guideline for conceptualizing the given text within the scientific stages of the civilization that it is a product of.<sup>12</sup> In this way we approach the topic from a civilizational point of view.

Although the discipline of philology in Arabic literary tradition was custom-tailored for the Arabic language, in many ways it has merits of universality. As Yasir Suleiman argues, “[Arabic grammar] is neither a universalist nor a restricted linguistic model, but rather a language-specific model which predominantly adheres to a ‘realist’ view of human language.”<sup>13</sup> according to which, the grammarian comes up with a true theory or description for a given phenomenon that explains the essences or *realities* that underlie the observable data.<sup>14</sup> However he suggests that the Arabic linguistic tradition contains indications of universalism in its triumphalist extension of Arabic grammatical principles to other languages.<sup>15</sup> In the same way, Ibn Jinnī’s grammatical approach in general, and his account of the origin of the language in particular, implies universalism in various ways and although its implications on the study of language are language-specific, they are realist in a way that could be used to apply to other languages. Hence, we believe the civilizational approach based on the scientific traditions helps elevate the study of the text to a level where it may serve as an intermediary for the introduction of the text to the contemporary discipline of philosophy of language, and linguistics.

Another method we have used in this research is the translation of the related sections in *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, which constitute our text.<sup>16</sup> Although there are partial translations for the main text inside *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, this research relied on the study of the text in its original language, and as our analysis progressed we felt the need to make our own translation. Translation is a very important part of analyzing the text because translating in and of itself requires analysis. Making sense of a text that was written in a different language

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<sup>12</sup> Our main guidelines for this approach are Açıkgenç’s classifications and periodizations in his study of Islamic Scientific Tradition.

<sup>13</sup> M.Y.I.H. Suleiman, "On the Underlying Foundations of Arabic Grammar: A Preliminary Investigation." *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 16, no. 2 (1989), 176.

<sup>14</sup> Yasir Suleiman, “Ideology, Grammar-Making and the Standardization of Arabic”, *In the shadow of Arabic the centrality of language to Arabic culture: Studies presented to Ramzi Baalbaki on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday*, (Ed. Bilal Orfali, Brill, Leiden, 2011), 12-13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>16</sup> Translation of any text in this thesis has been done by me unless stated otherwise. Any contributions I received from third parties will be indicated in footnotes.

ten centuries ago, understanding the tensions or controversies related to it, requires familiarization with extratextual and intertextual elements. Therefore, translation in this thesis serves as a methodology of its own, for it involves a great deal of interpretation, and finding correspondences.

I follow a functional approach in my translation of the text into English. I believe any other approach would equally risk loyalty to the originality of the text, therefore I prefer to adopt a functionalist approach which prioritizes conveying the meaning over the form,<sup>17</sup> and serves better to mirror the authors' ideas, for the general purpose of this thesis. I have included the key concepts in Arabic within parentheses in the translated sections and offered commentary and explanations to the usage of certain words and concepts in the text as needed.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, we will briefly give a background to the state of Islamic civilization in the tenth century with a focus on the discipline of grammar as a science within the Islamic scientific tradition. We will then focus on Ibn Jinnī: his life, education, and place in the Arabic literary tradition. Lastly, we will introduce *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, and provide the background for this thesis' research questions. This chapter mainly constitutes the intertextual body of our research.

In the second chapter, we will address the issue of the origin of language within the wider theological discourse of the time, and then introduce relevant terminology from Ibn Jinnī for our discussion. We briefly examine trends in theology pertaining to the origin of language before summarizing the discussions on the origin of language in the fourth/tenth century, its precedents and implications in the disciplines of linguistics and theology. Our analysis of the text shows that Ibn Jinnī's account of the issue of the origin of language is neither dependent on nor isolated from the related discourses in the field of theology. In this section we provide background information on the history and theological precedents of the development of the discussions on the origin of language in Arabic literary tradition, to help us position Ibn Jinnī and his text within the wider discourse of theology.

Early and modern scholars have differed concerning Ibn Jinnī's position on the origin of language. Some suggest he supported human convention, while others argue that he

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<sup>17</sup> Christine Nord, *Translating as a purposeful activity: Functionalist approaches explained*, Second Edition, (Routledge, New York, 2018), 112.

supported divine origin of language, and yet others suggest he adopted a non-committal position (*waqf*, lit. “stopping”) between what we might call the revelationalist and conventionalist views. Many historical and disciplinary tensions play into these speculations. I believe his position has two layers: On one level he is noncommittal in the sense that he chooses to isolate his work from any theological underpinnings; on another level he supports a unique revelationalizing view that he develops to accord his theory of language.

We begin the third chapter, with an analysis of Ibn Jinnī’s chapter in *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ* on the origin of language. In the text, Ibn Jinnī offers an account of both revelationalist and conventionalist arguments, presents his own opinions, and in the end confesses that he does not prefer one over the other. We understand his stance as theologically non-committal, in that he does not stake a position on the createdness of the Qur’an or the ontological status of the Divine Names. His conclusions on these matters then form the theoretical and methodological foundation for his studies of grammar.

Our analysis suggests Ibn Jinnī manages to detach himself from the theological entanglements while simultaneously providing his own unique synthesis of the origin of language that serves his philological endeavors. I believe that this synthesis is what underlies his theory of language. To test this hypothesis, in the last section of this chapter, I tackle the implications of Ibn Jinnī’s theory of the origin of language on his study of grammar. While the text we analyze is theoretically abstract, it nevertheless contains grammatical discussions that allow us to perceive the ways in which Ibn Jinnī’s theories, however rooted in theological questions of his age, also underlie his theory of grammar. These grammatical topics include: (1) the chronological priority of nominals, (2) the emergence of language from sounds in nature and consequent sound symbolism in (Arabic) language, and (3) the phenomenon of ongoing language change. By analyzing the metalinguistic implications of these arguments, we see that Ibn Jinnī’s theories of the origin of language significantly underwrite his system of grammatical thought.

## On Sources

To understand the text better, I have benefited from many other primary sources such as al-Suyuti's (d.911/1505) *Al-Muzhir* and *al-Iqtirāḥ fi uṣūl al-naḥw* and al-Ṭabarī's (d.311/923) commentary of the Qur'an, *Jām'u al-Bayān*.<sup>18</sup> *Al-Muzhir*, written five centuries after *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, is a work on the sciences of language whose first chapter serves as a literature review of the discussions of origin of language--juridical, theological, and philological--in the Arabic literary tradition up to the author's time. It also contains most of Ibn Jinnī's chapter on the topic. For this reason Shah notes that it is an important reference work for contemporary studies on this topic, opening a window for a researchers to get familiarized with different discourses among Ibn Jinnī's contemporaries and how the discussions developed after Ibn Jinnī.<sup>19</sup> Andrzej Chapkiewst has translated al-Suyuti's chapter on the origin of the language in his book *The Views of the Medieval Arab Philologist on Language and Its Origin in the Light of 'As-Suyuti's' Al-Muzhir*; he analyses the text and offers a very helpful study of the issue from al-Suyuti's account of it.<sup>20</sup>

One of the methodologies I use to analyze the text is comparative reading, where I compare a question or a concept Ibn Jinnī mentions, to what others--predecessors, contemporaries, or successors--who tackle the same issue say about it. For this I will often be referring to his contemporary Ibn Fāris, (d.1004) and his book *al-Sāhibī fi fiqh al-luga*, and also to al-Suyuti's account of the discussions in *al-Muzhir*.

I have also benefited from analysis of this text by 20th- and 21st-century scholars of the philosophy of language, history, and Arabic literature. I have been fortunate to have access to secondary sources which treat this text, sometimes in comparative analysis with similar works by other authors. I have benefited especially from the works of Henri Loucel, Bernard Weiss, Kees Versteegh, and Mustafa Shah, as well as many others that I will be referring to in my analysis.

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<sup>18</sup> al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muzhir* and *al-Iqtirāḥ fi uṣūl al-naḥw*, (Ed. Abdulkhakim 'Atayyah, Dar al-Beyrūtī, 2006) and Abu Ca'far Muhammad bin Cerir al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsir al-Ṭabarī: Jamī'ul-Bayan 'an te'wil aaya al-'Kur'an*, Ed. Abdullah bin Abd al-Muhsin al-Turki, Vol. I, Hijr li al-Ṭiba'a wa al-Naṣr wa al-tawzi' wa al-I'lān, Cairo, 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Shah, "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the Tawqīf-iṣtilāḥ Antithesis and the Majāz Controversy — Part I", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), 29.

<sup>20</sup> Andrzej Chapkiewicz, *The Views of the Medieval Arab Philologist on Language and Its Origin in the Light of 'As-Suyuti's' Al-Muzhir*, Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, Krakow, 1988.

In his series of articles published in 1963, titled "L'Origine du langage d'après les grammairiens arabes," Henri Loucel addresses the question of the origin of language for Arab grammarians. His second piece focuses on Ibn Jinnī's *al-Ḥaṣā'is* and Ibn Fâris' *al-Sâhibî* with a full translation of their chapters on the origin of language and some other related sections. Loucel's third article talks about Ibn Sida's (d.458/1066) treatment of the origin of language, which cites Ibn Jinnī generously and transmits the latter's chapter as a whole. Loucel then offers a glossary of post-5th-century scholarship on the topic. His fourth article he focuses on al-Suyuti's *al-Muzhir*. Loucel's second article has been especially very helpful for my research with its translation and commentary of the text.

Another scholar who sheds much light on the issue of the origin of language is Bernard George Weiss. His dissertation "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A Study of *Wad' al-Lughā* and Its Development" (1977) treats medieval discussions of the topic in regards to their place in the formation of the discipline of *wad'*, the linguistic premises, in Islamic sciences. His work highlights the theological influences and negates the influence of Greek thought on the historical development of the issue.

Ramazan Demir with his recent dissertation titled "Arap Dilbilimcilerine Göre Dillerin Kaynağı Meselesi" (The issue of the source of languages according to the Arab linguists), (2008) offers a wide-framed study of the origin of language in Arab literature. His work provides a very helpful literature review, and a classification of thinkers according to their arguments and disciplines. Although his focus is Arabic literature, his account of the history of discussions on the origin of language begins with pre-Islamic Greek thinkers and ends with contemporary opinions of both Arab thinkers and Western linguists.

Another Ph.D. thesis that focuses on Ibn Jinnī and his place in Arabic grammatical tradition is that of Mehmet Yavuz.<sup>21</sup> His work offers a background to the Arabic grammatical tradition, followed by thorough information about Ibn Jinnī's life, education, and works. Following a similar scheme with Muhammad Hasan Bakalla (1982),<sup>22</sup> he moves on to Ibn Jinnī's views regarding language and grammar: In so

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<sup>21</sup> Mehmet Yavuz, "İbn Cinni Hayatı ve Arap Gramerindeki Yeri", Doktora Tezi, İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Arap Dili ve Edebiyatı Bilim Dalı, İstanbul, 1996.

<sup>22</sup>Muḥammad Ḥasan Bakalla, *Ibn Jinnī, An Early Arab Muslim Phonetician: An Interpretive Study of His Life and Contribution to Linguistics*. London; Taipei: European Language Publications, 1982.

doing he mostly summarizes relevant chapters from *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, among them a summary of the chapter on the origin of language. Though Yavuz does not address the implications of Ibn Jinnī's theory of origin of language on the study of grammar, the detailed exploration of his views and sources for foundations of grammar, *uṣūl al-naḥw*, and the sources of foundations of grammar makes his dissertation a very helpful secondary source.

For general information about Ibn Jinnī's life, education, and works, useful secondary sources have included al-Najjar's introduction to *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, and Muhammad Hasan Bakillani's *Ibn Jinnī, An Early Arab Muslim Phonetician: An Interpretive Study of His Life and Contribution to Linguistics*. For historical framing of my research among the books I have benefited from Marshall Hodgson's *Venture of Islam I*, Alparslan Açıkgenç's *Islamic Scientific Tradition in History*, and Majid Fakhry's *A History of Islamic Philosophy*.

## CHAPTER ONE: IBN JINNĪ AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 1.1. Historical Background

The fourth/tenth century is a very productive period in the history of Islamic civilization in terms of literary and scientific advancement across various disciplines. Following a period of expansion from the Nile to Oxus and beyond, the early Abbasid period, or in Hodgson's periodization, "the high caliphal period (692-945)", marks the first period of Islamicate civilization.<sup>23</sup> He thus sums up the nature of the transition to Islamic civilization:

With the caliphal state established as an enduring political structure within whose framework the high-cultural life of the region was to be carried on, we come to the time when the Islamic impulse began to have at least a conditioning and limiting, at best a positively formative effect on all aspects of the Irano-Semitic cultural life. We enter the time of Islamicate civilization.<sup>24</sup>

The rich literary culture became so distinctive of the society that it almost defined the civilization: As Yunus Ali suggests, it would not be wrong to call Islamic civilization a "textual civilization".<sup>25</sup> However, Cooperson points out that in this time of the history, scholars did not just record the tradition, but constructed it "... in accordance with their own preoccupations and concerns."<sup>26</sup> This construction of tradition, in fact, is a characteristic of what Açıkgenç calls the disciplinary stage and the crystallization of names for the scientific traditions in the history of Islamic civilization.

In this literary production, we can see Braudel's description of a living civilization at work, that a living civilization is one that is able to export its way of thinking and living.<sup>27</sup> In fact, one of the reasons for the abundance of literary production in the Abbasid era was to make the Arab lore and Islamic tradition accessible to outsiders.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *Venture Of Islam, Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Volume One, The Classical Age of Islam, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1977), 96.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>25</sup> Mohamed M. Yunus Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics; Sunni Legal Theorists' Models of Textual Communication*, (Curzon Press, Richmond, Surrey, 2000), 6.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Cooperson, "The Abbasid "Golden Age": An Excavation", *Al-'Usur al-Wusta: The Journal of Middle East Medievalists* 25 (2017), 52.

<sup>27</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Volume I (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 763.

<sup>28</sup> Cooperson, "The Abbasid "Golden Age": An Excavation" (2017), 57.

Cooperson describes the state of this literary production as ‘dumbing-down’ of knowledge, and claims that “this dumbing-down made the tradition accessible not only to the *mawālī* but also to Arabs who had lost touch with their roots. In the long run, it also made the tradition accessible to later generations of readers, including us.”<sup>29</sup> Thanks to its content, aim and abundance, literature was one of the most powerful ways Islamic civilization at the time exported itself to the outside world.

Another factor that promoted this literary production, aside from the religious motivations and the political and economic prosperity, was the introduction of papermaking technology. In fact, Gutas points out that the introduction of paper was itself a result of the conquests, which according to one opinion, is transmitted to the Islamic world by Chinese prisoners in 751.<sup>30</sup> Cooperson highlights the important role of paper in the accumulation of knowledge at this stage of history, noting that paper not only facilitated an immediate preservation of memories but also made it possible to create an archive which preserved “the first systematic efforts to make the language, lore, and religion of the Arabs readable to outsiders--or even more likely, to bring those things into being, at least in the form we know them today.”<sup>31</sup>

All these factors played an important role in the emergence and development of the Islamic scientific tradition. In the next section we will focus on the historical background from the perspective of scientific tradition and we will try to frame our research within the perspective of scientific tradition of the Islamic civilization.

### 1.1.1. Discipline of Grammar in 4th/10th Century within the Timeline of Islamic Scientific Tradition

A scientific tradition mirrors the characteristics of the civilization in which it emerges, and essentially carries the worldview of the civilization it is a product of.<sup>32</sup> According to Açıkgenç, the Islamic scientific tradition, like the scientific tradition of any

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>30</sup> Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th Centuries)*, (Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, New York, 1999), 13.

<sup>31</sup> Cooperson, “The Abbasid ‘Golden Age’: An Excavation” (2017), 58.

<sup>32</sup> Alparslan Açıkgenç, “The Relationship between Language, Epistemology and Science: How to Preserve our Scientific Language?” *Tafhim: IKIM Journal of Islam and the Contemporary World* 12 No. 1 (June 2019), 2.

civilization, stemmed from a worldview which, in its own way, encouraged a scholarly pursuit of knowledge in the community. People with this worldview started acquiring and gathering knowledge at what he calls the “problematic stage”: As a result of this collection of knowledge they ended up with an “unorganized body of knowledge” which started gaining an order as the knowledge continued accumulating. The problematic stage was followed by the disciplinary stage which marked the emergence of disciplines, where the accumulated knowledge was organized and classified in accordance with different purposes.<sup>33</sup> The disciplinary stage for the Islamic scientific tradition, without clear-cut borders, corresponds to the eighth and ninth centuries in the history of Islamic civilization.<sup>34</sup>

Açıkgenç periodizes the second two fourth centuries of the Hijra, (corresponding to 750-950) as the “disciplinary stage and the rise of Islamic scientific tradition”. He analyses the progress of sciences in Islamic civilization starting from the “worldview stage” which emerged following the Revelation in the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, followed by the “stage of problems,” the disciplinary stage, and beyond.

One of the disciplines that clearly observed this order of scientific development was Arabic grammar, *naḥw*.<sup>35</sup> Ibn al-Anbārī defines grammar as “[the] science of norms, inferred from meticulous study of the language of the Arabs.”<sup>36</sup> Here, “the language of the Arabs” refer to a select variety of Arabic that was regarded as the pure and correct version of the language, *fuṣṣḥa*. This choice of a standard was based on the fact that this variation had “a recognized canon of texts, in the form of the pre-Islamic odea and later the text of the Qur’an”<sup>37</sup> which elevated this variant to a level that facilitated its recognition as the standard variant in the society.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Açıkgenç, *Islamic Scientific Tradition in History* (Penerbit IKIM, Kuala Lumpur, 2014), 195-197.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> It must be noted that the term *naḥw* which we will be translating as ‘grammar’ signified “all the scientific and philosophical studies on language studies.” (Ibid., 372).

<sup>36</sup> Troupeau, G., “Naḥw”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, (Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 12 June 2019), 1-2.

<sup>37</sup> Suleiman, “Ideology, Grammar-Making and the Standardization of Arabic”, (*In the shadow of Arabic the centrality of language to Arabic culture : Studies presented to Ramzi Baalbaki on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday*, Ed. Bilal Orfali, Brill, Leiden, 2011), 6.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Historically, Abu l-Aswad al-Du'ali is regarded as the founder of the discipline of Arabic grammar, who is also the first to write on grammar in the Arabic literary tradition.<sup>39</sup> According to Açıkgenç's framework of the scientific process, when Abu l-Aswad al-Du'ali composed a book on grammar upon the Caliph 'Ali's request (God ennoble his countenance), to address the mistakes in speech and the recitation of the Qur'an, he was representing a disciplinary tradition rather than establishing grammar, *naḥw*, as a science.<sup>40</sup> Hence Açıkgenç suggests that the beginning of the disciplinary stage for the science of grammar could be marked as the time of 'Ali's caliphate (656-661 AD).

From this time on, corpus collection from the sources of the language and the activities of grammar-making took off in the Arabic grammatical tradition. The individual grammarians came up with their theories that described the linguistic phenomena. For the discipline of Arabic grammar, just like any other science, the stage of problems was the time when data of language use were collected and analyzed, discussed, and explained. As we mentioned above, the Qur'an and the pre-Islamic poetry were considered to be a data for the language, however, they were not the only sources of data that served as a corpus.<sup>41</sup> From the seventh to the tenth century, the dialects of the Arab tribes of Central Arabia were also taken as a point of reference for grammarians, due to their geographical isolation which bestowed upon them linguistic purity.<sup>42</sup> For this reason lexicographers and grammarians traveled to these groups and spent time with them recording linguistic usages.

Knowledge of grammar was a prerequisite to understanding other sciences mainly because it was the key to understanding the sources of those sciences. For this reason, aside from the scholars whose main study focus was grammar and language, scholars of many different disciplines, from jurisprudence to theology and *hadith*, delved in questions of grammar and linguistics and authored books on them. Thus, does Ibn Khaldun explain the scope and necessary role of grammar in the religious sciences:

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<sup>39</sup> Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, (trans. Franz Rosenthal, Volume 3 1958), 322.

<sup>40</sup> Açıkgenç, citing Ibn Nadim, tells us that the book was presented as an "example" for Muslims to follow, which is synonymous with the word *naḥw*. For the lack of a copy of the book today, Açıkgenç points out that we cannot truly assess the content and contribution of the book to the science of grammar. (Açıkgenç, *Islamic Scientific Tradition in History* (2014), 372.)

<sup>41</sup> Suleiman, "Ideology, Grammar-Making and the Standardization of Arabic", (2011), 6.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

The pillars of the Arabic language are four: lexicography, grammar, syntax and style (bayan), and literature. Knowledge of them all is necessary for religious scholars since the source of all religious laws is the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which are in Arabic. Their transmitters, the men around Muhammad and the men of the second generation, were Arabs. Their difficulties are to be explained from the language they used. Thus, those who want to be religious scholars must know the sciences connected with the Arabic language.<sup>43</sup>

As we understand from the intermediary role of grammar in understanding the religion, we can say that the worldview that gave birth to the emergence of this discipline was driven by the need to understand the word of God and His Prophet ﷺ. Within the framework of this worldview, scholarly occupation with the grammar and language in the Islamic tradition was perceived as an act of worship.<sup>44</sup>

Arabic grammatical epistemology is informed also by the more general contemplative enquiry which Islam encourages. The Qur'an frequently calls on humans to examine and understand the visible universe and the nature of things: "There truly are signs in the creation of the heavens and earth, and in the alternation of night and day, for those with understanding" (3:190); "Who created the seven heavens, one above the other. You will not see any disparity in what the Lord of Mercy creates. Look again! Can you see any cracks? / Look again! And again! Your sight will turn back to you, weak and defeated" (67:3-4).<sup>45</sup> Moreover, seeking knowledge is itself considered an act of worship. In grammar the scientist analyses the universe of linguistic data and induces rulings from it while reflecting on the causes of the individual phenomena. Such contemplation of the linguistic data aims at unveiling the wisdom behind it; as we will see in Ibn Jinnī's case as well, his contemplation of linguistic phenomena is overtly motivated by the desire to understand the wisdom of the language's speakers.<sup>46</sup> The Muslim grammarian, through his study of the language, increases in astonishment in

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<sup>43</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, Volume 3 (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1958), 320.

<sup>44</sup> Yunus Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics; Sunni Legal Theorists' Models of Textual Communication*, (Curzon Press, Richmond, Surrey, 2000), 6.

<sup>45</sup> Açıkgenç, *Islamic Scientific Tradition in History* (Penerbit IKIM, Kuala Lumpur, 2014), 153-154.

<sup>46</sup> Suleiman, "Ideology, Grammar-Making and the Standardization of Arabic", (2011), 15-16. The causations of the grammar, what is called *'ilal*, addresses the nature of this quest for wisdom. There are two layers of *'ilal*, the first layer explains the grammatical reason behind a grammatical phenomenon, whereas the second layer tries to answer why this phenomenon manifests itself in the given way. This second layer pertains to unveiling the wisdom behind the given phenomenon (Ibid., 17).

the harmonious creation of God and the wisdom He granted to the speakers of the Arabic language.

Suleiman suggests that grammatical thinking in Arabic literary tradition was guided by a realist/essentialist epistemology, whose purpose is to come up with a true theory or description for a given universe or phenomena according to this epistemology, a theory fulfills its aim when it explains the essences or *realities* that underlie the observable facts.<sup>47</sup> This epistemology clearly reflects the scientific worldview which is shaped by the teachings of Islam that encourage knowledge acquisition through contemplation of the visible universe. As we pointed out above with the Qur'anic verses, the aim of this contemplation is to reflect on the existing phenomenon as a part of the divine creation, in an attempt to comprehend the wisdom behind it and to discover the inherent truth that explains it.<sup>48</sup> In this way, we can clearly see how the epistemology of the science of grammar can be realist in nature.

Returning to the historical development of the discipline, in the 2nd/8th century, the accumulation of knowledge in the discipline of grammar gave way to the emergence of two schools of thought in grammar, namely the Kufan and the Basran schools<sup>49</sup> which mirrored a similar polarization among the scholars of these cities in theology and law.<sup>50</sup> These two schools developed slightly different approaches in their understanding of Arabic grammar. Works of later scholars, including Ibn Jinnī himself, address these differences.<sup>51</sup> Ibn al-Anbārī's (d.577/1181) *al-Inṣāf* is a very useful source, which offers an analytical study of the topics of disagreements between the Basran and Kufan grammarians.<sup>52</sup> One of the main differences that is highlighted by contemporary scholars is the Kufans' adherence solely to the Qur'an and the speech

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<sup>47</sup> Suleiman, "Ideology, Grammar-Making and the Standardization of Arabic", (*In the shadow of Arabic the centrality of language to Arabic culture : Studies presented to Ramzi Baalbaki on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday*, Ed. Bilal Orfali, (Studies in Semitic languages and linguistics ; v. 63), Brill, Leiden, 2011), 12-13.

<sup>48</sup> Yasir Suleiman, "Autonomy versus Non-Autonomy in the Arabic Grammatical Tradition", (*Arabic Grammar and Linguistics*, Ed. Yasir Suleiman, Routledge, London and New York, 1999), 44.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 373, Versteegh points out to the likelihood that this distinction was artificially determined by later scholars. Cornelis Henricus Maria Versteegh, *Greek Elements in Arabic Linguistic Thinking*, (Leiden E.J., Brill, 1977), 108.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 65-6.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 109-110, *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, III, 282ff.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn al-Anbārī, Kamal al-Din Abu 'l-Barakat, *al-Insaf Fi masa'il al-khilaf bayn al-nahwiyyln al-Basriyyln wa'l-Kufiyyun*, ed. M. A. al-Hamid (2 vols., Cairo, Dar al-Fikr, n.d.).

of Arabs to support their opinions, whereas Basrans, in addition to these sources, relied on logic.<sup>53</sup>

Subsequently or perhaps simultaneously, there emerged a need to bring a methodology to these discussions and that is when the science *uṣūl al-naḥw* (foundations of grammar) appears in the history of the Arabic linguistic tradition.<sup>54</sup> With the development of *uṣūl* the science of grammar forms into a discipline of its own, differently from its previous perception as a tool for understanding other disciplines.<sup>55</sup>

Before Ibn al-Sarrāj (d.316/928), author of the book *al-Uṣūl fi l-Naḥw*, the work of the linguists was to collect and organize linguistic data related to Arabic grammar; with him, an effort emerged to offer an explanation of the causes and reasons for the content of the data.<sup>56</sup> Although Ibn al-Sarraḡ was the first to write a book on *uṣūl al-naḥw*, according to Çıkar, Ibn Jinnī is the real founder of *uṣūl al-naḥw*, for he is considered the first in the Arabic linguistic tradition to discuss the science of *uṣūl al-naḥw* in this sense.<sup>57</sup>

As we have pointed out, the emergence of *uṣūl al-naḥw* emphasized the disciplinary independence of grammar previously, grammar had been recognized as a mere tool to unlock other sciences rather than a science in its own right. Hence, across history, we face two different conceptions of the discipline of the Arabic grammar: one dependent, the other independent. Suleiman talks about what we may call grammar's "multilayered" nature in terms of the discipline's autonomy or non-autonomy.<sup>58</sup> The fact that grammar as a science has been recognized and functioned as a tool in other disciplines indicates its non-autonomy, whereas grammar as a science with its own ideology, purpose, methodology, and way of reasoning is complete and autonomous as an individual science.

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<sup>53</sup>Açıkgenç, *Islamic Scientific Tradition in History*, (Penerbit IKIM, Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM), Kuala Lumpur, 2014), 373. And Versteegh, *Greek Elements in Arabic Linguistic Thinking*, (Leiden E.J., Brill, 1977 ), 112.

<sup>54</sup> Mehmet Şirin Çıkar, "Kıyas: Bir Nahiv Usul İlmi Kaynağı", (Ahenk Yayınları, Van, 2007), 5.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 2, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Suleiman, "Autonomy versus Non-Autonomy in the Arabic Grammatical Tradition", (*Arabic Grammar and Linguistics*, Ed. Yasir Suleiman, Routledge, London and New York, 1999), 37-46.

## 1.2. Ibn Jinnī's Life, Education, and Works

Abū l-Faṭḥ ‘Uṭmān Ibn Jinnī al Mawsili,<sup>59</sup> mostly referred to as Ibn Jinnī, was a scholar of traditional upbringing, he was knowledgeable in many disciplines including jurisprudence, Quranic exegesis and *hadith*, however, the discipline of linguistics and grammar prevailed upon him,<sup>60</sup> and he gained fame for his contributions in this field in the Arabic literary tradition.

Yaqut al-Hamawī's (d.626/1229) *Mu'jam al-Udaba* is a reliable bibliographic work for Ibn Jinnī's life. He offers a long entry for the works and life of Ibn Jinnī.<sup>61</sup> We actually find an entry in Ibn al-Nadim's (d.380/990) *al-Fihrist*, rather small in size; however, the section is believed to have been written or completed afterward, by someone other than Ibn al-Nadim.

Ibn Jinnī was born in 330/942 in Mosul, his father was a slave of Sulayman bin Fahd bin Ahmad al-Ezdi. There is no definite information about where each of his parents was from, other than the report that his father was Greek, *Rumi*. Interestingly Bakalla cites a passage from Ibn Khair's (d. 575/1179) *al-Fihrist*, which points out to the possibility of Ibn Jinnī's father being a Byzantine Turk.<sup>62</sup> However, this opinion does not seem to carry much weight in the accounts of biographers.

Ibn Jinnī has two teachers he often cites in his works. Ahmad bin Muhammad al-Mawsili also known as al-Akhfash and cited by Ibn Jinnī as “Abu Hasan” in his works is his teacher from his birthplace, Mosul. However, we know that he lived a considerable part of his life in Baghdad in the company of his main teacher, the celebrated grammarian Abu Ali al-Farisi (d.377/987). According to Yaqut al-Hamawī,

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<sup>59</sup>Also among his titles are Imam al-‘Arabiyyah, Ibn Jinni al-Naḥwiyy (see. Shams’ad-din Muhammad al-Dahabi, *Sirat a’lam al-Nubala*, Vol. 17., Muassasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 1983, 17-18) He was also called by al-Baghdadi, for having lived in Baghdad a considerable part of his life (Bakalla, *Ibn Jinnī, An Early Arab Muslim Phonetician: An Interpretive Study of His Life and Contribution to Linguistics*, 9). Also, in relation to his father's affiliation to the Ezdi house in Mosul, he was also called by the name was also called as Ibn Jinni al-Ezdi (see Muhammad Ali al-Najjar (Ed.), *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I, introduction.)

<sup>60</sup> Dina Baqil, “al-Mustawayat al-lisaniyyah bayna al-tahlil va al-ta’lil fi al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ li Ibn Jinni ve al-Sahibi li Ibn Faris”, (Phd Thesis, Universite d’Oran, Kulliyat al -Ada’b al-lughat va al-Funun, 2014-2013), 10.

<sup>61</sup> Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu’jam al-‘udaba: Irshād al-arīb ilā ma’rifat al-adīb*, Volume IV, Ed. by Ihsan Abbas, Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, Beirut, 1993, pg. 1585-1601, entry number 691.

<sup>62</sup>Bakalla, *Ibn Jinnī, An Early Arab Muslim Phonetician: An Interpretive Study of His Life and Contribution to Linguistics*, 1-8.

Ibn Jinnī met Abu Ali during his visit to Mosul.<sup>63</sup> It is said that he attended one of Ibn Jinnī's grammar study circles and directed him a question on morphology to which he failed to give a complete answer, to this, Abu Ali remarked: "You are giving wine before your grapes are ripened". After this instance, Ibn Jinnī becomes a lifetime student of Abu Ali and accompanies him for forty years until his teacher's death.<sup>64</sup>

In Baghdad, he was present in the literary circles of his time and authored many commentaries on poetry and has written his own poetry as well as many a book majority of which was related to Arabic linguistics.<sup>65</sup>

Yaqut al-Hamawi informs us of Ibn Jinnī's companions among the poets, government officials, and scholars alike. Other than his teachers and his patrons in court,<sup>66</sup> a famous poet of his time, Abu Al-Tayyib Al-Mutanabbi (d.354/965) was a friend of Ibn Jinnī, for whose poetry Ibn Jinnī authored many commentaries that still guide the studies of al-Mutanabbi's poetry today. We can have an idea of al-Mutanabbi's high regard for Ibn Jinnī from his remark for Ibn Jinnī: "He is a man whose worth is unknown to most of the people."<sup>67</sup>

Another contemporary that I personally give a lot of importance in relation to the discussions of the origin of language is Abu'l-Husayn l-Ahmad bin Faris, also known as Ibn Faris al-Qazwini (d. 390/1004). Opinions of Ibn Faris on the issue of the origin of language are cited side by side with Ibn Jinnī by traditional scholars such as al-Suyuti and have been studied by contemporary scholars in comparison to Ibn Jinnī's views.

In terms of the grammatical school of thought, at the time of Ibn Jinnī, there were three schools of grammar, two schools were centered in the cities Kufa and Basra, and the third, Baghdadi, school, which was a synthesis of the two others.<sup>68</sup> Al-Najjar states that Ibn Jinnī, just like his main teacher Abu Ali, was a Basran grammarian and

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<sup>63</sup>al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-'udaba: Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb*, Volume IV, (Ed. by Ihsan Abbas, Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, Beirut, 1993), 1589.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. And al-Dahabi, *Sirat a'lam al-Nubala*, Ed. Šu'ayb al-Arnā'ūt, Muhammad Nu'aym al-'Irqūsūī, Vol. 17, Muassasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 1983, 19.

<sup>66</sup> For more contemporaries see. Bakalla. *Ibn Jinnī, An Early Arab Muslim Phonetician: An Interpretive Study of His Life and Contribution to Linguistics*. (London; Taipei: European Language Publications, 1982), 11. And al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-'udaba: Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb*, IV, (Beirut, 1993), 1585-1601.

<sup>67</sup> al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-'udaba: Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb*, IV, (Beirut, 1993), 1588.

<sup>68</sup> al-Najjar, Introduction to *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, 44.

followed this school in his works and studies.<sup>69</sup> However, some research suggests that his views fell under both Kufan and Basran schools but the latter prevailed upon him.<sup>70</sup>

In terms of his religious background, Ibn Jinnī is said to be affiliated with the school of Mu'tazilite in theology.<sup>71</sup> Contemporary scholars have analyzed the content of his works which highly supports the claim.<sup>72</sup> However, he also has entries that challenge Mu'tazilite views.<sup>73</sup> Some of these Mu'tazili characteristics, as well as his challenges to Mu'tazilite views, can be seen in our focus text. In terms of jurisdiction, Ibn Jinnī is believed to be a Hanafi; as Yavuz points out, he has brought the Hanafi school's method of *qiyas*, deductive analogy, onto his study of language.<sup>74</sup>

### 1.2.1. His Works

Ibn Jinnī was an author of many books on various topics and in various genres. Loucel mentions that *Mu'jam al-Udaba* enumerates thirty-two of Ibn Jinnī's works,<sup>75</sup> whereas Bakalla, lists a total of seventy works attributed to Ibn Jinnī.<sup>76</sup> Some are printed and have survived until today, and some we only know of through their mentions in other books. His works consist of books and treatises primarily related but not limited to Arabic linguistics from phonetics to grammar and morphology. He authored many commentaries on various books and poetry among which are the poems of Abu Nuwas (d.196/812) and al-Mutanabbi.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 44, al-Najjar brings examples of Ibn Jinni's writings which clearly state he is a Basran and not a Kufan or Baghdadian grammarian. However, he also mentions that some scholars have argued he might belong to the Baghdadi school for he resided there.

<sup>70</sup> Baqil, "al-Mustawayat al-lisaniyyah bayna al-tahlil va al-ta'lil fi al-Ḥaṣā'ish li Ibn Jinni ve al-Sahibi li Ibn Faris", (Phd Thesis, Universite d'Oran, Kulliyat al -Ada'b al-lughat va al-Funun, 2014-2013), 10.

<sup>71</sup> Fadil Salih Al-Samiri, *Ibn Jinni al-Nahwi*, (Dar al-Nazir li al-tiba'a ve al-neṣr va al-tawzi', Baghdad, 1969), 40- 52.

<sup>72</sup> For a detailed explanation and examples of these contents see. Ibid., 52.

<sup>73</sup> Yavuz, "Ibn Cinni Hayati ve Arap Gramerindeki Yeri" (Doktora Tezi, İstanbul, 1996), 69-71.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>75</sup> Henri Loucel, "L'origine Du Langage D'après Les Grammairiens Arabes." *Arabica* 10, no. 2 (1963), 262.

<sup>76</sup> Bakalla, *Ibn Jinnī, An Early Arab Muslim Phonetician: An Interpretive Study of His Life and Contribution to Linguistics*. (London; Taipei: European Language Publications, 1982), 16-31.

<sup>77</sup> These commentaries are not all recorded by the early bibliographers, Hirschfeld points out to the existence of a twenty-page manuscript in the British Museum titled "The manhuka of Abu Nuwas, interpreted by Abul Fath Othman Ibn Jinni" that has not been mentioned in either al-Fihrist or Mu'jam al-Udaba (H. Hirschfeld, "An Unknown Work by Ibn Jinni." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1917, 834-36)

He was also a well-versed poet and authored commentaries on many works of poetry. As we see in Yaqt's entry of Ibn Jinnī, his poetry was included in a book titled *Sirru-i Surur* by al-Kadi al-Ghaznavi (d.590/1194).<sup>78</sup>

Some of his most influential works in the field of philology are *al-Luma' fi'l-Arabiyya* on grammar and *Sirru Şina'at il-i'rab* on morphology and phonetics and *al-Ḥaşā'iş* on the foundations of grammar, methodology. *al-Luma' fi'l-Arabiyya* is a book on grammar that aims at students of grammar. It is a concise and comprehensive collection of various grammatical points. The book has been used as a reference work in grammar and commentated on by many scholars including his students.<sup>79</sup> His other book, *Sirru Şina'at ul-i'rab* is a work centered on the phonetics in the Arabic language where Ibn Jinnī studies all twenty-nine phonemes in separate chapters, and points out to their place of articulation, the places they can take within a trilateral word, and the possible changes they could go through under certain circumstances.

From just the example of Ibn Jinnī and the amount of work he produced, we can see how Cooperson's 'dumbing down' of the Islamic tradition and Arab lore is at work. His explanation of the science of grammar, for instance, supports the fact that as a grammarian he was aware of his role as a transmitter of the knowledge in this sense; the purpose of grammar, he states, is for the non-Arabs to catch up with the correctness of the language of Arabic speakers.<sup>80</sup>

### 1.3. *Al-Ḥaşā'iş*

The word *Ḥaşā'iş*, in the language, comes from the root ḥa-şa-şa and is the irregular plural form of the singular noun *ḥāşşiya* /خاصية which means “specialty, feature, particularity, characteristic”.<sup>81</sup> The word *al-Ḥaşā'iş* is not an uncommon title for books to have in classical Arabic literature. One can find many books whose title begins with

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<sup>78</sup>The full name of this author is Mu'īn al-Dīn Abū l-A'īlā Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Nīsābūrī al-Ghaznawī (d. ca. 590/1194) This book did not survive to our day but Griffel suggests that it was “an anthology of poetry with biographical information on poets.” (Frank Griffel, “On the Character, Content, and Authorship of Itmām Tatimmat Şiwān al-ḥikma and the Identity of the Author of Muntakhab Şiwān al-ḥikma”, Yale University, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 133.1 (2013), 11).

<sup>79</sup> Yavuz, “Ibn Cinni Hayatı ve Arap Gramerindeki Yeri” (Doktora Tezi, İstanbul, 1996), 84.

<sup>80</sup> *al-Ḥaşā'iş*, I, 34.

<sup>81</sup> Hans Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. 4th edition. Spoken Language Services, 1993, 281, left column.

*al-Ḥaṣā'is*, features [of something] in other fields of Islamic sciences.<sup>82</sup> As Ibn Jinnī's book is about foundations of grammar, *uṣūl al-naḥw*: We can understand the title of the book as “the specialties of the foundations of grammar”.<sup>83</sup> The printed version of the book consists of three volumes and 162 chapters.<sup>84</sup> In his introduction, Ibn Jinnī explains that he wrote this book on the foundational principles of grammar, *uṣūl al-naḥw*, and it covers various topics and questions related to the characteristics of the Arabic language on many different levels; from causations *'ilal* of grammar, to sound symbolism, from language change to theoretical questions such as definitions of grammar and language and question of the origin of language. He covers all these areas in a unique way for the discipline; as Baalbaki states it, in *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, Ibn Jinnī addresses “... fundamental issues of methodology and epistemology and ... demonstrates the inherently organized and harmonious nature of Arabic ... in [an] almost unprecedented manner in the tradition.”<sup>85</sup>

Ibn Jinnī claims that no one before him has written a book on *uṣūl al-naḥw*, foundational principles of grammar, with the methodologies of *uṣūl al-kalam* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the foundations of theology and the foundations of law. He recognizes the work of al-Sarraḡ on the foundations of grammar titled *al-uṣūl fi 'n-naḥw* but he notes that it does not approach the issues in the same way.<sup>86</sup> However, in his review of *Ḥaṣā'is*, al-Suyuti says that although it is a book on *uṣūl al-naḥw* most of the book is outside of the scope of *uṣūl al-naḥw*.<sup>87</sup>

In Ibn Jinnī's works, and in *al-Ḥaṣā'is* in particular, we encounter a product of a certain discipline, a discipline that is constructed, defined and explained, which mirrors Açıkgenç's general periodization for the scientific traditions of the Islamic civilization.

Ibn Jinnī's works, along with those of his close contemporaries such as al-Zajjaji (d.339/951), al-Sirafi (d.392/1002) and Abu Ali al-Farisi (d. 370/981) are said to mark

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<sup>82</sup> Baqil, “al-Mustawayat al-lisaniyyah bayna al-tahlil va al-ta'lil fi 'l-Ḥaṣā'is li Ibn Jinni ve al-Sahibi li Ibn Faris”, Ph.D. Thesis, (Universite d'Oran, Kulliyat al -Ada'b al-lughat va al-Funun, 2014-2013), 12.

<sup>83</sup> The manuscripts of the book at Nuruosmaniye library manuscript collection has been listed under the name *al-Ḥaṣā'is fi uṣūl an-naḥw*.

<sup>84</sup> The book is said to have been written around 379/990, for it is after the death of his teacher Abu ali (d. 377/988) and within the ruling time of Baha'ud-Dawla (379-403) in Baghdad, to whom the book was dedicated (al-Najjar, Introduction of *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, 69).

<sup>85</sup> Baalbaki, “Arabic Linguistic Tradition I: Nahw and Sarf” (2013), 104.

<sup>86</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 2, Yavuz, “Ibn Cinni Hayati ve Arap Gramerindeki Yeri”, (Doktora Tezi, 1996), 80.

<sup>87</sup> al-Suyuti, *al-Iqtirāh fi uṣūl al-naḥw*, 15.

the completion of the discipline of *naḥw* and *uṣūl al-naḥw*.<sup>88</sup> Çıkar notes that especially Ibn Jinnī's works among them carry great importance in the field of grammar in Arabic literary tradition and has influenced the succeeding scholars of language such as Ibn al-Anbārī and al-Suyuti who wrote on the foundational principles of grammar after him.<sup>89</sup>

### 1.3.1. *Uṣūl al-Naḥw: The Premise of Al-Ḥaṣā'is*

What then, is *uṣūl al-naḥw*? Although Ibn Jinnī authors *al-Ḥaṣā'is* as a book on *uṣūl al-naḥw*, similar to Ibn Serraj, he does not offer a definition of the term *uṣūl al-naḥw*.<sup>90</sup> This could be due to the established meaning of the term *uṣūl* for other disciplines at the time. However, as Suleiman remarks, Ibn Serraj explains how *uṣūl* literature helps understand the causes and reasons behind the nature of the Arabic language and grammar.<sup>91</sup> For understanding the general meaning of the word *uṣūl* within Islamic sciences, Açıkgenç's explanation is very helpful. He notes that *uṣūl* comes from the word '*asl*' in Arabic which stands for "origin, root". In the beginning the word *uṣūl*, meant principles of something, afterwards, in the disciplinary stage of Islamic scientific process, the meaning gained a more technical sense which meant fundamental principles on which knowledge of a certain kind is based.<sup>92</sup> Açıkgenç explains that in today's usage, the word means method in general, however it carried nuanced meanings in every discipline. For the field of grammar, *uṣūl al-naḥw* means "methodology of grammar as a science".<sup>93</sup>

Similar to Açıkgenç, Baalbaki states that the *uṣūl* of grammar means "the theoretical and methodological issues on which the discipline of grammar rests".<sup>94</sup>

In a similar way, to Ibn Jinnī, Ibn Fâris's book *al-Sâhibî* is engaged in a preliminary examination of the nature of the Arabic language, which applies to the language in general.<sup>95</sup> Although he does not term it as *uṣūl al-naḥw*, Ibn Faris mentions that the knowledge of Arabic language entails '*asl* and *far*', the former he defines as a study

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<sup>88</sup> Çıkar, "Kıyas: Bir Nahiv Usul İlmi Kaynağı" (Ahenk Yayınları, Van, 2007), 9.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Yavuz, "İbn Cinni Hayatı ve Arap Gramerindeki Yeri" (Doktora Tezi, 1996), 131.

<sup>91</sup> Suleiman, "On the Underlying Foundations of Arabic Grammar: A Preliminary Investigation." *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 16, no. 2 (1989), 181.

<sup>92</sup> Açıkgenç, *Islamic Scientific Tradition in History*, (Penerbit IKIM, Kuala Lumpur, 2014), 307.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Baalbaki, "Arabic Linguistic Tradition I: Nahw and Sarf" (2013), 104.

<sup>95</sup> Loucel, "L'origine Du Langage D'après Les Grammairiens Arabes." *Arabica* 10, no. 2 (1963), 255.

on the origin (*al-awwaliyya*) and development (*manṣa'*) of the language. The knowledge of the *far'* is insufficient, the science of *far'* and of *asl* in regards to the study of grammar must be possessed together if one wants to be able to understand the Quran and Sunnah and to benefit from it.<sup>96</sup>

Ibn al-Anbāri, approximately two centuries after Ibn Jinnī and Ibn Faris comes with a definition of *uṣūl al-naḥw*; “the foundations of grammar are the sources, *adilla*, of grammar from which the branches and divisions of grammar are induced”<sup>97</sup> this notion of foundations as sources and origins is similar to the definition Ibn Faris provides for *asl* in relation to *far'*.

As Ibn Jinnī mentions in his introduction, he promises a study of the foundational principles of grammar through the methodology of *kalām*, theology, and *fiqh*, law. This suggests an adoption of methodologies in these fields to the field of grammar. In fact, one can see a multidisciplinary approach in how he tackles the issue. Examples of the tools of analysis from interpretation, *ta'wīl*, to analogy, *qiyās*, can be seen in the analysis of the text in the next chapter.

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Ibn al-Anbāri, *al-Lam' al-'adilla fi uṣūl al-naḥw*, (Ed. Said al-Afghani, 1971), 80.

## CHAPTER TWO: PRECEDENT AND KEY POINTS FOR THE ISSUE OF ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

### 2.1. Issue of the Origin of Language in Theology

There is a large body of literature on the issue of the origin of language from the ninth- and tenth-century Arabic speaking world. Among the goals of this thesis is understanding how much Ibn Jinnī's account of the issue represents the wider discourse and where Ibn Jinnī is positioned among the existing sides of the discussions. To achieve our goal, in this section, we will look at the general history and the nature of the discussions in the Arabic literary tradition, especially in the field of theology.

The earliest accounts of the origin of language in the Arab literary culture dates back to the first works of exegesis. Al-Tabari cites the interpretation of Ibn Abbas (d.67/687) for the Quranic verse 2:31 "(God) taught Adam all the names". Ibn Abbas' elaboration of the verse suggests that God taught Adam names of all things, all the living and all other things, little and big.<sup>98</sup> This idea of the divine origin of language was the earliest and most widely supported position with regards to the question of the origin of language in Arabic literary tradition.

Another view that was articulated before any theological debates took place, is what we might call a "naturalist view".<sup>99</sup> The Arab lexicographers as early as al-Khalil bin Ahmad al-Farahidi (d.175/791) and Sibawayh (d.180/796) pointed out to the existence of a sound symbolism in the Arabic Language.<sup>100</sup> This understanding of a natural relation between the sounds of expressions and their meanings took off to become a view for the origin of language with a Basran Mu'tazilite, Abbād bin Suleyman (d.250/864).<sup>101</sup> Abbād bin Suleyman's claim that the language originated through a

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<sup>98</sup>al-Tabari, *Tafsir al-Tabari: Jami'ul-Bayan 'an te'wil aaya al-'Kur'an*, 493ff.

<sup>99</sup> We have chosen to refer to this position with this term following Bernard Weiss and other contemporary scholars who authored works analyzing these positions for the issue of the origin of language.

<sup>100</sup> Bernard George Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 12. And see. *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 152.

<sup>101</sup>al-Suyuti, *al-Muzhir*, 17, and Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 14.

formation of sound symbolism was rejected by dialecticians and theologians as a theory of the origin of language.

That said, the question of the origin of language was not directed as a critical question in Arabic literary tradition until the end of the ninth century.<sup>102</sup> The issue was carried to a problematic status when it became interrelated with critical discussions in the realm of theology in the ninth century. One of the critical topics debated by the Mu'tazilite and traditionalist theologians was the concept of "createdness of the Qur'an".<sup>103</sup> This debate has led to the development of another position, the conventionalist view, which claimed that language has originated through a human convention. Pioneered by the Mu'tazilite theologian, Abu Hashim al-Jubbai (d.321/933),<sup>104</sup> the conventionalist view, as a logical argument, aimed at reinforcing the opinion that Qur'an was created.

At this stage of the discourse, which historically corresponds to the late ninth and tenth century, there were two rival positions in the theological debates: (1) Those who argued that the Qur'an is the created speech of God and supported this argument with the theory of human convention as the origin of language, (2) and those who argued it was the uncreated speech of God, just like its language was of divine origin. The sides of the discussions were mainly Mu'tazilites for the human origin of language, and traditionalists for divine origin of language.<sup>105</sup>

The conventionalist view was supported by most of the Mu'tazilite scholars. In fact, it did not only help their arguments about the ontology of God's speech but at the same time corresponded very well to other aspects of their creed. To elaborate on this, let us go through the basic tenets of their creed. According to Hodgson, the Mu'tazilite doctrines of theology was gathered under five topics by the followers of Abu al-Hudhayl (d.225/840) who was the first to systematize the Mu'tazilite school of theology;<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>105</sup>Among the proponents of the traditionalist position is Imam al-Ash'ari (Ibid., 21-22 ) who establishes the Ash'arite school of theology in discipline of theology around the same time. (Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 3rd Edition, Columbia University Press, 2004, 65).

<sup>106</sup> Hodgson, *Venture Of Islam, Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Volume One, The Classical Age of Islam, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1977), 438-439.

- 1- The Unity of God, which was the reason they problematized the status of the Divine Names and suggested it was contradictory to His Unity.
- 2- The Justice of God; that human beings were responsible and all-punishable from their acts.
- 3- The Day of Judgement
- 4- The intermediate position of the Muslim sinner, neither faithful nor infidel; that is “*al-manzila beyna al-manzilatayn*”
- 5- Obligation to command good and forbid evil “*al-amr bil ma‘ruf wa-l-nahy ‘an al-munkar*”

Having presented the basic tenets of the Mu'tazilite creed, it should not be forgotten that, individual scholars had their individual opinions, and sects did not take their shapes quickly.<sup>107</sup> In other words, not all who were attributed to this sect necessarily agreed on all of these five principles or have agreed on them with the same reasoning and same point of view. In fact, the nuances within the school resulted in a division of two main sub-schools; Basran and Baghdadi schools.

The idea of Divine Unity and Justice meant God's absolute transcendence.<sup>108</sup> And this meant an absolute rejection of any idea that might place anthropomorphic qualities to God's essence.<sup>109</sup> The human origin of language corresponds well to the first two doctrines Hodgson lists. Some Mu'tezilites attempted to resolve the controversy over the Divine Names with an analogy made to the conventional nature of the language suggesting the idea that Divine Names are also a conventional designation.<sup>110</sup> It was mainly the Basran Mu'tazilites who developed the position that centered the origin of language on human convention.<sup>111</sup> Human convention as the origin of language is also in agreement with the doctrine of Divine Justice which lead them to reject the notion of predestination and emphasized the free will of man and their responsibility from their actions.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Duncan Black Macdonald, *Development of Muslim theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory* (The Semitic series, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1903), 122.

<sup>108</sup> Mustafa Shah, "Classical Islamic Discourse on the Origins of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy." *Numen* 58, no. 2/3 (2011), 316.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>111</sup> Sophia Vasalou, "Their Intention was Shown by Their Bodily Movements: The Basran Mu'tazilites on the Institution of Language." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 47, (2009), 201–221.

<sup>112</sup> Shah, "Classical Islamic Discourse on the Origins of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy." *Numen* 58, no. 2/3 (2011), 317.

As Vasalou points out, the idea of independence of human language from divine revelation mirrors the idea of independence and freedom of human will before God, which confirms their understanding of Divine Justice.<sup>113</sup> For the Mu'tazilites, mankind is the creator of their actions as opposed to the Ahl al-Sunnah position which believes that humans have free will but that their actions are created by God once they use their will.<sup>114</sup>

At the same time, the Mu'tazilite response to the orthodox view of the Qur'an as uncreated speech of God was that firstly, the Qur'an was created in a given time and space and that it did not exist before; secondly, attributing speech to God meant He possessed a physical organ for the articulation of words.<sup>115</sup> Hence they deemed the idea of uncreated speech of God impossible in their creed.

The discussions of the origin of language were located in the midst of these theological discussions, and in the beginning the argumentative reasoning behind the discussions was briefly as follows;

Premise: Language is a divine institution, and it is uncreated.

Argument: The Qur'an is the uncreated speech of God.

Premise: Origin of language is a human convention, language is ephemeral.

Argument: The Qur'an is the created speech of God.

As it can be seen, the theories of the origin of language served as an auxiliary argument to theological discussions. And the conventionalist view for Mu'tazilites, supported other arguments of theirs such as related to divine names, freedom of human will and imposition of human obligation, and created Qur'an. Based on *al-Muzhir*, Versteegh summarizes the arguments of the opponents of Mu'tazilite school in regards to the origin of language as follows:<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Vasalou, "Their Intention was Shown by Their Bodily Movements: The Basran Mu'tazilites on the Institution of Language." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 47, (2009), 207.

<sup>114</sup> Al-Juwayni, *Lam' al-adilla* ('alam al-Kutub, Beirut, 1987) 120.

<sup>115</sup> Shah, "Classical Islamic Discourse on the Origins of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy." *Numen* 58, no. 2/3 (2011), 317.

<sup>116</sup> al-Suyuti, *al-Muzhir*, 17ff. Kees Versteegh, "Linguistic attitudes and the Origin of speech in the Arab World, Understanding Arabic", *Essays in Contemporary Arabic Linguistics in Honor of El-Said Badawi*, (American Univ in Cairo Press, 1996), 24-25.

	Traditionalists: Divine origin of language				Mu'tazilites: Human origin of language	
Argument	<p>“<i>allama</i> <i>'adama</i> <i>al-asma'a</i> <i>kullahā</i>”</p> <p>“He taught Adam all the names” (Q 2:31).</p>	<p>The condemnation of the invented names (Q 53:23).</p>	<p>God created <i>alsina</i>, languages (Q 30:22).</p>	<p>Each convention needs a preceding convention so that an infinite series of conventions would be needed.</p>	<p>Language must precede the revelation (Q 14:4).</p>	<p>Divine inspiration entails prior knowledge of God, which is a logical impossibility.</p>
Counterargument	<p><i>'allama</i> could be interpreted as “He taught him how to create names”.</p>	<p>The verse applies only to names of idols.</p>	<p><i>Alsina</i> could mean tongues as bodily parts.</p>	<p>Parents teach their children a language without prior convention.</p>	<p>God could create the necessary knowledge in man that words mean things and then teach language by inspiration.</p>	<p>Necessary knowledge about the meaning of words does not entail logically the necessary knowledge of God's essence.</p>

Table 1: Versteegh's summary of the arguments and counterarguments developed by traditionalists and Mu'tazilites addressing the issue of Origin of language.<sup>117</sup>

As we can see it summarized in Table 1, the arguments used by both sides of the discussion are mostly based on the Qur'an. Shah remarks that the arguments were supported by (1) *adillat al-sam'* (authenticated scriptural proofs) and (2) *adilla*

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

'akliyya, rational arguments'.<sup>118</sup> As the coming and going of the discussions suggest, we can talk about a 'circularity', in Shah's terms, that is at work in the discourse.<sup>119</sup> We can see that the development of arguments and counter-arguments around interpretations of Qur'anic verses are used as supporting proofs by both parties in these discussions.

The argument that "divine inspiration entails prior knowledge of God, which is a logical impossibility"<sup>120</sup> is attributed to the Mu'tazilite theologian Kadi Abd al-Jabbar (d. 416/1025). Shah explains that the idea behind this argument is that if God established the relationship between words and meanings, that would mean he would disclose the design and intention behind the language which would mean disclosure of knowledge of God before they were even held responsible for their actions.<sup>121</sup> The supporters of this idea claimed that "knowledge of the attributes of an entity, in this case, God's imposition of language, would a fortiori necessitate knowledge of the essence of that entity, namely God."<sup>122</sup> If humans knew God's intention, then fulfillment of *taklīf*, which is the "act of imposing religious obligation" would be problematic. This idea has been rejected by the opponents of the divine origin of language with the statement that a "necessary knowledge about the meaning of words does not entail logically the necessary knowledge of God's Essence."<sup>123</sup>

The Mu'tazilites thinkers who found the concept of divine attributes problematic with regards to the concept of Divine Unity, argued that the Qur'an, as God's Speech, was created,<sup>124</sup> as opposed to it being the uncreated Speech of God which was supported by traditionalists (*Ahl al-Sunnah*). In the first stages of this debate, among the proofs of the supporters of the opinion that the Qur'an is created was their claim that language was created by man through convention. To oppose this premise, the traditionalists

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<sup>118</sup> Shah, "Classical Islamic Discourse on the Origins of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy." *Numen* 58, no. 2/3 (2011), 325, 322-323.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Versteegh, "Linguistic attitudes and the Origin of speech in the Arab World", *Understanding Arabic: Essays in Contemporary Arabic Linguistics in Honor of El-Said Badawi*, (Ed. El-Said M. Badawi, Alaa Elgibali, American Univ in Cairo Press, 1996), 24-25.

<sup>121</sup> Shah, "Classical Islamic Discourse on the Origins of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy." *Numen* 58, no. 2/3 (2011), 321.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Versteegh, "Linguistic attitudes and the Origin of speech in the Arab World", *Understanding Arabic: Essays in Contemporary Arabic Linguistics in Honor of El-Said Badawi*, (Ed. El-Said M. Badawi, Alaa Elgibali, American Univ in Cairo Press, 1996), 25.

<sup>124</sup> Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 3rd Edition (Columbia University Press, 2004), 63.

argued that language is not a convention and it comes from God, quoting the Quranic verses 2:33: “He taught Adam all the names”.

Other than the scriptural evidence, the sides of the discussions put forth logical and empirical arguments in support of their theories. As we will see in Ibn Jinnī’s chapter of *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, some of the Mu’tazilite supporters of the human convention asserted that convention takes place through pointing at and saying with the help of a physical organ and because God Exalted does not have hand to point at, they ruled for the impossibility of convention by God.<sup>125</sup> Whereas, some traditionalist said language cannot be by convention because they have not heard an Arab narrate an action of convention in the naming of anything in the language.<sup>126</sup>

With respect to implications of the disagreements in theology, the Mu’tazilite scholars claimed that language comes from human convention and so is ephemeral,<sup>127</sup> and therefore the language of the Qur’an is a created language, and hence it is the created speech of God. To describe this, they used the terms *tawāḍu‘* and *Iṣtilāh*. On the other hand, in the beginning, traditionalist scholars, in response to the Mu’tazilites, claimed that language is from God and Him only and there is no human interfering in the emergence of language, that it was a revelation and instruction of God upon man.

However, as the speculations on the concept of “Speech of God” developed, the traditionalist did not find it necessary to adhere to the idea of the divine origin of language to support the uncreatedness of the Quran. Their understanding of the Divine Speech came to be explained by “divine articulateness” which, different than the ordinary speech, was about thought and meanings.<sup>128</sup> Hence the argument that the language of the Qur’an was created no longer threatened the notion of uncreatedness of Divine speech. As Weiss notes, Bakillani (d. 404/1013) called off the debates over the origin of language, observing that neither side of the argument had conclusive evidence serving their ends.<sup>129</sup> In this way, by the end of the tenth century, the theological debates on the origin of the language started to fade away and lost

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<sup>125</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I, 44.

<sup>126</sup> Ibn Fāris, *al-Sāhibī*, 38.

<sup>127</sup> Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lugha” and Its Development” (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 23.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

importance due to the resolution of what has caused the debates in the theological realm.<sup>130</sup>

In terms of the development of the issue in history, Weiss emphasizes the relationship of the issue of the origin of language to the concept of *wad' al-lughah* in Islamic legal theory. The *wad' al-lughah*, which means the givenness of the language, is basically the study of the semantic givenness, the established meanings of the Arabic language based on which the sacred texts can be interpreted and laws can be induced from them.<sup>131</sup> Before the emergence of the *wad'* as a separate topic in legal theory around the tenth century, the semantic givenness of the language was documented and studied by Arab lexicographers on the level of lexicon and grammarians on the level of syntax and morphology.<sup>132</sup> The study of the givenness of language in this way was an essential tool in understanding and living the religion of Islam.

The main difference between the tenth-century discussions of the issue of origin of language and the scope of *wad' al-lughah*, is that the former is a theoretical study aiming at finding out where the language comes from, whereas the latter is a pragmatic study of the language as a given.<sup>133</sup> Mainly because *wad'* serves the legal theory, in that they approached a given linguistic entity as the starting point and investigated its possible meanings for the purpose of inducing legal conclusions. Whereas, independent of legal concerns, the issue of the origin of language as discussed by theologians and grammarians in the ninth and tenth century addressed the question of the source of the language, which marks the discussions as theoretical and abstract.

Simultaneously with the cease of arguments in the realm of theology, *wad'* takes its place in the books of foundations of law, *uṣūl al-fiqh* and continues its course within the Islamic sciences independent of the ramifications of the controversies about the origin of language. At this point, the issue of the origin of language for both legal

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>131</sup> Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 1-2. As Weiss points out, the legal theorists suggested that "...the principal features of language upon which their hermeneutics is based, are among those things established in language, i.e. are givens of language (Ibid., 74).

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 88.

theorists and theologians was seen, as Weiss puts it, “only a theological possibility ... to be entertained but not espoused.”<sup>134</sup>

To summarize, the tenth-century Arabic literature in theology and grammar exhibits a tension between different schools of thought with regards to the issue of the origin of language. Ibn Jinnī knew all these arguments and may have been involved in them. As his usage of general terminology, narration of different sides of the discussions, their arguments and his responses to the arguments suggest, his account of the issue is not isolated from the theological controversies around the matter.

That said, Ibn Jinnī is very clear about the purpose and scope of his work *al-Ḥaṣā'ish*: It aims at developing a theoretical and methodological foundation for the science of grammar. Hence the issue of the origin of language which is among the first chapters of the book must be tackled for the same purpose. Ibn Jinnī, who adopts a neutral position with regards to the theological discussions, could in fact be one of the philologists who triggered a shift of focus from the study of the source of the language to the study of the givenness of the language.<sup>135</sup>

For the purpose of getting familiarized with Ibn Jinnī and help understand the text better, in the following sections we will address the key terminologies used in the discussions of the origin of language followed by a brief summary of Ibn Jinnī's understanding of the concepts of language and origin(s) as it relates to our topic.

## 2.2. Key Terms for the Issue of the Origin of Language

The discussions around the origin of language in the 9th-10th century were mainly polarized between two positions. The supporters of the divine origin of language which Weiss refers to as “theological view” and Chapziewicz (1988) as ‘creationist’ and Shah as ‘revelationalist’ view, constituted one side of the discussions; whereas the supporters of human origin of language, which is often referred to as “conventionalist view”, formed the other side of the discussions.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>135</sup> Weiss notes that the philological point of view of the Mu'tazilites in the discussions of the origin of language led the way to the acceptance of the idea that “all features (of language) in question are established” which is the idea behind the science of *wad'* that later developed. As a Mu'tazilite philologist, I believe Ibn Jinnī's account might be one of those which influenced such an understanding (Ibid., 89).

All in all, the most important key terms for the study of Ibn Jinnī’s text on the origin of language would be convention and revelation. However, the author uses five different terms to refer to the conventional or the divine origin of language. The meanings are derived from the Arabic terms: “*Tawāḍu’*”, “*iṣṭilāḥ*”, “*wahy*”, “*ilhām*” and “*tawqīf*”. Below we offer a tentative explanation to understand these terms with respect to the discussions of the origin of language.

The word *tawāḍu’* comes from the root of *w-ḍ-‘a* and it is the infinitive form of the sixth form verb *tawāḍa‘a* which means “to agree, come to an agreement”<sup>136</sup>, the form *tafā‘ala* denotes a meaning of either reciprocity or that the action is done mutually. Among the definitions provided in Lane’s Lexicon,<sup>137</sup> for the first form of the root is to apply, assign or appropriate a word or phrase to denote or signify a thing, when this meaning is carried to the sixth form it would come to mean the mutual activity of denoting a thing by more than one person. By this term, the authors such as Ibn Jinnī refer to the human institution of language. Loucel translates this term as “institution resulting from an agreement”<sup>138</sup> and Shah refers to it by “conventional agreement”.<sup>139</sup>

Another word that is used almost synonymously with *tawāḍu’*, institution, is the term “*iṣṭilāḥ*”. The eighth form of the root *ṣ-l-ḥ* has the meaning of “to make peace, to reconcile” to mutually agree on something, on a name for instance. The infinitive form of the verb as given in dictionaries come to mean “convention, agreement”.<sup>140</sup> Therefore it would not be wrong to think that by *iṣṭilāḥ*, convention and the conventional origin of language is meant.

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<sup>136</sup> Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. 4th edition. Spoken Language Services, 1993, 1262.

<sup>137</sup> Lane’s Lexicon Supplement, 75.

<sup>138</sup> Loucel, "L'origine Du Langage D'après Les Grammairiens Arabes." *Arabica* 10, no. 2 (1963), 254.

<sup>139</sup> Shah, "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the Tawqīf-i-ṣṭilāḥ Antithesis and the Majāz Controversy — Part I", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), 32.

<sup>140</sup> Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. 4th edition. Spoken Language Services, 1993, 610. Also, for more meanings; Lane, Edward William, and Stanley Lane-Poole. *Arabic-English lexicon*. New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co, 1955, 1725. (Henceforth Lane’s Lexicon) I did not mention it for the lack of direct relevance to our topic, but *iṣṭilāḥ* also means “technical term”.

Another word that is used interchangeably with *tawāḍu‘* is *muwāda‘a*, which is used in the same meaning as the term *iṣṭilāh*.<sup>141</sup>

The term *tawqīf* is an infinitive of the second form of the root w-q-f: the verb means to instruct, teach, reveal someone knowledge of something, and to make something pause.<sup>142</sup> In the discussions of origin of language, this term is mentioned almost synonymously with the term “*wahy*” which means revelation, or “divine inspiration” as Shah refers to it.<sup>143</sup> In an attempt to unite all these meanings, Loucel tells us that he refers to *tawqīf* as “revealed fixation” and says that “*tawqīf* is a well-defined, almost material fixation”.<sup>144</sup> On the other hand, Lane’s Lexicon cites Ibn Faris who interprets *waqqafa* synonymous with the word ‘*allama*, “to teach”, as in “God taught, revealed to Adam what he pleased to teach him.”<sup>145</sup> In this case, as Weiss also points it out, the term *tawqīf* describes very precisely, the theory of the Divine origin of the language which is based on the Qur’anic verses 11:30 “God taught Adam all the names”.<sup>146</sup>

Although the terms *wahy* and *ilhām* are used along with *tawqīf* by the supporters of the divine origin of language, *wahy* and *ilhām* both mean “inspiration” however in theology they mean different levels of inspiration, former, a revelation from God, and the latter is a kind of revelation, an inspiration from God.<sup>147</sup> *Wahy* is the term used for revelation to Prophets, however *Ilhām* can take place with any of God’s creation, human and non-human. The difference in terminology but the similarity in meaning does not mean they are actually being used in a synonymous way. The different terms might be expressing nuances in the arguments that the supporters of the divine origin of language were developing.

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<sup>141</sup> *Muwāda‘a* is an interesting word that also connotes how the metaphors in the Arabic language were established. For more detail, see. Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lugha” and Its Development” (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 78.

<sup>142</sup> Lane’s Lexicon Supplement, 78, 3th column.

<sup>143</sup> Shah, “The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the Tawqīf-iṣṭilāh Antithesis and the Majāz Controversy — Part I”, *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), 32.

<sup>144</sup> “*fixation révélée*”, “...*tawqīf* est une révélation bien déterminée, presque matérielle.” Loucel, “L’origine Du Langage D’après Les Grammairiens Arabes.” *Arabica* 10, no. 2 (1963), 254.

<sup>145</sup> Lane’s Lexicon Supplement, 78, 3th column “*waqqafa Allahu ‘Ādama ma yaša‘, an yu’allimahu iyyāh*”.

<sup>146</sup> Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lugha” and Its Development” (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 22-23.

<sup>147</sup> “*نوع من الوحي*” see. Ibn Mansur, *Lisan al-‘Arab*, (Dar Ehya al-Torath al-Arabi, 1999), Vol. 12, 346. For the definition of *wahy* see. Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. 4th edition. Spoken Language Services, 1993, 1239, left column.

Having provided a brief explanation of the terminology, it must be said that to have a full understanding of the terms one needs a multidisciplinary in-depth analysis of all their usages in relation to the given discourse.

### 2.3. Origin *and* 'Aṣl for Ibn Jinnī

Ibn Jinnī uses the word 'aṣl in its literal meaning to refer to the 'origin' of language. The word 'aṣl has three different functions for the discussions of the origin of language. The first function is as we have mentioned, is its usage in describing the issue with its literal meaning, the other functions are related to its terminological meanings.

One of the terminological uses of the word 'aṣl is to refer to the origins or the roots of the words, the preeminent trilateral versions of the words.<sup>148</sup> Ibn Jinnī also uses the term to refer to the original version of a word before it went through changes due to difficulty in conjugation and pronunciation and frequency of usage. The definition for this meaning of 'aṣl can be summarized as “the original vocalization, form, construction, meaning, writing (in grammatical reconstruction, before phonological, morphological, syntactic, orthographical changes take place); basic function, in meaning, etc.; origin, source; basis; the root of a verb or noun”.<sup>149</sup>

Ibn Faris's explanation of the concepts of 'aṣl and *far'* might help us understand this second function of 'aṣl.<sup>150</sup> For him 'aṣl is the knowledge of the givenness of the language (linguistic entity) its primary, original state and the knowledge of how it changed, whereas *far'* is the knowledge of the word patterns such as the descriptive, adverbial, doer pattern, feminine, plural, dual etc. And one could say for the category of verbs, for instance, the different patterns for different tenses are considered *far'*. Hence one could conclude that what is meant by *far'* is a given statement and its state, and asl is the knowledge of its origin. Similar to a morphological study of a linguistic

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<sup>148</sup> The word 'aṣl has been used 135 times, al-'aṣl 172 times in all three volumes of *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, (cf. islamport.org).

<sup>149</sup> Quoted in the encyclopedia from Kinberg's Lexicon; Carter, M.G., "Uṣūl", pg. 1 of 87, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, First published online: 2012

<sup>150</sup> Ibn Fâris, *al-Sâhibî*, 33-34.

entity versus epistemological study. This usage of *'aṣl* in grammar is very frequent and its usage extends over phonology, morphology, and syntax.<sup>151</sup>

In relation to the origin of language, according to one opinion, the first stage of language that was established were the *'aṣl* or *ṣadr* (synonyms in the meanings for origin, root on the morphological level) of the language. In fact, what was established was *'aṣl* of things, which Ibn Jinnī interprets as the *ṣadr*, source words, when applied to language. People derived forms and patterns from those origins as needed.<sup>152</sup>

The other terminological use of *'aṣl* in relation to the issue of the origin of language is its plural form *uṣūl* which frames of the issue of the origin of language as a theoretical foundation, describing its role in the science of grammar. The issue is discussed within the premise of *uṣūl al-naḥw*; as we have elaborated in the previous chapter, we will suffice with the explanation provided in the previous chapter on this meaning of *uṣūl*.

Let us return to the *'aṣl* in *'aṣl al-luġha*, the origin of language; the word *'aṣl* means root, origin, source.<sup>153</sup> Ibn Jinnī uses this word to address the phenomena of the origin of language. However, it was not the only term used to talk about this issue in the Arab literary tradition. His contemporary Ibn Faris, for instance, does not use any word to give the meaning of ‘origin’ but talks about the issue as “is language [by] revelation or convention?”<sup>154</sup> Some scholars as cited by al-Suyuti, use the word “*ṭabata*” (to settle, establish” as they talked about how the language was originally established).<sup>155</sup> Later scholars, including al-Suyuti himself, address the issue with the term “the coiner of the language” “*wāḍi*”.

Weiss talks in detail about the term *wāḍi*. Other than its connotation used to describe the work of the lexicographers in Arabic literary tradition, Weiss notes, *wāḍi* in relation to the issue of the origin of language was most likely used by the Mu'tazilites to mean the origin of language by convention as opposed to divine instruction or

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<sup>151</sup> Carter, M.G., “Uṣūl”, , in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, First published online: 2012, 1 of 87.

<sup>152</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 30, 33-34, 40.

<sup>153</sup> Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. 4th edition. Spoken Language Services, 1993, 23, left column.

<sup>154</sup> Ibn Fâris, *al-Sâhibî*, 36-39 (6-9).

<sup>155</sup> al-Suyuti, *al-Muzhir*, 20.

revelation.<sup>156</sup> Hence the term *tawāḍu'* which will be used by Ibn Jinnī to describe the human convention is, in fact, related to *waḍ'* in this meaning.

Later, *waḍ'* was used as a neutral term to refer to the coining of language by either humans or God.<sup>157</sup> The reason for this neutrality might be related to both the meaning of the term and the shape the discussions took after a while.

## 2.4. Language for Ibn Jinnī

One of the terms Ibn Jinnī addresses prior to his chapter on the origin of language is language. Loucel rightfully suggests that the preceding chapters serve as a preliminary by getting the reader familiarized with the definitions of the concepts and the methods of analysis the author bases his studies on.<sup>158</sup>

In the second chapter of *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, Ibn Jinnī gives a definition and etymology of the word language, *luḡa* in Arabic.<sup>159</sup> The analysis of the origin of language cannot be done without understanding what language is, and Ibn Jinnī dedicates this chapter to defining and describing what language is. His definition of language is “the sounds with which each nation express its intentions.”<sup>160</sup> After defining language he offers an etymological explanation of the word *luḡa* in Arabic.<sup>161</sup> He follows an anagrammatic method that was used by lexicographers which involved providing the meanings of all six permutations of the root letters of a trilateral word. Ibn Jinnī calls this method *iṣṭiqāq al-akbar* (greater etymology).

However, in *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, the word *luḡa*, language is used in multiple meanings by the author. The first and foremost meaning its general meaning that we have explained in

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<sup>156</sup>Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Luḡa” and Its Development” (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 38.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., for an example see *al-Muzhir*, 8.

<sup>158</sup>Loucel, "L'origine Du Langage D'après Les Grammairiens Arabes." *Arabica* 10, no. 2 (1963), 265.  
<sup>159</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 33.

<sup>160</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 33, Trans. Czapkiewicz, *The views of the Medieval Arab Philologist on Language and Its Origin in the Light of ‘As-Suyuti’s’ ‘Al-Muzhir’*, (Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, Krakow, 1988), 43.

<sup>161</sup> Starting from the first chapter, which is titled “the difference between speech and sayings” (*al-faṣl beyn al-kalam va al-qawl*), Ibn Jinnī is very enthusiastic in his study of the etymologies of the words, citing lines of poetry and important lexicographers such as Sibawayh. As Loucel puts it, “this shows that in less than three centuries, linguistic concepts and vocabulary have made sufficient progress to offer the new language theorists numerous and precise tools of analysis” (“*Il montre qu’en moins de trois siècles les concepts et le vocabulaire linguistiques ont fait des progrès suffisants pour offrir aux nouveaux théoriciens du langage des instruments nombreux et précis d’analyse*” Loucel, "L'origine Du Langage D'après Les Grammairiens Arabes." *Arabica* 10, no. 2 (1963), 263).

the previous paragraph. This is meaning of language at work as he addresses the issue of the origin of language, *'aṣl al-luġa* in which case, he is clearly not talking about one specific language but referring to languages, in other words, to human speech in general. The other use of the word *luġa* is its technical meaning that is used when referring to lexical variations in Arabic language. This meaning can be understood from the phrase *luġāt al-'arab* which stands for the languages of the Arab, thereby *luġāt* refers to different variations of the Arabic language.

Other than presenting Ibn Jinnī's definition and understanding of language, it is also important to address Ibn Jinnī's approach to language and grammar. Suleiman suggests Ibn Jinnī's approach to language and grammar is realist/essentialist in nature, according to which, the purpose of the scientific inquiry is to come up with a true theory or description for a given universe or a phenomena; this scientific theory fulfills its aim when it explains the essences or *realities* that underlie the observable facts.<sup>162</sup> The science of grammar shares this nature of epistemology on some levels with the epistemology of the Hanafī school of *uṣūl al-fiqh* which draws a general ruling, *qā'ida 'amma*, from the study of individual cases and detail rulings. We can say that Ibn Jinnī, believed to be a Hanafī himself, follows the same approach in his linguistic analysis. By analyzing the language at their disposal, the grammarians of the Arabic language formulate theories regarding the rulings of the language; these theories also explain extra-linguistic realities with regards to the language.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Suleiman, "Ideology, Grammar-Making and the Standardization of Arabic", *In the shadow of Arabic the centrality of language to Arabic culture: Studies presented to Ramzi Baalbaki on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday*, (Ed. Bilal Orfali, Brill, Leiden, 2011), 12-13.

<sup>163</sup> Suleiman, "Autonomy versus Non-Autonomy in the Arabic Grammatical Tradition", (*Arabic Grammar and Linguistics*, Ed. Yasir Suleiman, Routledge, London and New York, 1999), 44.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE ISSUE OF THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE IN AL-ḤAṢĀ'IS AND ITS PHILOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

### 3.1. The Text

The text we are about to analyze is the sixth chapter in Ibn Jinnī's work *al-Ḥaṣā'is* dedicated to the discussion of the origin of language, which is titled "opinions on the origin of language: inspiration (*ilhām*) or convention (*iṣṭilāḥ*)?"<sup>164</sup> Similar to some other titles in the book, the title gives an either/or imposition to the question, however, as our analysis will make clear in the following sections, he does not portray a binary opposition in his study of the matter.

In this chapter, Ibn Jinnī talks about the issue of the origin of language. The chapter, by addressing this philosophical and existential question about language, carries an epistemological status for language.<sup>165</sup> I believe the main purpose of the chapter, as of the rest of the book, is offering a foundational basis for the Arabic language and grammar. In this chapter, he does more than offering an sufficient account for a grammarian, he narrates the arguments of his day related to theology and offers his opinions on them. He makes use of analytical tools such as analogy, *ta'wīl*, (interpretation), and many other multidisciplinary sources and tools of analysis to analyze the theories at his disposal, offering linguistic and even theological explanations from time to time. In fact, he revisits some of the concepts he covers in this chapter throughout the rest of the book. These visitations carry a very important role in understanding the text; they show us how in fact the chapter serves as a foundational basis for linguistic matters. In this chapter, we shall analyze the text and we will focus on the question of how this text serves as *uṣūl* for Arabic grammar in the last section of this chapter.

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<sup>164</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 40.

<sup>165</sup> Suleiman notes that in *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, there are various references to epistemology of grammar, "however the importance of epistemology in Ibn Jinnī's approach is underscored by the fact that he devotes a whole chapter ...to this issue" (Suleiman, "On the Underlying Foundations of Arabic Grammar: A Preliminary Investigation." *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 16, no. 2 (1989) pg. 181) The issue of origin of language I believe is one of the topics that merit to an epistemological status for the study of language.

This text was influential in the field of *uṣūl al-naḥw*, and for the science of *wad'* in Arabic literary tradition. Ibn Sida (d.458/1066) an Andalusian scholar of philology and author of many books, cites most of the text in his voluminous book on Arabic language, *al-Muḥaṣṣaṣ*.<sup>166</sup> The celebrated polymath al-Suyuti frequently cites this chapter in his book on *uṣūl al-naḥw*; *al-Iqtirah*. We also find an almost exact copy of this chapter in al-Suyuti's *Al-Muzhir* in the section where he gathers different theories of the origin of language coined by scholars starting with Ibn Jinnī, followed by the views of Ibn Faris, al-Ghazali, Ibn Hajib, Fakhraddin Razi, Imam al-Haramayn.<sup>167</sup>

Al-Suyuti copies the whole text of Ibn Jinnī except the pages forty-two through the beginning of forty-four in our version of *al-Ḥaṣā'is*. The section where al-Suyuti talks about the origin of language is titled “the giver/coiner of the language”<sup>168</sup> and as he cites Ibn Jinnī, he quotes Ibn Jinnī's text under three headings as shown below:

- The teaching of Ibn Jinnī (Pages 40-46)
- Sounds are the basis of language (Pages 46-47)
- How Ibn Jinnī viewed the problem (Page 47)

It must be noted this subdivision serves his whole chapter and not Ibn Jinnī's text only. His chapter consists of citations from several scholars who offered their opinion on the issue of the origin of language.

To make it easier to analyze, I divided the text into sections and subsections according to the flow of ideas and issues that are addressed.

- 1- Introduction and interpretation of the Quranic verse 2:31.
  - Origin of language is human convention
  - Different languages: Exegetical explanation
  - Why did God teach Adam “names”?
  - “Names” include verbs and particles.
- 2- Arguments of the Supporters of the Conventional Origin of Language.
  - The reasons for the convention
  - The way of the convention

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<sup>166</sup> Loucel, "L'origine Du Langage D'après Les Grammairiens Arabes." *Arabica* 10, no. 2 (1963), pg. 281.

<sup>167</sup> al-Suyuti, *al-Muzhir*, 10-23.

<sup>168</sup> Al-Muzhir “al- Wadi' al-luḡa”, Trans. Czapkiewicz, *The views of the Medieval Arab Philologist on Language and Its Origin in the Light of ‘As-Suyuti’s’ ‘Al-Muzhir’*, Krakow 1988, 44).

- The way other languages emerge
  - Convention is ongoing
  - Convention cannot be Divine
  - Different languages: Scripts and Alphabets
- 3- Ibn Jinnī's counter argument for the claim "convention cannot be Divine"
  - 4- The naturalist view
  - 5- Ibn Jinnī's reflections
  - 6- Ibn Jinnī's position

Al-Suyuti's division is very insightful, for it categorizes all the content of our first three sections as Ibn Jinnī's teaching of the issue. By this we might suggest that al-Suyuti observed a new synthesis of a theory rather than simply narrating different opinions, as our analysis of the text also confirms.

## 3.2. Different Views for the Origin of Language

### 3.2.1. Ibn Jinnī's Revelationalist View

Ibn Jinnī begins his chapter on the origin of language by briefly introducing the two different opinions on the issue:

This subject demands particular contemplation, though the majority of dialecticians hold that the origin of language is (human) institution (*tawādu*) and convention (*iṣtilāḥ*) and not revelation (*wahy*) or instruction (*tawkiḥ*)--Abu 'Ali, on the other hand (may God have mercy on him) said to me one day: "It is directly from God." He supported this with God Exalted's statement: "(God) taught Adam all the names (*'asmā*'),<sup>169</sup>

The first position, which is adopted by the dialecticians, *ahl an-nazar*, is that language originated from human convention. Based on our knowledge of the historical background of the discussions, we may understand "Mu'tazilite theologians" from the term 'dialecticians'. Ibn Jinnī does not make any reference to the theological questions that triggered the development of different opinions, and without taking sides he cites his teachers' opinion. As we have mentioned in the chapter on the general place of the issue of the origin of language in Arabic literature, both the arguments and counterarguments from either side of the discussions were mostly founded on Qur'anic verses and their commentaries. Likewise, the Quranic verse 2:31 "He taught Adam all

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<sup>169</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 40-41.

the names” is the main component of the argument with which Abu Ali al-Farisi supports his opinion.

The Quranic verse 2:31 is, in fact, so widely used by the proponents of the opinion that the origin of language is divine revelation both inside and outside of the theological discussions, that Shah describes it as the *locus classicus* for the supporters of the divine origin of language.<sup>170</sup> For instance, Ibn Faris, also a grammarian, uses this verse in his argument as it stands as strong scriptural evidence that corresponds very well to the idea of *tawqīf*, divine instruction as the origin of language.<sup>171</sup>

It should be noted that, when Ibn Jinnī is narrating his teachers’ view in the quoted passage, he does not use any of the terminologies such as *tawqīf*, *wahy* or *ilhām* to describe his teacher’s position. He rather suffices to say “from God”, *min ‘ind Allah*,<sup>172</sup> and this might be an attempt to avoid labeling the view he is about to elaborate, as a traditionalist point of view with regard to the discussions in the field of theology. Ibn Jinnī goes on to offer an interpretation of the verse that exhibits nuance in the traditionalist understanding of the divine origin of language:

This (verse) does not pose a contradiction for it is possible to interpret it as: “He granted Adam the capacity of instituting the language.” This would, of course, be directly from God Exalted, without question. If this is a possibility, not rejected outright, argumentation based on this verse will be invalid. This figured also amongst Abu ‘Ali’s teachings, may God have mercy on him, and it is also the opinion of Abu l-Hasan, insofar as it does not contradict the argument that it is an institution (*tawādu‘*) from Adam.<sup>173</sup>

Ibn Jinnī, here, presents an example of the circular nature of the discussions around the Quranic verses. He does more than presenting it and offers a solution which attempts to end this circularity as he suggests that the verse clearly implies a divine origin for the language, but it does not oppose the idea of human convention. Hence the verse cannot be used by the supporters of divine revelation and institution in a way that excludes human convention in the emergence of the language.

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<sup>170</sup>Shah, "Classical Islamic Discourse on the Origins of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy." *Numen* 58, no. 2/3 (2011), 326.

<sup>171</sup> Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lugha” and Its Development” (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 22-23.

<sup>172</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I, 40-41.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

Ibn Jinnī develops this argument through *ta'wīl*, an interpretation of the verse; in agreement with his teachers, he suggests that the verse can mean “God made Adam capable of instituting language”. Loucel finds this *ta'wīl* on the part of Ibn Jinnī very courageous.<sup>174</sup> However, there are several reasons to disagree with Loucel on this point. Firstly, the form of the verb *'allama* in the verse, has a meaning of causativity in the language, which makes it possible to understand it as “to cause to know” rather than “to teach”. This meaning clearly supports Ibn Jinnī’s interpretation.<sup>175</sup> Secondly, this sense of double transitivity in the meaning of the word *'allama* is apparent in al-Tabari’s commentary of the Qur’an, *Jami’ al-Bayān* and in his *Tarih al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk* which includes a commentary that Adam started calling things by their names, or naming things by their names.<sup>176</sup> Rosenthal’s translation of this commentary is as follows:

According to al-Qasim b. al-Hasan-al-Husayn b. Dawud Hajjaj -Jarir b. Hazim and Mubarak`-al-Hasan 1542 And (Hajjaj) Abu Bakr' -al-Hasan and Qatadah: He taught him the name of everything (saying): These are horses, mules, and camels, jinn, wild animals. And he began to call everything by its name.<sup>177</sup>

It is likely that Ibn Jinnī’s *ta'wīl* is an extension of this commentary.<sup>178</sup> In this way, Ibn Jinnī carries the strength of the scriptural evidence which is initially used to support the divine origin of the language onto his argument that language is *from God*, however, it may have originated through human convention as a result of God’s granting humans the ability to institute the language in other words, by causing them to know how to do it.

Ibn Jinnī continues to elaborate on the verse and this time gives an anonymous *ta'wīl*:

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<sup>174</sup> Loucel, "L'origine Du Langage D'après Les Grammairiens Arabes." *Arabica* 10, no. 2 (1963), 276.

<sup>175</sup> Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lugha” and Its Development”, (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 22-23.

<sup>176</sup>The Arabic word used in the context “*yusamma bi*” means both to call something by something and to name something (See. al-Tabari, *Tafsir al-Tabari: Jami’ul-Bayan ‘an te’wil aaya al-’Kur’an*, 493, 517. And, al-Tabari, trans. Franz Rosenthal, *The History of al-Tabari (Ta’rikh al-rusul wa’l-muluk)*, Volume I, General Introduction and From Creation to the Flood, State University of New York Press, Albany, (1989), 268.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. 268.

<sup>178</sup> It is also worth mentioning the resemblance of this *ta'wīl* to the biblical narration. Weiss draws our attention to this resemblance, he cites al-Makhzumi’s suggestion that the Qur’anic commentary which has Adam call things by their names might be influenced by the biblical narration where the prophet Adam is the giver of names. Al-Makhzumi seems to support the idea that this interpretation is a result of the biblical narration (See. Mahdi al-Makhzumi, *al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi: a’maluhu wa manhajuhu*, Matba’at al-Zahra, Baghdad, (1960), 83-84).

For this [verse] has been interpreted: “God Exalted taught Adam the names of all creatures in all languages; Arabic, Persian, Syriac, Hebrew, Greek and all other languages. Adam and his children used to speak in them until they dispersed across the world. Each one then held onto one of those languages, which came to predominate. All others then faded as time passed.” If the correct report entails this, then it must be accepted, believed, and internalized.<sup>179</sup>

We find a similar reference that explains the origin of all languages grounds on God’s revelation to Adam in Ibn Fâris’s *al-Sâhibî*, which goes: “It is said that the first to write in Arabic and Syriac and in all of them [languages] was Adam...”.<sup>180</sup> This interpretation is also given anonymously by the author and could be considered weak for that matter, however, the fact that it is mentioned by two scholars of different backgrounds and geographies, it can be said that this was a recognized possibility among scholars.<sup>181</sup>

Ibn Jinnî continues his discussion on the origin of language by answering why the category of *’asmā*, nouns were singled out among other parts of speech in the verse “(God) taught Adam all the names (*’asmā*)”? Ibn Jinnî states:

If someone asks: Language consists of nouns (*’asmā*), verbs and particles, and what is taught cannot be nouns to the exclusion of the others, so why has He singled out nouns? One can say, He does this because nouns are the strongest of the three, indispensable for meaningful speech. In contrast, an independent sentence can do without either a particle or a verb. Since the strength and priority of nouns--both in themselves and relative to the other classes--is so evident, they may suffice against that which succeeds them, and whose necessity is occasioned by them.<sup>182</sup>

Al-Najjar comments that Ibn Jinnî is basing his explanation of the Qur’anic usage on the grammatical meaning of the word *’asmā*, in which case *ism* does not have the general meaning of the name as a signifier. Whereas the *’asmā* in the verse stands for the names of all things, substances and actions alike, which includes all three categories of speech in the language.<sup>183</sup> This grammatical perspective is initiated by the question itself, and Ibn Jinnî answers it from the same perspective.

Ibn Jinnî points to the kind of rhetoric used in the verse, which is by uttering the bigger category, including other categories in the meaning. He explains that the nouns in that

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<sup>179</sup> *al-Ḥaṣṣā’iṣ*, I, 41. I thank Kevin A. Butts for his editing of this translation.

<sup>180</sup> Ibn Fâris, *al-Sâhibî*, 38.

<sup>181</sup> I could not trace this interpretation in al-Tabari’s Tafsir.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> al-Najjar, introduction to *al-Ḥaṣṣā’iṣ*, 42.

case are the bigger and superior category than the other parts of speech. Hence if they are taught the others are included in the meaning.

To make the usage of this rhetoric clear, Ibn Jinnī draws an analogy from early Islamic poetry on the usage of the phrase “God knows”. He cites a line of poetry that was written in the context of the battle of Badr by al-Makhzumi:<sup>184</sup> “*God knows* I did not stop fighting them until my horse was conquered by the reddest of butter/blood.”<sup>185</sup> Ibn Jinnī comments; “I.e. since God knows it, I am not concerned with anyone other than Him Exalted, whether I mention and cite them, or do not. He does not mean that it is a secret matter and none knows of it but God alone; he only draws attention to a clear matter and a situation well-known generally.”<sup>186</sup> He continues building up his analogy and quotes another line of poetry supporting the same usage; “*God knows* that we--glancing around on the day of parting--toward our loved ones our necks are tilting.”<sup>187</sup> Once again, he points to what the usage of the phrase *God knows* implies: “[the poet] does not claim that it is a hidden matter, or a story not known but to God alone. Customarily meant by such usages, rather, is that it is common knowledge amongst the people: It has spread amongst them, and they speak of it often.”<sup>188</sup> I believe, by way of using recognized lines of poetry among Arabs as a source for an analogy to help interpret a Quranic usage,<sup>189</sup> he wants to deliver the idea that just like the phrase “God knows” does not mean an exclusion of the knowledge of others, the usage of ‘nouns’ in the verse does not mean an exclusion of other categories, namely, verbs and particles.<sup>190</sup>

That said, Ibn Jinnī’s explanation is unique among others in terms of the way he chooses to explain this question. We read in *al-Muzhir* that the majority of the

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<sup>184</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I, 42, See footnote by al-Najjar.

<sup>185</sup> al-Najjar commentates that the phrase “reddest of butter” (*aṣqar mazbad*) is a metaphor to blood. (See footnote on *Ibid.*, 42.)

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43. I thank Kevin Butts for his editing of this translation.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> In the sense that it aims at interpreting Qur’anic meaning, the way of analogy through poetry in this way was utilised by Mu’tazilites due to their enthusiasm in philology and lexicography in the 10th century. (Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lughā” and Its Development”, (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 27) Traditionalists, on the other hand, based their interpretations on the authority of the Prophet and the companions and how they interpreted the Qur’an. Therefore, this method was not utilized by them at first, however, in the following centuries, it will be an accepted method among the traditionalists as well (*Ibid.*, 37).

<sup>190</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I, 42-43. I thank Dr. Hamza Bakri for his help in understanding this section.

interpretations suggested by that every category of speech was meant by the Qur’anic usage:

“...[in the verse], all the *’asmā’*, names/nouns, were taught by God, and likewise verbs and particles for the lack of detailing. For verbs and particles are also names and are signifiers. They are distinguished from each other [as a category] in grammar but not in the language. And speaking with only [the category of] nouns is impossible.”<sup>191</sup>

As we can see, al-Suyuti highlights the same understanding with Ibn Jinnī, that every category of speech is meant by *’asmā’*. Moreover, al-Suyuti’s indicates a consent among the different sides of the discussions that the word *’asmā’* in the verse stands for *alfāz*, (words) which includes each and every category of speech.<sup>192</sup> However, al-Suyuti arrives at this conclusion by reflecting on the non-technical meaning of the word that as simply “signifier”, which can be in any given category of speech. Whereas Ibn Jinnī arrives at this interpretation by pointing to a use of rhetoric in the usage of its technical meaning in grammar.

Ibn Jinnī’s approach may look unnecessary when compared to the latter solution. That said, Ibn Jinnī’s grammatical focus in this section benefits his study of the language by making a link to what is categorically the origin *’asl* in the language. Consequently, we see the meeting of two different usages for the word *’asl*; its literal meaning that is used in the general question of the origin of the language meets its terminological meaning which is used to describe the categorical origin of a word in morphology. In the last section of this chapter, as we address the philological implications of the text, we will focus on Ibn Jinnī’s opinion of the first category of speech, the *’asl* of the language in that sense, in detail.<sup>193</sup>

To summarize, it can be said that Ibn Jinnī’s revelationalist view is different than the mainstream revelationalist view in theological debates in two main ways; (1) that the divine origin of language may be by way of God’s bestowment on humans the ability to institute language; and (2) that by the *’asmā’* (names) the category noun is meant rather than the names as the general term for signifiers that include all three parts of

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<sup>191</sup> al-Suyuti, *al-Muzhir*, 17. Shah states that the reasoning behind this interpretation is based on the notion of *taghlib* that “...was used to explain the comprehensive nature of the phrase *’aradahum.*” (Shah, “The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the Tawqīf-i-īstīlāh Antithesis and the Majāz Controversy — Part I”, *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), 32.

<sup>192</sup> al-Suyuti, *al-Muzhir*, 19ff.

<sup>193</sup> In section 3.3.1. of this thesis titled “Names” and Chronological Priority of Nominals”.

speech.<sup>194</sup> Now we may ask what these differences tell us about Ibn Jinnī's position in the bigger picture of the discussions on the origin of language. The disagreement in the first point leads us to think he either avoids taking a side in the theological discussions or that he believes the fact that the origin of language is divine does not mean the language of the Qur'an is divine but ephemeral in the same way other things that humans take part in, this falls very close to the understanding of the Qur'an is the created speech of God. However, it also falls close to the understanding that the wording of the Qur'an is created however the meaning is uncreated. Therefore, we cannot make a conclusive remark on Ibn Jinnī's theological position with regards to the createdness of the Qur'an.

On the other hand, the disagreement about the meaning of 'names' may mean that he avoids making an interpretation that would position his theory on either side of the theological discussions, or that he wants to highlight and draw a theological framework for a linguistic theory he supports. For now, it may suffice to say that Ibn Jinnī, with his revelationalist view, is drawing a theory that is helpful for his study of the Arabic language and keeps himself intentionally independent of the theological sides of the discussion.

On the other hand, Ibn Jinnī's view of the divine origin of language is also close to Abu Ishaq al-Isfara'ini's (d. 418/1027) hypothesis which suggests that man was introduced to an elementary language that was enough for man to continue a convention with other men.<sup>195</sup> The idea is the same, in both Ibn Jinnī's interpretation and al-Isfara'ini's hypothesis that God grants the ability of instituting language to mankind.

Ibn Jinnī's avoidance to commit to any theological sides also manifests in his wording when he cites his main teacher Abu Ali al-Farisi's opinion that the language is from God based on the Quranic verses 2:31. He avoids using any of the terminologies such as *tawqīf* or *wahy* that define the theological positions as he explains his teacher's view of the divine origin of language and he simply says "from God", *min 'ind*

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<sup>194</sup> See al-Suyuti, *al-Muzhir*, I, 10-17 for the interpretation of 'asmā' within the discourse of the issue of the origin of language.

<sup>195</sup>Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 31. And, al-Suyuti, *al-Muzhir*, I, 20.

*Allah*.<sup>196</sup> I believe this might be explained by the fact that he tries to distance his teachers' view from being labeled as a traditionalist position within the discussions that took place in theology to avoid any theological underpinnings.

As we have mentioned before, the discussions have stemmed out of the debates over the uncreated speech of God. Weiss notes, in the tenth-century the discussions of the origin of language were not aimed at finding out whether language was created by God or not.<sup>197</sup> It is established in both people of the tradition *Ahl al-Sunna* and Mu'tazilite creed that everything is the creation of God. and therefore, language is also a creation of God. But is it ephemeral like other creations? Or is it eternal as it relates to the notion of uncreated speech of God (or God's speech)? This was the question they were really trying to answer. The verse is for sure a sufficient premise for the supporters of the divine origin of language, *tawkiḥ* or *ilhām*, as these terms imply "the imparting and infusion" of the language onto Adam.<sup>198</sup> Both interpretations serve both sides of the argument. Language or the ability to institute language is granted to Adam; language is of divine origin, but it could also involve convention for it is an ability granted to mankind.

### 3.2.2. *Ibn Jinnī's Conventionalist View*

Following the study of the Qur'anic verse 2:31 and presenting his understanding of divine origin of language based on it, Ibn Jinnī starts telling us why he condemns the supporters of the conventionalist view who claim that the origin of language cannot be divine revelation, *wahy*: "Now let us return, and talk about the weakness of the argument that language cannot be revelation: This is because they argue that the origin of language must involve convention */muwāḍa'ah/*".<sup>199</sup> This way, he makes a link to his very first statement in the chapter which is that "the majority of dialecticians hold that the origin of language is (human) institution (*tawāḍu*) and convention (*iṣṭilāḥ*) and not revelation (*wahy*) or instruction (*tawkiḥ*)". In this way a shift in the chapter is made from the study of the revelationalist view toward the study of the conventional view that is at the disposal of Ibn Jinnī.

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<sup>196</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 40-41.

<sup>197</sup> Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 26.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 44. I thank Kevin A. Butts for his editing of this translation.

Ibn Jinnī's rendering with the word weakness, *i'tilāl*, tells us that Ibn Jinnī disagrees with the mainstream conventionalist view. However, Ibn Jinnī does not really disagree with the possibility of the convention as the origin of language. But he disagrees with their definition and framing of convention that he deems weak. He first presents their position by narrating their theory of origin of language in detail. He begins his narration with the following lines:

They say: It is as if two or three doctors gathered and needed to distinguish between specific things, instituting for each of them a sign and an utterance by whose mention is understood its referent. In this way that thing would be distinguished from all others, and its mention would obviate the need to physically bring it before one's eyes. This is simpler, easier, and less burdensome than having to physically produce it to achieve the purpose of singling it out.<sup>200</sup>

In the quoted passage, Ibn Jinnī starts by giving voice the proponents of the conventionalist theory. Firstly, they picture a setting for the convention; two or more wise man (or the word wise man, *hakim*, could also be translated as doctors) come together triggered by the need to name things for to make communication easier. They seem to presuppose a kind of elementary sign language prior to naming things which have possibly facilitated this gathering. Secondly, they elaborate the reason for convention: "Moreover, in many cases, it would be necessary to mention the things whose introduction or presence is not possible, like something that has perished or the gathering of two opposites in one place. How would it happen even if it were possible? Likewise the things that are in motion in an impossible state, away from their normal course of action."<sup>201</sup> As we can see, Ibn Jinnī tells us the reasons and the wisdom behind human convention for supporters of this view, counting why it is needed and how it makes communication easier and functional without worrying about having to bring the things one needs to talk about in one's presence. It emerges out of the need to talk about things that can be absent, in motion or even abstract. These reasons serve as their arguments in support of the idea that language emerges through convention. He returns to the example of wise man and moves on to relating the what way the convention takes place:

As if these men approached a son of Adam and said: Human! Human! Human! And whenever he heard this utterance he knew that this kind of creature was meant by it. And if they wanted to signify his eye or his hand they pointed at it and said; "hand",

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<sup>200</sup>Ibid.

<sup>201</sup>Ibid.

“eye”, “head”, “foot” etc. and whenever he heard this utterance he knew its meaning, same for the rest of the nouns, verbs or prepositions.<sup>202</sup>

At this point we begin to get acquainted with their definition. This gesticulating way of calling things names will become identified with the concept of convention, *muwāda‘ah* that they frame, Ibn Jinnī explains in the following lines:

And they say that in the beginning, there must be someone to institute (the language) by seeing and pointing. And that it would not be possible to attribute to God (al-Qadim), the Exalted, the action of instituting (a name) for something to one of His servants, for it is confirmed the institution has to take place with the signing and pointing of a limb toward the thing that is intended. But God, the Exalted, has no limbs. Thus, the idea that the action of pointing and signing at the objects is done by man is true and the idea that the language is instituted by God (al-Qadim) Most High has become unreasonable for them.<sup>203</sup>

Shah remarks that whether this anthropomorphic meaning lead to the rejection of the idea of a divine convention, *muwāda‘a*, or that it served as a supporting pretext to this understanding is unclear.<sup>204</sup> However, it seems that the importance of the action of naming with the help of an organ to point at it is so vital that, for them, it almost defines convention (*muwāda‘a*). Hence, they go on and rule for the impossibility of the idea that God can perform *muwāda‘a* for the danger of falling into ascribing an anthropomorphic attribute to God. Once again, we can say that the supporter of this argument is likely a proponent of the Mu'tazilite creed.<sup>205</sup> The idea of Divine Unity and Justice which is one of the pillars of the Mu'tazilite creed, meant God's absolute transcendence and this required an absolute rejection of any idea that might place anthropomorphic qualities to God's essence.<sup>206</sup>

Going back to the text, although the supporters of the conventionalist view Ibn Jinnī narrates see a divine convention ontologically problematic, in theory, they have no problem with the idea that God can make changes on a language that has once been established by human convention. Ibn Jinnī narrates this idea as follows, “And they

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<sup>202</sup>Ibid.

<sup>203</sup>Ibid, 45.

<sup>204</sup>Shah, "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the Tawqīf-i-ṣīlāh Antithesis and the Majāz Controversy — Part I", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), 32.

<sup>205</sup> The usage of the divine name al-Qadim also confirms that the narration belongs to the aforementioned school as Al-Samiri says the emphasis on the Divine name al-Qadim was a distinctly associated with the Mu'tazilite creed. (al-Samiri, *Ibn Jinnī al-Nahwi*, (Dar al-Nazir li al-tiba'a ve al-neṣr va al-tawzi', Baghdad, 1969), 52.

<sup>206</sup>Shah, "Classical Islamic Discourse on the Origins of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy." *Numen* 58, no. 2/3 (2011), 316.

say; however, it is possible for God to make changes on a language that was instituted upon among his servants by saying “the thing that you express with this, express it with such, and the thing you named by this, must be named that. And this is possible for God, all praises due to him, just like it is possible for His servants.”<sup>207</sup> The party Ibn Jinnī narrates from subtly argues by the prerequisite of a preexisting convention, *muwāda’ah*. We can see this same idea in Abd al-Jabbar’s (b. 935/1025) interpretation of the Q: 2:31 who is also a Mu’tazilite theological active in the debates on the issue of the origin of language. Abd al-Jabbar has no objections to the verse with regard to its apparent meaning that God taught Adam all the names. He claims, however, the language that was taught to Adam must have been preestablished by *muwāda’ah*, convention.<sup>208</sup> Based on this example we may suggest that Ibn Jinnī’s reflects the ideas behind the conventionalist view of his time sensitively well.

The idea that God could make changes on the language after convention is evident in the tradition with regards to legal terminology, for instance, the vocabulary in Arabic language for many acts of worship such as prayer and fasting went through a semantic change and gained new meanings after revelation.<sup>209</sup> In fact the idea of the interpretations of these concepts as technical vocabulary has been advanced by the Mu’tazilites and gained recognition in the tradition later on.<sup>210</sup> Ibn Jinnī’s narration in this part probably represents the Mu’tazilite opinion on this matter.

As we have mentioned in the section on precedents, supporters of the conventionalist view backed up the idea of preexisting convention by the Quranic verses 14:4 “And We did not send any apostle but with the language of his people”, suggesting language must precede revelation.<sup>211</sup> To this view, the traditionalist school responded with a

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<sup>207</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I,45.

<sup>208</sup> Shah, "Classical Islamic Discourse on the Origins of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy." *Numen* 58, no. 2/3 (2011), Pg. 327, Shah cites; (Abd al-Jabbar, Mughni,1969:82-4, 1965: V 164-6)

<sup>209</sup>Versteegh, “Linguistic attitudes and the Origin of speech in the Arab World”, *Understanding Arabic: Essays in Contemporary Arabic Linguistics in Honor of El-Said Badawi*, (Editors El-Said M. Badawi, Alaa Elgibali, American Univ in Cairo Press, 1996), 20. Weiss remarks that terminologies such as these were sources of ambiguities that was studied in the Islamic hermeneutics (Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lugha” and Its Development”, (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966).79).

<sup>210</sup>Ibid. 83.

<sup>211</sup>Versteegh, “Linguistic attitudes and the Origin of speech in the Arab World”, *Understanding Arabic: Essays in Contemporary Arabic Linguistics in Honor of El-Said Badawi*, (Editors El-Said M. Badawi, Alaa Elgibali, American Univ in Cairo Press, 1996), 24-25.

logical argument that this would mean each convention would need a preceding one;<sup>212</sup> an infinite amount of conventions is impossible therefore the argumentation that convention must precede revelation is invalid when used in support of the idea that human convention is the origin of language.

After relating their hypothesis, Ibn Jinnī finally gets to answer the question he directed in the beginning, what he thinks is the weakness of their position. We do not know from this section if he disagrees with the idea that convention precedes revelation however he clearly sees their definition of convention that marginalizes a divine convention problematic. Ibn Jinnī addresses this weakness as follows:

One day, I asked someone who supports this opinion, “What prevents the possibility of convention by God? He might not have a physical organ, but He can bring an entity, a thing of wood or something to someone and cause that wood to move towards something and at that very moment of movement a sound of the name for that thing can be heard. And He can repeat this movement in the presence of that person many times, although He has the might to cause him to know by only doing it once.”<sup>213</sup>

Al-Najjar notes that from the historical context, the person Ibn Jinnī refers to is likely a Mu'tazilite.<sup>214</sup> Perhaps because Ibn Jinnī is often considered a Mu'tazilite, his refutation is different from those of traditionalists who object to the view on the basis of the idea that convention precedes divine revelation, or that they reject convention altogether.<sup>215</sup> Ibn Jinnī does not express any disagreement about the way of or the wisdom behind a human convention, however he claims that a divine convention is possible, and based on this he points out to the weakness of their definition of convention. Their theory fails to gain Ibn Jinnī's complete confirmation for he believes that convention does not have to be in a direct gesticulative fashion as they claim.

That way, Ibn Jinnī ends yet another circularity in the debates around the origin of language. It is true that convention can be a part of the origin of language, but Ibn Jinnī's conventional view does not contradict his revelationist view for revelation could be in the shape of a divine convention as he exemplifies: “Hence the wood, used for signing and pointing at, takes the place of a limb of a human being when pointing

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<sup>212</sup>Ibid.

<sup>213</sup>*al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 46.

<sup>214</sup>Ibid. 46-47 and footnotes.

<sup>215</sup>Versteegh, “Linguistic attitudes and the Origin of speech in the Arab World”, *Understanding Arabic: Essays in Contemporary Arabic Linguistics in Honor of El-Said Badawi*, (Editors El-Said M. Badawi, Alaa Elgibali, American Univ in Cairo Press, 1996), 24-25.

at something in the process of convention. Just like it is possible for a human to institute (a name) by making use of a piece of wood to point towards an intended object and use it instead of his hand if he wished to designate something.”<sup>216</sup>

It seems Ibn Jinnī’s challenge was enough to convince his opponent for he reports:

He did not give an answer other than agreeing on the indispensability of it. And no word came from him that I can narrate. ...And based on what has been demonstrated, my opinion is that it is binding for someone who argues against a convention by God (al-Qadim) in an off-handed way, to accept that language cannot be transmitted from tongue to tongue. And let it be known.<sup>217</sup>

This section in the text, has a special importance when we consider the fact that Ibn Jinnī was a Mu'tazilite himself. The discussion back and forth between the traditionalist and Mu'tazilites has been developed, proved and disproved and eventually lead to an adoption of a middle way or a non-committal position by scholars from both sides. Ibn Jinnī might be one of the first thinkers to point out the exhaustion of the arguments in his text. Abu Ishaq al-Isfara'ini(d.1027) and al-Baqillani (d.1013) will be calling for a cessation in these discussions a little period after Ibn Jinnī.<sup>218</sup>

We see that Ibn Jinnī offers a seemingly objective account of the opinions of the supporters of the conventionalist view. He expresses his agreement with some, disproves some and leaves some uncommented. His pattern of agreement gives us an idea of his select opinion of a possible conventionalist theory; which conforms the ways and reasons of human convention, and agrees with the idea of human convention, but disagrees with the definition of convention that deems divine convention impossible.

### 3.2.3. *Entailing Questions*

#### 3.2.3.1. *Different Languages: Revelationalist vs. Conventionalist View*

One of the themes that Ibn Jinnī addresses in his study of the origin of language is the origin of different languages. He addresses this question from both the revelationalist

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<sup>216</sup>*al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 46.

<sup>217</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup>Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lugha” and Its Development”, (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 31.

and conventionalist positions. In this section, we will examine his interpretation of origin of different languages and their possible ramifications.

In the previous chapter titled “Ibn Jinnī’s revelationalist view”, we have briefly referred to the idea of the origin of different languages Ibn Jinnī presented in his rendering of the revelationalist view. Ibn Jinnī introduces the theory that explains the origin of languages within the theory of the divine origin of language as an interpretation to the Qur’anic verse “(God) taught Adam all the names”; he remarks:

For it has been interpreted: “God Exalted taught Adam the names of all creatures in all languages; Arabic, Persian, Syriac, Hebrew, Greek and all other languages. Adam and his children used to speak in them until they dispersed across the world. Each one then held onto one of those languages, which came to predominate. All others then faded as time passed.” If the correct report entails this, then it must be accepted, believed, and internalized.<sup>219</sup>

As it can be seen from the passage, Ibn Jinnī’s revelationalist reading of the origin of languages suggests an idea of original multilingualism.<sup>220</sup> The idea of original multilingualism contradicts the opinion that there was one language in the beginning. The question of the first language was also discussed in the Arabic literary tradition; one of the thinkers who addressed this question was Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1064).<sup>221</sup> Ibn Hazm summarizes the possible theories for the first language as follows: (1) It is possible that the first language is an extinct language, (2) it is possible that it is a living language that we do not know of, (3) it is possible that God taught Adam all the languages or he taught him a language that consisted of synonyms from which, as the children of Adam dispersed upon the world, different languages emerged.<sup>222</sup> Ibn Hazm adds that although he thinks the last possibility might be closest to reality, for the lack of evidence in support of the other possibilities, he declares it most likely that God taught Adam all the names. Other than the scriptural evidence in support of this idea, he makes a logical argument that it would not make sense for people who communicated in one language to feel intrigued to formulate another language when they already fulfil their need to communicate one which supports the likelihood of the

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<sup>219</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I, 41. I thank Kevin A. Butts for his editing of this translation.

<sup>220</sup> Abdelfattah Kilito, “The Tongue of Adam” Trans. From the french by Robyn Creswell, Foreword by Marina Warner, New Directions Publishing Corporation, New York, 2016, 29-30.

<sup>221</sup> Ramazan Demir, “Arap Dilbilimcilerine Göre Dillerin Kaynağı Meselesi”, (Doktora tezi, 2008), 61.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.* 63.

idea of an original multilingualism over others.<sup>223</sup> Ibn Hazm's reflection on the matter might help us understand how Ibn Jinnī and his teachers also arrived at this opinion.

Loucel in his analysis of Ibn Jinnī's text, compares this theory to the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, and comments that the biblical story is more coherent, in which case, the reason for the variation of languages is God's punishment that results in confounding communication among people.<sup>224</sup> However he seems to be disoriented from the fact that Ibn Jinnī is narrating a view on how languages came to differ and not why they have. His remark on coherence relates to the why of the phenomena rather than the how.

Similar to Loucel, Kilito also recalls the biblical story and compares Ibn Jinnī's interpretation of the origin of languages with it. However he departs considerably from Loucel's approach and points out to the unlikeliness of the biblical story in because it is unlikely to occur in the ordinary sense, but he agrees that it could have been a miracle or an act of divine will as Ibn Khaldun explains.<sup>225</sup> He seems to favor Ibn Jinnī's rendering of the question and suggests that its main difference from the biblical story is the fact that it suggests an original multilingualism as the starting point.

On the other hand, Ibn Jinnī's rendering of the question of different languages tells us about the universality of the discussions of the origin of language. Ibn Jinnī keeps his study of the issue independent of any given language in the chapter, unlike, Ibn Faris, for instance, whose account of the discussion seems to be framed around "the language of Arabs" as his title and introduction suggests. One of the implications of Ibn Jinnī's neutrality can be, once again, to avoid getting directly involved in the discussions of God's uncreated speech or the question of Divine Names, both of which are virtually related to the Arabic language.

In the text, another possible theory for the diversity of languages is given in the context of the conventional view of the origin of language. After narrating why and how convention among humans takes place according to the supporters of the conventionalist view, Ibn Jinnī continues:

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid. 64.

<sup>224</sup> Loucel, "L'origine Du Langage D'après Les Grammairiens Arabes." *Arabica* 10, no. 2 (1963), 276.

<sup>225</sup> Kilito, *The Tongue of Adam*, (Trans. Robyn Creswell, New Directions Publishing Corporation, New York, 2016), 29-30.

Following this, you can carry the institution on to another and say; let the name of this thing called *insān* (human) be *mard*, and this thing called *ra's* (head) be called *serr* and so on. And thus if the Persian language emerged and instituted upon, it would be possible to carry out this convention and generate many languages from it, such as Greek, Ethiopic and others.<sup>226</sup>

It seems, the supporters of the conventionalist view also had their explanation for the diversity of the languages. Although the examples are given in Arabic for it is the language of the text, similar to the scope of the revelationalist view, the theory holds relevance for a universal theory of the origin of language and languages.

By referring to the question of the diversity of languages in both the revelationalist and the conventionalist views on the origin of different languages, we can arrive at two main conclusions: (1) that both views were multidimensional in their scope and that the discussions were of a universalistic nature, rather than a language-specific one, pertaining to Arabic only.

### 3.2.3.2. *Language Change and Ongoing Convention*

Another theme that we find in Ibn Jinnī's reading of both the revelationalist and conventionalist views of the origin of language is the notion of ongoing linguistic change and growth. In this section we will point to the direct and indirect ways through which Ibn Jinnī conveys this theme in his chapter.

As we have previously highlighted, according to Ibn Jinnī, the conventionalist view presumes an ongoing convention in a given language. As we can infer from the statement "... today, we observe the craftsman such as the carpenter, the goldsmith, the weaver, the mason and the sailor, name the tools for their crafts,"<sup>227</sup> the convention or agreeing on naming things is regarded as an ongoing phenomenon, and it does not receive Ibn Jinnī's disapproval. Weiss notes that the existence and ongoing emergence of technical vocabulary were recognized by the Arab philologists.<sup>228</sup> Likewise, the

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<sup>226</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 44-45.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> This phenomenon of coining technical vocabulary fell under the category of *wad' 'urfī* in the science of *wad'* as opposed to *wad' lughawī*. *wad' lughawī* could be translated as linguistic givenness that is the base of the language, and relevant to all of its speakers, whereas, *wad' 'urfī* is only relevant to a specific group where it is used. Similarly, religious terminology that gained its meaning with revelation such as *salat*, *zakat* and *sawm*, according to one opinion were considered technical terms for a specific context distinct from the general usage. (Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 80-81).

quoted statement that was used as an argument in support of the conventionalist view is a clear example of occurrence of ongoing change in a language.

Additionally, Ibn Jinnī's elucidation of the revelationalist view affirms language change in two ways. First and foremost, the fact that his revelationalist view endorses human convention ratifies the idea of language change via human convention. Secondly, his interpretation of the usage of the word *'asmā'* as a category of parts of speech rather than names or signifiers in the general sense, may imply that a certain category of speech came before other parts of speech in the language, which leads us to the idea that language went through change in time, with the addition of other categories and forms as it was needed by the speakers.

The idea of ongoing convention which amounts to language change was a critical point in the wider discussions of the origin of language in fourth century Arabic literary tradition. Ibn Jinnī's reference to its possibility seems to counter Ibn Faris who claims that he is "... not informed from any Arab tribe that they recollect, from their time or their near past, an agreement to coin a new name for something that they are using (in the language)." and he claims: "If we knew of such a thing, we would use it as a proof [in support] of the convention on the language before them (conventionalists)."<sup>229</sup> However, as we can understand from his following explanation that they do not know of anyone among the Companions of the Prophet who "agreed on inventing a word or a saying that did not precede them",<sup>230</sup> Ibn Faris is actually questioning invention of any new word that does not resort to what has been established in the language.<sup>231</sup> And, for the matter of fact, Ibn Jinnī seems to agree with him on this for he states that "... you do not hear any Arab (who speaks the pure Arabic) speak in any other way than their fathers and ancestors have spoken. And what comes later follows the rulings of what precedes."<sup>232</sup> The quoted statements by Ibn Faris and Ibn Jinnī carry a very similar meaning. However, this may sound contradictory to what we have mentioned in the beginning of the chapter about Ibn Jinnī's study of the theme of language change. In the next paragraph we will try to address how this is not contradictory but explanatory of Ibn Jinnī's conception of language change

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<sup>229</sup> Ibn Fâris, *al-Sâhibî*, 38.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> Loucel, "L'origine Du Langage D'après Les Grammairiens Arabes." *Arabica* 10, no. 2 (1963), 260.

<sup>232</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 29.

Firstly, let us point to another idea that Ibn Jinnī and Ibn Faris share in common which is that language that we speak today did not come into existence all at once, but rather emerged in a gradual fashion.<sup>233</sup> That said, there is a slight difference in their perspectives; for Ibn Faris, this gradual development occurs through revelation to the prophets starting from Adam to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and that it reaches its mature state with the last Prophet ﷺ.<sup>234</sup> Ibn Jinnī, on the other hand, looks at the change from a pure linguistic point of view and explains how change in the Arabic language does not contradict the previous patterns of linguistic entities and emphasizes the reasons such as frequency of usage or lightness or heaviness of the pronunciation that trigger language change.

The fact that language goes through change was accepted by both sides of the discussions as we see from the examples of Ibn Faris and Ibn Jinnī. However, the conventionalist theory supporters use this fact as a proof that language could have originated through human convention. On the other hand, the opinion of the revelationalist manifested itself in how they framed change: the change occurs by way of revelation, and the change occurs in accordance with what has already been established through revelation, making divine revelation the foundation of change.

Ibn Jinnī seems to be aware of how the idea of language change was harnessed by the both sides of the discussions. However, as a philologist, he chooses to approach it through a linguistic evaluation of the reasons and the nature of these changes in the language. He dedicates a separate chapter for language where he narrows his focus on the Arabic language. In the chapter on the origin of the language Ibn Jinnī follows a universalist approach in his speculations, but this time by basing his inductions and theories on examples in the Arabic language. Ibn Jinnī begins the chapter by linking it to the chapter on the origin of language, repeating his conclusion that the origin of language could either be divine revelation or human convention, and that in either case, some language was established in the beginning.

For the case of Arabic language, he touches on the following questions: What did this first phase of language consist of? How did it grow and change afterwards? What was

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<sup>233</sup> Demir, “Arap Dilbilimcilerine Göre Dillerin Kaynağı Meselesi” ( Doktora tezi, 2008), 304. *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, II, 28-40. Ibn Fâris, *al-Sâhibî*, 37.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

the reason for the addition of new words? What was the reason for changes in existing words? What is the difference between change in the language of the sedentary people and change within the correct form of Arabic? His study of these questions relates to the characteristics of the Arabic language in various ways.

To summarize, the theme of language change and ongoing convention is an important theme in Ibn Jinnī's handling of the issue of the origin of language. Especially because he aims at building up a theory that explains linguistic phenomenon. To summarize Ibn Jinnī's opinion of language change we can suffice to say that he agrees with the idea of an ongoing convention, but this convention takes place in accordance with the preexisting patterns and modes of speech in a language that could be called *al-maqāyīs*. Ibn Faris also agrees with this but he adds that an invention of a *qiyas*, pattern is impossible to occur in a language.<sup>235</sup> Perhaps based on the borders Ibn Jinnī draws for language change, Versteegh remarks that "Ibn Jinnī denies the diachronic/historical character of the grammarian's representations because he believes the Arabic language does not undergo any change."<sup>236</sup> We will be addressing Ibn Jinnī's detailed study and perspective of language change in the last section of this thesis.

#### 3.2.4. *Ibn Jinnī's Naturalist View*

In the previous sections we have embarked upon the theories of human convention and divine revelation as the origin of language, and as we analyzed Ibn Jinnī's report of the two theories, we made references to the nature of the arguments about them and their implications in the discipline of theology. Aside from the conventionalist and revelationalist views on the origin of language(s), Ibn Jinnī, in his chapter, presents another idea of the origin of language which can be referred to as the naturalist view, for its similarity to the naturalist view that is discussed in the Greek philosophy.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Shah, "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the Tawqīf-iṣtilāḥ Antithesis and the Majāz Controversy — Part I", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), 34.

<sup>236</sup> Versteegh, "Linguistic attitudes and the Origin of speech in the Arab World", *Understanding Arabic: Essays in Contemporary Arabic Linguistics in Honor of El-Said Badawi*, (Ed. El-Said M. Badawi, Alaa Elgibali, American Univ in Cairo Press, 1996), 19. (*al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 257.)

<sup>237</sup>The similarity of Ibn Jinnī's view to the naturalist view of the Greek philosophy has been pointed out and discussed by several contemporary scholars on the topic: Shah, Weiss and Versteegh to count a few of them (See. Shah, "Classical Islamic Discourse on the Origins of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy." *Numen* 58, no. 2/3 (2011), 330, and Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development", Princeton University, Ph.D.,

The naturalist view in Greek philosophy refers to the idea that there is a natural connection between the names and the denominated things.<sup>238</sup> And it suggests that the human language originated from nature, suggesting a correlation between the language and the physical world.<sup>239</sup> To support this argument, Socrates, points out to how the names of things resemble their sounds in nature, that they are, in a sense, imitations of nature.<sup>240</sup> Similarly we read Ibn Jinnī say:

Some said that the origin of all languages come from the sounds of the denominated things, like the hissing of the wind, the roar of thunder, the rustling of the water, the braying of the donkey, the croaking of the raven, the neighing of the horse and the slab of a gazelle and alike. And then the languages were born out of them. For me this is a sound perspective and an acceptable opinion.<sup>241</sup>

Ibn Jinnī does not offer any elaboration of the topic in this section, however, in a following chapter titled “On how utterances symbolize their meanings” (*Bab fi imsas al-alfaz ashbah al-ma’ani*), he bases his study of sound symbolism in the Arabic language on this idea of a natural relationship between expressions and their meanings. Ibn Jinnī hints to the fact that he was influenced by grammarians such Sibawayh and al-Khalil who tackled this phenomenon in their works.<sup>242</sup>

Ibn Jinnī did not refer to the nature of the connection between names and the named things in his description of the revelationalist and conventionalist views. The absence of this should not mean that Ibn Jinnī’s conventionalist and the revelationalist views reinforce the idea of arbitrary connection between utterings and their meanings, as it might be presumed based on the nature of the theories in the Greek discussions. The resemblance of Ibn Jinnī’s opinion on the natural origin of language to that of the

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1966, 8-10, and Kees Versteegh, *Landmarks in linguistic thought III: the Arabic linguistic tradition*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), 80.

<sup>238</sup> Salikoko S. Mufwene, “The Origins and the Evolution of Language”, Chapter 1, *The Oxford handbook of the history of linguistics*, (Ed. Keith Allan, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013), 16-17.

<sup>239</sup> Versteegh, *Landmarks in linguistic thought III: the Arabic linguistic tradition*, (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), 80.

<sup>240</sup> G. Bagwell, “A Study of Plato’s Cratylus” (Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University, 2010), 110ff.

<sup>241</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I, 46-47.

<sup>242</sup> Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lugha” and Its Development” (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 12. And Abū l-Faṭḥ ‘Uṭmān Ibn Jinnī, *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, Ed. Muhammad Ali al-Najjar, Volume II, Dar al-Huda li at-taba’a va n-naṣr, Beirut, 1952, 152ff. I thank Kevin A. Butts for his contribution to this translation.

Greek does not mean he is against the idea of an arbitrary connection between words and their meanings.

It is known that the naturalist theory as described, was a linguistic view in the Arab literary tradition and Abbād bin Suleyman is said to be the only representative of this view.<sup>243</sup> Philologists such as al-Khalil and Sibawayh are, also reported to recognize this view especially in their study of onomatopoeia and sound symbolism in the Arabic language.<sup>244</sup> However this theory does not seem to be an independent view with theological implications with regards to the discussions of createdness of Qur'an or Divine Names and therefore it was not a rival position in the tenth-century discussions of origin of language.<sup>245</sup>

Having said this, I believe, for Ibn Jinnī, the place of the naturalist view is complementary either to the revelationalist or the conventionalist views rather than an alternative to them. It is complementary in a way that might be serving as a bridge between the theory of language and the content of the language.

First of all, it may conform to either one of the theories of the origin of language. Its concurrency to the idea of divine origin of language in Islamic theology might be found in the very idea of monotheism, that God is the creator of everything and that everything in the creation is a sign of God.<sup>246</sup> Nature, too is a creation and a sign of God. Hence as it is a means for humans to be inspired and reflect on for the knowledge of God, it can be explained that God inspires humankind in their development of language with the sounds and things in nature. As we mentioned in the chapter on the key terms, inspiration from God, *ilhām* seems to be one of the interpretations of the

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<sup>243</sup>Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 12-14. And Shah, "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the Tawqīf-iṣṭilāḥ Antithesis and the Majāz Controversy — Part I", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), 33. and al-Suyuti cites al-Razi's summary of Abbad's view as "the sounds can indicate meanings by their (sound) itself.", "الألفاظ اما ان", "تدل على المعاني بذواتها" (Al Muzhir, 16, trans. Czapkiewicz, *The views of the Medieval Arab Philologist on Language and Its Origin in the Light of 'As-Suyuti's' 'Al-Muzhir'*, (Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, Krakow, 1988), 114.

<sup>244</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 152.

<sup>245</sup> Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 10-11.

<sup>246</sup>The Qur'an, 1:164, Ekrem Demirli, "Sûfilerin Âlem ve Tabiat Görüşü: Her Şey Tanrı'ya İşaret Eden Canlı Bir Âyettir", *Çevre ve Din Uluslararası Sempozyumu, 15 Mayıs 2008*, cilt: II, 2008, 67-72.

divine origin of language. Hence it is clear how the conception of nature as an origin for language sits in the framework of the view of the divine origin of language.

Secondly, for conventionalist view, too, it is understandable how sounds in the nature could inspire humans to imitate them to refer to them, and hence agree on establishing words, again, inspired by the nature. Also, since the conventionalist view in the Arabic literary tradition is not synonymous with the idea that the connection between language and the world is an arbitrary one as it is in Greek philosophy, it can be seen how the nature as a source of language formation would not contradict the conventionalist view.

It is also complementary to Ibn Jinnī's perception of conventionalist view, which sees divine convention possible. This section follows immediately his rebuttal of the idea that divine convention is impossible for it necessitates usage of an organ.<sup>247</sup> Following his explanation that God could bring a piece of wood or another substance to point at something and He could create the sound of the name of the thing he designates and thus a divine convention can take place, he mentions the possibility that language comes from the sounds of things that exist in nature. At this point, Loucel draws our attention to the location of the naturalist view in the text and points to an understanding that Ibn Jinnī's mentioning of the naturalist view, here, constitutes a support for his previous statement. As Loucel puts it, "...why imagine that God moves a piece of wood with an [accompanying] sound, when he has placed in his creation a great deal of sounds and noises associated with elements and animals and even manifestations of anger, joy, satisfaction, etc."<sup>248</sup>

Another way that it complements the conventionalist view is that nature serves as a source of divine inspiration from which humans, by way of imitating or reflecting on the things they want to express, could institute names for things. Ibn Jinnī leaves this aspect of the naming procedure ambiguous, to what degree the language we use today is God's inspiration is not addressed and perhaps is not important. Ibn Jinnī looks at the language as it is now and seeks to reveal the wisdom behind it with a respect and

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<sup>247</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 44-46.

<sup>248</sup> Loucel, "L'origine Du Langage D'après Les Grammairiens Arabes." *Arabica* 10, no. 2 (1963): 279-280 "De fait, pourquoi imaginer que Dieu meuve avec bruit un morceau de bois, quand il a placé dans sa création quantité de sons et de bruits associés à des ments et même aux manifestations de colère, de joie, de satisfaction, etc... des animaux."

admiration that is either due to God’s establishment of language, or due to the His creation which He made capable of instituting such a language.

The naturalist view on the whole reinforces the idea of divine origin of language, be it explained as divine convention or divine revelation or inspiration. In fact, we find this view listed among the possible interpretations of the divine origin of language that al-Suyuti lists,

There are three opinions for those who support the divine origin of language; that its knowledge reached us through God’s revelation upon one of the prophets, or that He created sounds in certain substances that refer to them, and He made [people] hear them, know them and transmit them. Or that He created the necessary knowledge of language in human beings.<sup>249</sup>

Above all, Ibn Jinnī clearly does not see it as a third position himself as his title and his later summary of the issue tells us: “the origin of language: is it human convention or divine revelation?”<sup>250</sup> and “the question of (origin of) language, whether if it is convention or revelation has been tackled in the beginning of the book, and we have said that both are valid.”<sup>251</sup>

As it can be seen, the place of the naturalist view in the text raises questions such as: Is Ibn Jinnī positing it as a third view among others? If not, what is the role of this theory in the text? And how is it beneficial? We have found that it is not a third position; its role is complementary and not contradictory. And it benefits the issue in several ways: (1) It complements the other two views, (2) It reinforces Ibn Jinnī’s previous rebuttal of a specific conventionalist argument, (3) It tells us Ibn Jinnī agrees with the theory that suggests language originated from sounds in nature.

The implications of the third benefit we counted on the Arabic philology is important. And it will be tackled in the following section titled “philological implications”. In the next section, we will briefly tackle the question of Greek influence in Ibn Jinnī’s account of the issue of origin of language.

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<sup>249</sup> al-Suyuti, *al-Iqtirāh fi uṣūl al-naḥw*, 25. He explains in *al-Muzhir* that this is Ibn al-Hajib’s (d. 1249) interpretation of al-Aṣ’ari’s view of divine origin of language (*al-Muzhir*, 24-25).

<sup>250</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I, 40.

<sup>251</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, II, 28.

### 3.2.4.1. Question of Greek Influence

Contemporary scholars have been pointing to the similarity of the issue of origin of language tackled by the Arab thinkers to the one in Greek philosophy; sometimes suggesting the possibility of a Greek influence. Especially Ibn Jinn's section on what we call the naturalist view has been widely cited and studied with this question in mind.

The question of Greek influence has been discussed by the scholars who studied the issue of origin of language in Arabic literary tradition. The Greek discussions on the origin of language as seen in Plato's *Cratylus* evolve between the rival opinions of the naturalist "*phusei*" and conventionalist "*theses*" views. The main difference between the two views is the connection between the names and the denominated things: Is this connection arbitrary or deliberate? For the naturalist view, the connection is deliberate, and for the conventionalist view it is arbitrary.

The question is, then, in the Greek discussions, whether or not language is originated from an arbitrary process of naming or a deliberate one. The discussions in the Arabic literary tradition do not aim at finding out if it is arbitrary or not. Weiss suggests that both the conventionalist and theological views based the connection between expressions and meanings on fiat.<sup>252</sup> However, based on Ibn Jinn's reading, I believe it may have been equally presupposed as non-arbitrary.

The section where Ibn Jinn supports what we might call a naturalist view for the origin of language have led many contemporary scholars to draw attention to its similarity to the Greek philosophy. The fact that this view is included in Ibn Jinn's chapter might raise the question of whether or not there was a Greek influence in the Arab literary tradition with regards to the origin of language. Weiss explains the unlikelihood of this influence with regards to the discussions of origin of language.<sup>253</sup> He notes that a translation of *Cratylus* was probably not available at the time. Secondly, the naturalist view was not really a rival position by itself in the discussions that took place in the

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<sup>252</sup> Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 38. Cf. Shah, "Classical Islamic Discourse on the Origins of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy." *Numen* 58, no. 2/3 (2011), 315.

<sup>253</sup>Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 10.

tenth century whereas in the Greek philosophy, the two sides of the discussion are naturalist theory and conventionalist theory. We do not see a tension between the naturalist and conventionalist view in Arabic literary tradition as there was in the Greek philosophy.<sup>254</sup>

This view is seen in the works of al-Khalil ibn Ahmad and Abbad ibn Suleyman centuries before Ibn Jinnī.<sup>255</sup> Weiss remarks that the naturalist view as presented in Ibn Jinnī's chapter can be accounted without any Greek precedent in Arabic literary tradition.<sup>256</sup> In his chapter "On how utterances symbolize their meanings" (*Bab fī imsas al-alfaz ashbah al-ma'ani*), Ibn Jinnī himself mentions that this phenomenon has been addressed by al-Khalil and Sibawayh.<sup>257</sup>

As we have seen in Ibn Jinnī's account, the naturalist view challenges the understanding of arbitrary establishment of the language. Having mentioned a possible framing of the naturalist view in Islamic thought, accepting nature as a sign of God, the naturalist view in this sense suggests that the relation between expressions and meanings could as well be deliberate. The origin of language could either be a result of human convention inspired by God's creation, or God's revelation through his creation, from either perspective, it could be deliberate.

Therefore, the implications of the naturalist view on the grammar can be seen in the concepts of sound symbolism, onomatopoeia and greater derivation (*al-ištiqāq al-akbar*) which highlight a deliberate connection between words and meanings.

Weiss explains how the naturalist view is different in the Greek and the Muslim discussion on the origin of language. First of all, he notes that a translation of Cratylus was probably not available at the time. Secondly, the naturalist view was not really a rival position by itself in the discussions that took place in the tenth century unlike its place in the Greek discussions where the two sides of the discussion were the naturalist

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<sup>254</sup>Ibid. 10-11.

<sup>255</sup>Ibid. 12. Shah, "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the Tawqīf-iṣṭilāḥ Antithesis and the Majāz Controversy — Part I", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), 33. And al-Suyuti cites al-Radi's report of Abbad's view as "the sounds can indicate meanings by their (sound) itself (al-Muzhir, 16, trans. Czapkiewicz, *The views of the Medieval Arab Philologist on Language and Its Origin in the Light of 'As-Suyuti's' 'Al-Muzhir'*", (Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, Krakow, 1988), 114.

<sup>256</sup>Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 10-11.

<sup>257</sup>*al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 152ff.

theory and the conventionalist theory. We do not observe a tension between the naturalist and conventionalist views in the Arabic literary tradition as it was the case in the Greek discussions.

Another interesting difference between the Greek philosophers and Arab grammarians on the issue of origin of language is that the perfectness of Arabic language leads Arab philologists such as Ibn Jinnī to believe language comes from God. Whereas for Greek philosophy it was not seen possible that the language came from God because of its perception as imperfect.<sup>258</sup> As Ibn Jinnī states:

And let it be known that after all the mentioned, as time passed, I was continuous in my search and investigation about this matter. And I find the causes and ideas strongly attractive for me in different ways that change my thinking. And when I ponder on the state of this language so noble, distinguished and refined, in it I find wisdom, precision, wit and delicacy that overwhelms my thoughts that it almost distracts from the purpose of its magic. Thus, from what our companions taught us, may God have his mercy on them, and this includes their examples I followed. Considering its stretch of time and its aims, I came to know by its continuity and scope the truthfulness of what they presented successfully and of the delicacies that made them smile and the things they regarded as distinctive about it. Add to this, the narrations of transmitted reports suggesting it is from Allah Most High. So, the belief that language came into existence by God Almighty's instruction (*tawqīf*) and that it is by revelation (*wahy*) became strong in me.<sup>259</sup>

Hence the fact that the discussions are taking place at such an advanced disciplinary phase of Arabic philology which helped grammarians realize the richness and the harmony of the Arabic language actually motivated a belief in divine origin of language.

The difference in their approach probably lies beneath the very difference of the worldview that guided their scientific enquiries. For the grammarians of the Arabic language, language is a phenomenon in God's creation and reflecting on the harmony of the language reinforces the believe in the harmony of the divine creation.

### 3.2.5. *Ibn Jinnī's Position*

In the previous sections, we have analyzed Ibn Jinnī's account of the different views on the origin of language. Weiss suggests that Ibn Jinnī's scope of the different views

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<sup>258</sup> Mufwene, "The Origins and the Evolution of Language", Chapter 1, *The Oxford handbook of the history of linguistics*, (Ed. Keith Allan, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013), 16-17.

<sup>259</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 47.

mirrors the arguments in the discipline of theology in the ninth and tenth century Arabic literature.<sup>260</sup> However, we have observed that Ibn Jinnī does more than narrate the different opinions that are discussed in his time, and with his agreements disagreements and suggestions on different occasions, he builds up his own synthesis of these views. In the last section of the chapter, he concludes by offering his thoughts and he reveals his position in the discussions of the origin of language. This final section where Ibn Jinnī expresses his agreement with both of the views may at first appear confusing for the reader however, his position is not surprising for he has been in agreement with both of the views in his analysis in the chapter.

Firstly, Ibn Jinnī arrives the divine origin of language with the following lines “...the transmitted reports suggests it is from God Most High. So, the belief that language came into existence by God Almighty’s instruction (*tawqīf*) and that it is by revelation (*wahy*) became strong in me.”<sup>261</sup> In this way, he acknowledges the strength of the scriptural, authentic arguments. However, we must remember that Ibn Jinnī’s take on the divine origin of language is that it could be through God’s bestowment upon humans the ability to institute language. Ibn Jinnī revisits this interpretation with the next lines:

However, I say in opposition, as it occurred to us and to our companions, and as they have paid attention, as we have, to dwelling on this marvelous and brilliant wisdom, we do not deny that God Most High might have created before us, people with cognitions more refined from us and memories quicker, and hearts more daring, regardless of how far in the past they might have been from us.<sup>262</sup>

As he revises his synthesis of the divine origin of language in the passage, he points out to the inherent wisdom of the language.

This section carries special importance for its focus on the Arabic language. But it is a specific class of the Arabic language, which is the *fuṣḥa*, the correct, uncorrupted version of the language. Previously, Ibn Jinnī kept the discussion mostly at universal level, i.e. origin of language in general for all languages. Unlike Ibn Jinnī, Ibn Faris titles the chapter where he addresses the question of the origin of language as “the

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<sup>260</sup>Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lugha” and Its Development” (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 28.

<sup>261</sup>*al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I, 47.

<sup>262</sup>*al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I, 47.

language of the Arabs: Is it revelation or convention?”<sup>263</sup> Ibn Faris, a traditionalist in religion, strictly supports the view that language has originated from revelation. His explanation of the phenomena seems to engage with the theological discussions more, hence his title “language of Arabs” which is also the language of the Qur’an binds the discussion to theology, and linguistic purposes sound secondary to the theological concerns.

What Ibn Jinnī has related so far either covered the origin of other languages or was dealing with language in a general sense, i.e. not a specific language. Thus, with this approach that is not language-specific, he elevates the discussions to a theoretical level almost independent of the theological discussions for it to serve his main purpose of drawing a theoretical framework for his language-specific case: the study of the Arabic language.

However here, Ibn Jinnī shifts a focus on the language of the Arabs;”... when I ponder on the state of this language so noble, distinguished and refined, in it I find wisdom, precision, wit, and delicacy that so overwhelms my thoughts that it almost distracts from the purpose of its magic.”<sup>264</sup> Here, he tells us that his knowledge of this language pushes him in astonishment to declare that the origin of this language could only be a revelation and a divine instruction.<sup>265</sup> This language-specific point he makes also leads him to point to its superiority among other languages in a following chapter, employing a similarly romantic description of the language.<sup>266</sup>

Thought this shift onto the Arabic language although makes the matter sound language specific, in fact represents a realist view of human language. As Suleiman remarks:

In supporting the superiority of the Arabic language over other languages, Ibn Jinnī advances the following argument. He points out that the unsurpassed beauty of Arabic is acknowledged by non-native specialists in Arabic linguistics, whose training in this field enables them to arrive at a proper appreciation of their native languages, thus bestowing a validity on their judgement born of well-informed and well-founded comparisons between their native languages and Arabic. Clearly, Ibn Jinnī’s argument

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<sup>263</sup> Ibn Fâris, *al-Sâhibî*, 36.

<sup>264</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I, 47.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

rests on the basic premise of the transferability of linguistic expertise and knowledge from one language to another.<sup>267</sup>

If we get back to the question of his position, having studied Ibn Jinnī's text, it is evident that he chooses a middle way between the divine instruction and human convention. But it is not simply being indecisive in between these positions as some have remarked.<sup>268</sup> Later scholars such as Ibn Tayyib (d.1170/1757) categorized this position “*waqf*”,<sup>269</sup> non-committal position, most probably based on his statement: “And to my regret, I stop (*aqifu*) between these two dispositions, I compare them [but] I retreat becoming overwhelmed. And after this, if there comes an idea to the mind, which promotes one of these positions, we will prefer it over the other, this is our opinion and success is through God.<sup>270</sup> Neither one of the hypotheses comes stronger than the other and hence accepting both of them. The scholars affiliated with the *waqf* position might have slightly different perspectives among themselves, but at the end of the day, they support both of the theories. We find him highlighting his conclusion in a following chapter once again: “... the question of (origin of) language, whether if it is convention or revelation has been treated in the beginning of the book, and we have said that both are valid ... and in the beginning, some language must have been given, and new things were added to it as needed.”<sup>271</sup>

As we have mentioned before, the discussions have stemmed out of the debates over the uncreated speech of God. Weiss notes, in the 10th century the discussions of the origin of language was not aimed at finding out whether language was created by God or not.<sup>272</sup> It is established in both people of the tradition *Ahl al-Sunna* and Mu'tazilite creed that everything, including language, is a creation of God. But is language ephemeral like other creations? Or is it eternal as it relates to the notion of uncreated speech of God? This was the question they were really trying to answer. The verse 2:31 is for sure a sufficient premise for the supporters of the divine origin of language, *tawqīf* or *ilham*, as these terms imply “the imparting and infusion” of the language

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<sup>267</sup> Suleiman, "On the Underlying Foundations of Arabic Grammar: A Preliminary Investigation." *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 16, no. 2 (1989), 178-79.

<sup>268</sup> Demir, “Arap Dilbilimcilerine Göre Dillerin Kaynağı Meselesi” (Doktora tezi, 2008), 97.

<sup>269</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 47, see footnote by the Ed. al- Najjar.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.* II, 28.

<sup>272</sup> Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lugha” and Its Development” (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 26.

onto Adam.<sup>273</sup> both interpretations serve both sides of the argument. The language or the ability to institute language is granted to Adam --language is of divine origin-- but it could also involve convention for it is an ability granted to mankind.

We can say that Ibn Jinnī's position is more than *waqf*, a non-committal stance with regards to the revelationalist and conventionalist views. In terms of theological discussions, it might be considered a non-committal stance since he does not get into any of the ramifications of the different positions in relation to theological controversies such as the createdness of Qur'an or the nature of Divine names. However, with regards to Arabic grammar, as a philologist, he rather agrees with both positions in the way he develops them. For instance, the fact that he agrees with conventionalist view does not mean he supports the arbitrariness of the connection between expressions and meanings, and the fact that he agrees with Divine origin of language does not mean he refuses any human agency in the way of convention in the language. On the contrary the theory he develops is tailored for his view of Arabic language, which he believes is so sophisticated that it can only be of divine origin in that sense --which undergoes and contains different stages of changes due to human usage and need on many levels of the language from lexicology to morphology and semantics-- hence affirming the idea of human convention in language.

Furthermore, from Ibn Jinnī's study of etymology that deeply suggests an idea of sound symbolism in expressions --which will analyze in detail in the next chapter-- reinforces the idea of correctness of names, as opposed to the idea of arbitrariness of the relation between names and denominated. This, moreover, conforms with a divine origin of language as al-Suyuti explains: "God created sounds in certain substances that refer to them, and He made (people) hear them, know them and transmit them."<sup>274</sup> And phenomena such as synonyms or homonyms in relation to metaphor and pragmatics again conforms a contribution of human cognition in the language and consequently the idea of divine origin for he has created mankind capable of such interventions. In the next chapter, we will reflect Ibn Jinnī's theory of the origin of

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<sup>273</sup>Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> al-Suyuti, *al-Iqtirāh fi uṣūl al-naḥw*, 2006, 25, he explains in *al-Muzhir* that this is Ibn al-Hajib's (d. 1249) interpretation of al-As'ari's view of divine origin of language (*see. al-Muzhir*, 24-25)

language on his study of Arabic grammar, and analyze how his position serves as an epistemological foundation for the study of Arabic language.

It should also be noted that some modern scholars have suggested Ibn Jinnī is a supporter of the conventionalist view for his agreement with the conventionalist view he narrates (with one exception) and for his rendering of the Qur'anic verse 2:31 in a way that sees convention possible,<sup>275</sup> and probably for his connection with the Mu'tazilite school of theology. Through the close reading I have come to disagree with this idea.

Although the proponents of the Mu'tazilite school were mostly ascribed to the conventionalist view, we know that some prominent scholars of the school actually supported the revelationalist view.<sup>276</sup> And as Versteegh marks, in principle, Mu'tazilites were not opposed to the idea of divine revelation as the origin of language.<sup>277</sup> Probably for his agreement with the revelationist and explicit disagreement with the conventionalist view on the basis that divine convention is possible, some scholars have listed Ibn Jinnī among the defenders of the revelationalist theory.

With al-Baqillani, a contemporary of Ibn Jinnī, the topic was suspended for the arguments did not arrive at a conclusive solution. Weiss recommends that this can be a sign that at that time, the issue of the origin of language was no longer a live debate among Mu'tazilites and traditionalists.<sup>278</sup> In agreement with Weiss, I believe Ibn Jinnī wrote his chapter at a time when it was safe to tackle the issue for philological interests without necessarily imposing a theological doctrine. Hence, although there are suggestions within the text and the book that Ibn Jinnī endorses many Mu'tazilite doctrines we do not see any suggestion that he took absolute side with the Mu'tazilites on the issue of the origin of language for the imposition of any doctrine that it might facilitate the argument for, namely the Createdness of Qur'an and or the nature of the Divine Names.

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<sup>275</sup> Yavuz, "Ibn Cinni Hayati ve Arap Gramerindeki Yeri", (Doktora Tezi, İstanbul, 1996), 117-118.

<sup>276</sup> For instance, Abu Ali al-Jubba'i (d.925-6) *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>277</sup> Versteegh, *Greek Elements in Arabic Linguistic Thinking*, (Leiden E.J., Brill, 1977), 175.

<sup>278</sup> Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 32.

Therefore, the text serves as a foundation for philological ideas rather than theological ideas. And Ibn Jinnī tackles the issue with almost a neutral language and attitude, presenting a sufficient scope for the framing of his wider linguistic discourse. That said, Ibn Jinnī, at the end of the day seems to adopt a view that he, perhaps indirectly, develops: A divine origin of language with the likelihood of human convention, made possible with the ability granted by God; language might have been established through God’s revelation or inspiration, which can be in the way of direct instruction (as clearly stated in the Qur’anic verse 2:31) or through the ability of naming that humans are granted, by humans themselves, or through divine inspiration via the voices and signs that exist in His creation.

As we have mentioned earlier in the chapter, Ibn Jinnī does not reinforce a binary opposition between the ideas of divine revelation and human convention for the origin of language. Our analysis of the text confirms that he comes up with a synthesis of these different views and in a way unites them. The fact that he avoids putting these ideas in competition distinguishes his narration from the discussions that took place in the discipline of theology. In so doing, I believe, he makes it clear that his concern is the language alone and not the theological underpinnings. Suleiman, as he explains the autonomy of the discipline of grammar in Arabic literary tradition, points out how Ibn Jinnī’s positioning of the science of grammar among other disciplines, while pointing out to the similarities and differences in their methodologies, actually separates it from them and, in a way, highlights its autonomy.<sup>279</sup> By the same token, we can say that Ibn Jinnī, in his chapter on the origin of the language accomplishes the same idea of autonomy of the science of grammar.

### 3.3. Philological Implications

Ibn Jinnī suggests that the *‘ilal*, causations, of a grammarian is based on senses and they aim at discovering the wisdom behind a grammatical phenomenon.<sup>280</sup> As we have seen in the previous sections, the chapter on the origin of language is a theoretically abstract text and does not directly engage with grammar. However, it contains references to grammatical phenomena that allows us to perceive the ways in which

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<sup>279</sup>Suleiman, “Autonomy versus Non-Autonomy in the Arabic Grammatical Tradition”, *Arabic Grammar and Linguistics*, (Ed. Yasir Suleiman, Routledge, London and New York, 1999), 39-40.

<sup>280</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, I, 48

this text underlies his theory of grammar. I believe his theory of the origin of language guides the nature of its epistemology, in that seeking the wisdom behind a grammatical data becomes a quest to unveil the divine wisdom in his creation of language and its speakers.

In this chapter, we will address the philological implications of the Ibn Jinnī's view of the origin of language. Previously we have mentioned that the *uṣūl* for grammar means “the theoretical and methodological issues on which the discipline of grammar rests.”<sup>281</sup> And the term *naḥw* which we have been translating as grammar actually signified “all the scientific and philosophical studies on language studies.”<sup>282</sup>

Çıkar notes that Ibn Jinnī's work had had a great impact on later scholars, among them Ibn al-Anbāri and al-Suyuti who authored on the foundational principles of grammar after him.<sup>283</sup> As Açıkgenç remarks, Ibn Jinnī's *oeuvre*—and I believe especially his book *al-Ḥaṣā'is*—is among the significant works of literature that marks the completion of the discipline of *naḥw* and *uṣūl al-naḥw*.<sup>284</sup> It brings greater theoretical, methodological and epistemological depth to these sciences.

As we pointed out in the introduction, Ibn Jinnī frames *al-Ḥaṣā'is* as a book on *uṣūl al-naḥw*, whereby presumably all the content aims to develop a theoretical and methodological foundation for the science of grammar. Suleiman notes that in *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, there are various references to the epistemology of grammar, “However, the importance of epistemology in Ibn Jinnī's approach is underscored by the fact that he devotes a whole chapter ... to this issue”<sup>285</sup> The issue of origin of language I believe is one of the topics that has an epistemological status for the study of language whose importance and implications might have been overseen in contemporary scholarship. The epistemological value of the issue of origin of language for the study of Arabic grammar has been addressed by al-Suyuti in his book *al-Iqtirāh fī uṣūl al-naḥw*, where he cites *al-Ḥaṣā'is* frequently. Al-Suyuti poses the question: What is the benefit of the issue of origin of language? He answers that there are two kinds of benefits to it, one

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<sup>281</sup> Baalbaki, “Arabic Linguistic Tradition I: Nahw and Sarf”, *The Oxford Handbook of Arabic Linguistics* (2013), 104.

<sup>282</sup> Açıkgenç, *Islamic Scientific Tradition in History* (Penerbit IKIM, Kuala Lumpur, 2014), 372.

<sup>283</sup> Çıkar, “Kıyas: Bir Nahiv Usul İlmi Kaynağı” (Ahenk Yayınları, Van, 2007), 9.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Suleiman, “On the Underlying Foundations of Arabic Grammar: A Preliminary Investigation.” *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 16, no. 2 (1989), 181.

is related to law, and that is why the topic is mentioned on the books on foundations of law, *uṣūl al-fiqh*. And the second benefit is linguistic, and for this reason it is studied in the books of foundations of grammar, *uṣūl al-naḥw*.<sup>286</sup> With this answer, al-Suyuti places the issue of origin of language to the status of an epistemological topic for the discipline of jurisprudence and Arabic grammar. Furthermore, he refers to its implications in Arabic grammar, and notes that among its benefits is how it frames the discussions of linguistic phenomena such as various types of changes that occur in a language and the derivations.<sup>287</sup>

Shah suggests that 20th century scholars have meticulously studied the theories of the origin of language, perhaps mostly in relation to the dynamics that governed it in the field of theology. However, the wider implications of these theories in the field of philology have been primarily glossed over.<sup>288</sup> By the same token, the philological implications of Ibn Jinnī's theory of the origin of language has only been partially addressed in contemporary scholarship. This section aims at addressing this gap in the literature.

When we attempt to read the implications of the revelationalist view, *tawqīf*, and conventionalist view, *iṣtilāḥ*, separately in the discipline of grammar, our reading fails to present the cohesion and harmony of the Arabic grammar and its relation to the scientific worldview that it is a product of. Hence we are often times left with concepts in grammar that pose a contradiction to the individual theories such as etymology, homonymity, synonyms and antonyms.<sup>289</sup> However, we pointed out how Ibn Jinnī's revelationalist and conventionalist views differ from the mainstream articulations of these views in the 10th century, and we have also mentioned the likeliness of the naturalist view being a complementary and not contradictory view to the other two theories. The eclectic nature of Ibn Jinnī's theory of the origin of language closely accords with his theory of grammar which makes it a unique and fruitful topic for close reading.

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<sup>286</sup> al-Suyuti, *al-Iqtirāḥ fī uṣūl al-naḥw*, (Ed. Abdulhakim 'Atayyah, Dar al-Beyrūti, 2006), 26.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Shah, "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the Tawqīf-iṣtilāḥ Antithesis and the Majāz Controversy — Part I", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), 28.

<sup>289</sup> Shah, "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the Tawqīf-iṣtilāḥ Antithesis and the Majāz Controversy — Part I", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), 33.

Following al-Suyuti's footsteps in explaining how the chapter benefits the field of *uṣūl al-naḥw*, we conduct a reading of the chapter on the origin of language aiming at demonstrating the ways in which it serves as a foundational basis for Ibn Jinnī's general study of the Arabic grammar and linguistics. Although Ibn Jinnī's chapter on the origin of language is a theoretically abstract text, it contains grammar-related topics that allow us to perceive the ways in which this text underlies his theory of grammar. In our reading, we found three main points which stood up with clear implications in philology: (1) the explanation on why 'asmā', nouns or names has been singled out in the verse Q:2:31 "(God) taught Adam all the names", (2) the idea of the emergence of the language from the sounds in nature, and (3) the concept of ongoing convention and language change. We find that the text serves as a theoretical framework to Ibn Jinnī's study and understanding of (1) the chronological priority of nominals, (2) sound symbolism in Arabic Language, and (3) language change in Arabic.

Having explained the non-contradictory nature of Ibn Jinnī's theory which is that language is of divine origin either through God's direct instruction or by making humans able to institute language or through , the grammatical points we mentioned conform with either theories for this reason we will not conduct our analysis based on *tawqīf* and *iṣtilāḥ* independently, but we will consider Ibn Jinnī' theory as the basis. The following pages will focus on each of these ideas and their possible implications in Arabic philology.

We observe a two-way effect between the theory of the origin of language and its implications in grammar: (1) The theory of origin of language serves as a theoretical and methodological foundation for related grammar issues, (2) the related grammar issues serve as a proof to the theory of origin of language. In other words, Ibn Jinnī's study of topics in grammar related to these points that Ibn Jinnī coins with regards to origin of language, such as sound symbolism or language change serve as a demonstrative logical argument reinforcing his views of the origin of language.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Sohn, in her thesis focuses on the theory of *al-iṣṭiqāq al-akbar* and how it helps form a theory of the origin of language at a level of demonstrative argument, in Ibn Jinnī's *al-Ḥaṣā'is*. (Myungin Sohn, "Exploring ḥikma (wisdom) in the Arabic Language: Ibn Jinnī's (d. 392/1002) Theory of *al-iṣṭiqāq al-akbar* (The Greater Derivation) in the Arabic Linguistic Tradition" (Unpublished undergraduate thesis, New York University Abu Dhabi, 2017) 9.

### 3.3.1. “Names” and the Question of the Chronological Priority of Nominals

As previously mentioned in relation to its contribution to Ibn Jinnī’s view of divine origin of language, Ibn Jinnī tries to answer why the category of nouns, *’asmā’* which signifies both names and nouns, as seen in the usage of *’asmā’* in the Quranic verse is singled out among the other parts of speech in Arabic, namely verbs and particles. In this chapter, we will talk about the grammatical aspect of his interpretation. As his explanation is based on the technical meaning of term, we ask two questions to *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ* to guide measure the implications of the related passage in grammar: (1) What is Ibn Jinnī’s understanding of the category of nouns? (2) What is the first category of speech in Arabic according to Ibn Jinnī?

First of all, it should be noted that in Arabic, the category of nouns, *’asmā’* includes adjectives and pronouns, the category particles *ḥurūf* include adverbs prepositions, conjunctions, and interjunctions,<sup>291</sup> and verbs are the same categories as in the English language. The classification of parts of speech as nouns *’asmā’*, verbs *af’al* and particles *ḥurūf* in Arabic literary tradition is believed to have been set by the Caliph Ali.<sup>292</sup>

Following the tradition of grammarians, Ibn Jinnī’s definition of parts of speech *kalām* is; “Speech consists of three categories: noun, *’ism*, verb, *fi’l* and a particle, *ḥarf* that comes with a meaning.”<sup>293</sup> Ibn Jinnī’s explanation on the superiority of nouns is very similar to that of Sibawayh’s which elaborates that nouns can be a predicate, *ḥabar*, or can receive a predicate unlike the verbs which can take a predicate but cannot be one, and unlike the particles which cannot take or be either of them.<sup>294</sup>

An important question related to the categories of speech among the grammarians was the priority of the categories over another in chronology. There were debates that took place between the Basran and Kufan schools of grammarians, around the question whether verbs originated from infinitive nouns or the other way around, infinitive

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<sup>291</sup> Bernard Weiss, "A Theory of the Parts of Speech in Arabic (Noun, Verb and Particle): A Study in 'ilm Al-waḍ'", *Arabica* 23, no. 1 (1976), 23.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>293</sup> Ibn Jinni, *al-Luma' fi'l-'arabiyyah*, Ed. Samih Abu Maghli, Dar al-Majlawi li'n-Nashr, Amman, 1988, 15.

<sup>294</sup> Simona Olivieri, (University of Helsinki / Finland) "The ism in the Arabic Grammatical Tradition: Reflections on Its Origin and Meanings" *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* • 17 (2017), 332 (1).

nouns from verbs. We read in Ibn al-Anbārī's *Insaf*, an account of both sides of the argument. To briefly summarize, the Kufan grammarians believed the infinitive nouns were derived from the past tense verbs, whereas the Basrans thought the verbs were derived from infinitive nouns, suggesting the former preceded the latter in the evolution of the language.<sup>295</sup> Ibn al-Anbārī says:

Some of the [Basran grammarians] adhered to the opinion that the proof for the fact that the infinitive noun is the origin, is that the infinitive noun is a noun: and a noun can suffice to its category [for a meaningful statement], without the need of a verb whereas a verb cannot stand by itself and is in need of a noun.<sup>296</sup>

This passage from Ibn al-Anbārī bears the same idea with Ibn Jinnī's explanation in the chapter on the origin of language that "...nouns are the strongest of the three, indispensable for meaningful speech. In contrast, an independent sentence can do without either a particle or a verb."<sup>297</sup> However it would be wrong to rush to the conclusion that this is Ibn Jinnī's opinion with regards to the arguments regarding the priority of infinitive nouns and verbs. For in a different chapter he explains his opinion on this phenomenon. He asks the question "how did the categories of noun, verb, and particle come into existence? Did they emerge all at once or gradually? Part by part or one after another or origin after another origin (*sadr*)?"<sup>298</sup> In agreement with his teacher Abu Ali, Ibn Jinnī suggests that regardless of the category, the *sadr*, origin of every expression was established first and at the same time, followed by their different derivations and versions.<sup>299</sup> He carefully negates the idea that nouns, as they are superior in value to the other categories, form the first category of speech in a language. He does this by giving examples of nouns derived from verbs and particles and points to how what should precede categorically should not be a category that has gone through change, or derived from other categories, or derived into other forms for this suggests a secondariness in the order of existence. Instead, he highlights the state of

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<sup>295</sup> As Weiss uses the term source-noun instead of infinitive noun; "the function of source noun vis-a-vis derived words is simply to name a meaning which can serve as a basis for derivation." (Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development", Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966, 121-122)

<sup>296</sup> Ibn al-Anbārī, *al-Insaf fi masa'il al-khilaf bayn al-nahwiyyun al-Basriyyun wa'l-Kufiyyun*, (Ed. M. A. al-Hamad, 2 vols., Cairo, Dar al-Fikr, vol. 1), 237.

<sup>297</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 41-42. I thank Kevin Butts for his contribution to this translation.

<sup>298</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 30.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 30, 33-34, 40.

*sadr* what is called source or origin, and whatever category the underived state of an origin word is, the priority of that category can be accepted.

The ambiguity stands with regards to what category of speech the source words belong. In the science of *wad'* Abd al-Rahman Khalaf suggests that the source nouns were established by what Weiss translates as 'subsumptive' *wad'* rather than isolative *wad'*. The characteristic of isolative *wad'* is that individual source nouns are established for individual meanings. Whereas, the subsumptive *wad'* explains that every source-noun in the patterns of source nouns comes for such and such meaning.<sup>300</sup> This chronologically later explanation might help understand the established category for source words. They were in fact regarded as nouns, and the question was not whether or not they were nouns but it was whether or not the form they come in had a common meaning or they were individually established for individual meanings.

In this later chapter, rather than supporting his argument about the priority of nouns in the chapter on the issue of the origin of language, brings a different perspective which suggests that source-words (*sadr*) whichever category they were in, came first in Arabic language.

As we mentioned, Ibn Jinnī prefers to explain the Qur'anic usage of the word '*asmā'*' from a grammatical point of view, through which, as we have tried to elaborate, he explains the nature of source words, and derived words.

On a different note, it is important to mention that Ibn Jinnī's answer to the question of why nouns instead of other parts of speech were singled out has a language-specific nature, in the sense that it addresses directly the parts of speech in the Arabic language. However, I believe this was not the intention of the author. Ibn Jinnī was not talking about the origin of the Arabic language but rather all languages, as is evident in other passages. Suleiman remarks that the Arabic linguistic tradition, although specific for the Arabic language, has hints of universalism. He explains that the universalistic nature of Arabic grammar was known to grammarians of the Arabic language. Al-Zajjaji (d. 338/949), for instance, suggested that the classification for the parts of

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<sup>300</sup> Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development", (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 125.

speech in Arabic grammar applies to all languages.<sup>301</sup> Likewise, Ibn Jinnī's seemingly language-specific shift at this point does not change the universalistic status of the origin of the language he discusses.

### *3.3.2. The Emergence of Language from Sounds in Nature: Sound Symbolism in Arabic*

In chapter two we addressed Ibn Jinnī's the naturalist view, which is a view that accentuates an onomatopoeic factor in the origin of language and where it falls as a theory among the other views of the origin of language. In this section we will be focusing on how Ibn Jinnī's naturalist view finds currency in Arabic philology, and how this view serves as a theoretical foundation for grammar.

Ibn Jinnī states his support of the idea of language originating from sounds in nature, suggesting a connection between the sounds of words and their meanings. Furthermore, Versteegh remarks "... in his writings, [Ibn Jinnī] keeps coming back to instances of symmetrical relationship between sound and meaning."<sup>302</sup> and he points out how this theory might serve as a theoretical basis in his study of linguistic phenomena that propose a connection between utterances and their meanings.

The naturalist view denotes an understanding of language in which expressions and meanings are intrinsically related. This is the main ramification of the naturalist view in conceptualizing the language. Therefore, the linguistic implications of the naturalist view will be built on how the idea of an intrinsic connection between words and meanings find a currency in Arabic.

The phenomena that describes an intrinsic connection between expressions and their meanings can be called "sound symbolism" which is defined as "direct linkage between sound and meaning".<sup>303</sup> Hinton's division of categories of sound symbolism is very helpful in analyzing sound symbolism in Arabic language. He divides it into four categories; (1) corporeal sound symbolism which is the usage of sounds and

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<sup>301</sup> Suleiman, "On the Underlying Foundations of Arabic Grammar: A Preliminary Investigation." *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 16, no. 2 (1989), 178.

<sup>302</sup> Versteegh, "Linguistic attitudes and the Origin of speech in the Arab World", *Understanding Arabic: Essays in Contemporary Arabic Linguistics in Honor of El-Said Badawi*, (Ed. El-Said M. Badawi, Alaa Elgibali, American Univ in Cairo Press, 1996), 23.

<sup>303</sup> Kees Versteegh, *Encyclopedia of Arabic*, IV, Brill, 2006, 282, and Johanna Nichols Hinton, and John J. Ohala. 1994b. "Introduction: Sound symbolic processes". Hinton a.o. (1994a:1-12), 1-2.

intonations to express the state of the speaker;<sup>304</sup> (2) imitative sound symbolism also called “primary onomatopoeia”, which is the use of sounds that represent environmental sounds; (3) synesthetic sound symbolism, also called “secondary onomatopoeia” which is described as the acoustic representation of a non-acoustic phenomena and (4) conventional sound symbolism which is the analogical association of certain elements of the words with certain meanings.<sup>305</sup>

The relation between words and their meanings, sound symbolism per se, is a topic Ibn Jinnī ponders deeply and in detail.<sup>306</sup> In fact all the above-mentioned categories of sound symbolism are referred to in his linguistic analysis one way or another. Throughout *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, Ibn Jinnī tackles the connection of expressions and meanings in several different chapters.<sup>307</sup> Among the titles under which Ibn Jinnī studies sound symbolisms are: “The utterances that resemble their meanings”,<sup>308</sup> “the strength of the utterances for the strength of the meaning”<sup>309</sup> and “the resemblance of expressions for the resemblance of meanings”.<sup>310</sup> To have a better understanding of Ibn Jinnī’s scope of study for sound symbolism in Arabic, the frame of his study can be summarized as in *chart 1*.

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<sup>304</sup> Hinton explains, “This category includes involuntary, “symptomatic” sounds such as coughing or hiccupping, and ranges through expressive intonation, expressive voice quality, and interjections. An argument could be made that this is not properly sound symbolism, because in this case the sound is not a true symbol, but rather a sign or symptom.” (Hinton et. al., 1994b. “Introduction: Sound symbolic processes”. Hinton a.o. (1994a:1–12), 2.) this category of sound symbolism is studied by Ibn Jinni under the category of *Ism-fi’l*, *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, III, 34-51, he studies the grammatical position of these verbs in the chapter. We will not be including this category in our analysis, for the grammatical usage of this category is not directly related to our topic.

<sup>305</sup> Versteegh, *Encyclopedia of Arabic*, IV, (Brill, 2006), 282, the definitions provided are from Hinton et. al. (1994) and Ullmann (1962) as cited in the encyclopedic entry.

<sup>306</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 152.

<sup>307</sup> Versteegh cites in *Encyclopedia of Arabic*, (Vol. IV, Brill, 2006 , 287, left.) that Ibn Jinni deals with sound symbolism in the first three chapters we mentioned, however it is referred to in many other chapters and studied specifically in the chapters for *al-iṣṭiqāq al-akbar*, and also chapter on “breaking and reconstructing of roots” (*naqd al-usul wa insha’ usul*), 227.

<sup>308</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 152ff “*Bab fi imsas al-alfaz eṣbah al-ma’ani*”.

<sup>309</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, III, 264, “*Bab fi quwwat al-lafz li quwwat al-ma’na*”.

<sup>310</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 145-152, “*Bab fi tasaqub al-alfaz li tasakub al-ma’ani*”.

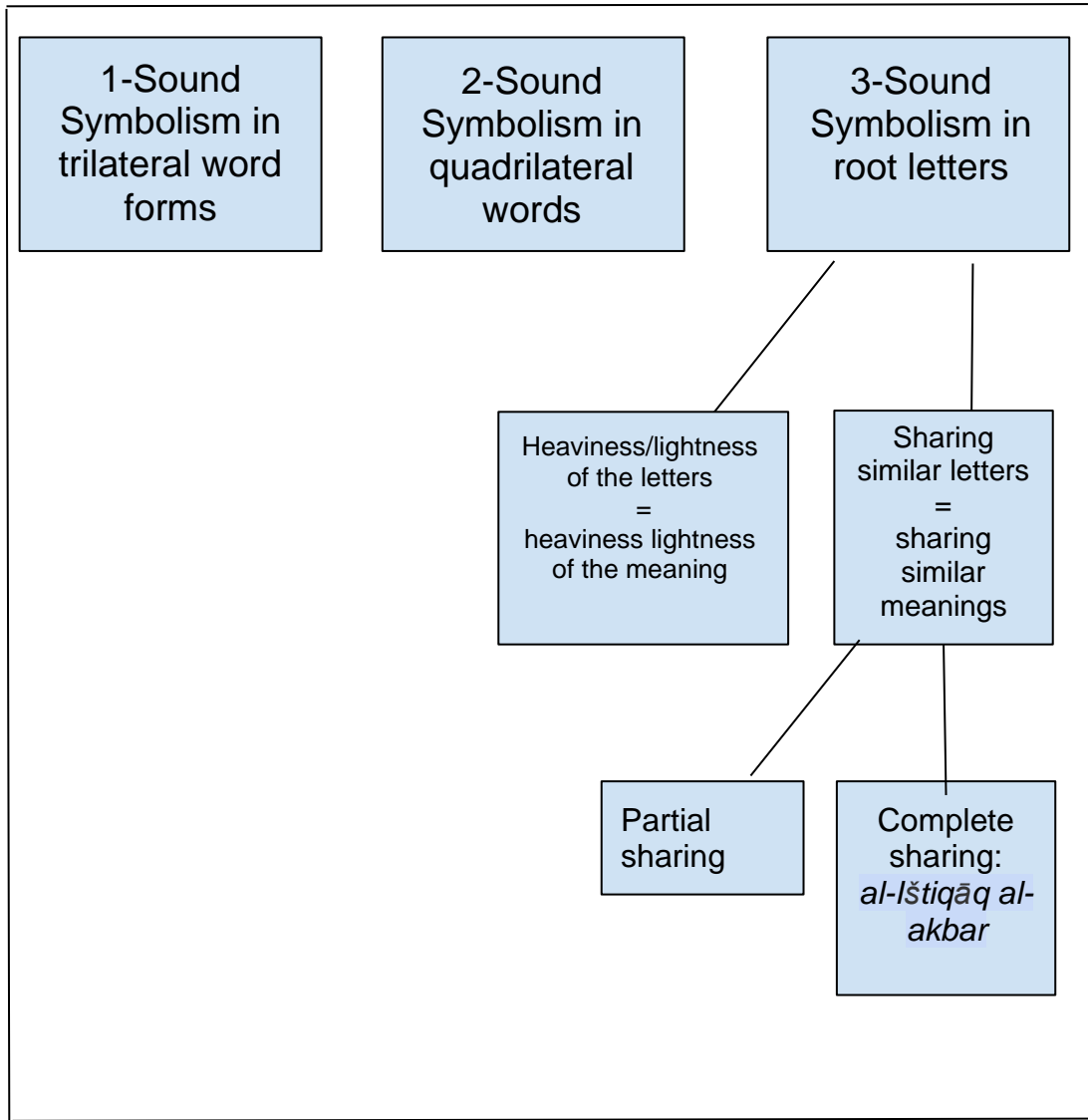


Figure 1: The Scope of Ibn Jinnī's Study of Sound Symbolism in *Al-Ḥaṣā'is*.

As we have summarized in the chart, Ibn Jinnī tackles with the phenomena of sound symbolism in three main levels. On the level of morphological forms of trilateral, on the level of quadrilaterals and on the level of individual root letter independent of morphological forms.

By morphological forms we mean different forms that evolve around mostly trilateral roots and add different meanings to the root's meaning. The morphology of Arabic language similar to other Semitic languages revolves around the root and the different patterns the roots exhibit for different meanings. These patterns are often called forms which entail adding, deleting and metathesizing vowels, inserting prefixes and infixes

to the trilateral roots.<sup>311</sup> The various patterns derived from the trilateral roots are often called derived words, *mushtaqq* as opposed to stationary words, *jāmid*.<sup>312</sup>

Ibn Jinnī suggests that the characterization of morphological forms symbolize the meanings they add to the trilateral root.<sup>313</sup> For a better understanding of his explanation of sound symbolisms on the level of morphological forms, some of his examples will be mentioned in the following passages.

Ibn Jinnī starts the chapter on “the sounds that imitate the meaning” by pointing out to general morphological patterns that suggest a similar meaning with every trilateral root. For instance in the case of the infinitive noun form *fa‘alān* as seen in the meanings of *naqazān* “to leap, to jump”, *galayān* “to boil, to bubble up” and *gaṭayān* “nausea, to feel like vomiting” the form has the common meaning of disruption and overwhelmingness in general.<sup>314</sup> Similarly the nouns on the form of *fa‘alā* for instance *baṣakā* “someone with quickness of hand”, *jamazā* “a quick mule” and *walaqā* “a quick camel” the vowelings and the final consonant *-ā* imitates the sense of quickness and hence gives the same meaning to all the words that come in this pattern.<sup>315</sup>

From the noun forms he moves on to the verbal forms. The form *istaf‘ala* which usually means to seek, demand or ask for the action that the naked trilaterals signify; for instance *ṭa‘ama* means to eat, to taste, whereas *istaf‘ama* means to ask for food, to seek to eat/taste and *manaḥa* means to grant or award, *istamnaḥa* means to ask someone to grant or award. After listing other similar examples Ibn Jinnī explains; “in this form, the letters are put in the order of the actions.”<sup>316</sup> I.e. in the first forms, the actions take place without a demand hence the root letters come as they are and by their usage the occurrence of that action is understood, whereas in the latter form, the root letters are preceded by the letters *sin* and *ta*, therefore by the utterance of the word

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<sup>311</sup> Grover Hudson, "Arabic Root and Pattern Morphology without Tiers." *Journal of Linguistics* 22, no. 1 (1986), 87.

<sup>312</sup> Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lughā” and Its Development” (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 118.. For a detailed study of the derived words in English, see chapter on Etymology of the parts of speech, in W. Wright, *A grammar of the Arabic language*, 3rd Ed. Vol.I, 1996, 29 ff.

<sup>313</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ* II, 153-156, *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ* III, 264

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 152-153

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.* For translation, for translation, I consulted Yavuz, “Ibn Cinni Hayatı ve Arap Gramerindeki Yeri”, (Doktora Tezi, İstanbul, 1996), 119.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

a demand for the action that the trilaterals signify is understood.<sup>317</sup> The fact that the root letters are preceded by other letters mirror the meaning that the action signified by the root letters is preceded by a demand for it and the word signifies the demand of that action not the action itself.

Furthermore the repetition of the ‘*ayn*’ letter of the verb as seen in the form *fa‘‘ala* implies a repetition of the action meant by the trilateral verb. For instance, the verb *kasara* means to break, and *kassara* with the duplication of the middle letter *sīn*, means to break into many pieces, to shatter. Ibn Jinnī remarks, “...for the expressions are meant to signify their meanings, the stronger the expression must correspond to a stronger meaning in the action that is signified”.<sup>318</sup> He carries on the implication of a duplication in the root letters of an expression on the meanings. He points out to different forms of root duplications such as the *fa‘al‘ala*, as in *‘aṣabṣaba* which denotes “a vehemently hot day”<sup>319</sup> from the root ‘*a-ṣ-b* which means hot, where the repetition of the second (‘*ayn*) and third (*lam*) letters of the root word indicate an exaggeration and intensification in meaning just like it does to expression<sup>320</sup>. On the other hand when only the last letter of a root is duplicated, the meaning implies a weakness rather than intensification, as in the example of the form *if‘anlala; iq‘ansasa* (from the trilateral root *qa-‘a-sa*) means to draw back, to recede with a sense of weakness in following up, in reaching or completing.<sup>321</sup> Another example of a form Ibn Jinnī points at a sound symbolism is the form *if‘aw‘ala* as in *i‘šawšaba* which means “to produce an abundance of herbs [for a land]”<sup>322</sup> from the word ‘*ašaba* which means to be grassy.<sup>323</sup> He explains that the increase in the amount of letters by way of repetition and addition, increases the meaning and intensifies it in this case the addition of the letter *waw* and the duplication of the letter *ša* which is the middle letter of the root.<sup>324</sup>

As it can be seen from the examples we cited from *al-Ḥaṣā‘iṣ*, Ibn Jinnī suggests that the morphological patterns in Arabic language have a sound symbolism that is

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā‘iṣ*, II, 155.

<sup>319</sup> *Lane’s Lexicon*, 2112, left column.

<sup>320</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā‘iṣ*, II, 155.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 156, *Lane’s Lexicon*, 2606, right column.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 2102, left column.

<sup>323</sup> Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. 4th edition. Spoken Language Services, 1993, 718, left column.

<sup>324</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā‘iṣ*, III, 264.

imitative or synesthetic of the things they signify. This type of sound symbolism might be similar to what Hinton calls the conventional sound symbolism, which is “the analogical association of certain phonemes and clusters with certain meanings”,<sup>325</sup> this type of symbolism is said to be mostly language-specific, hence the morphological forms for trilateral roots in Arabic is a specific feature of this language and perhaps related Semitic languages.

Another category Ibn Jinnī examined for the sound symbolism is the quadrilateral words in Arabic. Ibn Jinnī presents the first example of a quadrilateral word as he makes a comparison to its cognate. He states that “al-Khalil said, as if they name the sound a cricket makes *ṣarra* for it imitates the prolongation of the sound, whereas they call a falcon’s cry ‘*ṣarṣar*’ imitating its repetitive wail”<sup>326</sup> pointing out to how the word *ṣarṣar* symbolizes the reiteration of the sound of the cry of a falcon. The quadrilaterals such as *ṣarṣar* in Arabic mostly carry an onomatopoeic character. Ibn Jinnī corroborates al-Khalil’s statement and remarks that he has observed many a quadrilateral words symbolizing repetition such as *za’za’a*, to shake violently; *qalqala*, to shake, unsettle; *ṣalṣala*, to clink, jingle; *jarjara*, to gargle; *qarqara* also to gargle, rumble, to make a rumbling noise,<sup>327</sup> *qa’qa’a*, *ṣa’ṣa’a*, other than the quadrilaterals which amount to an imitative sound symbolism, as Hinton describes. We can observe a reduplication in the quadrilateral words Ibn Jinnī gives as examples. In fact, he points out to this reduplication and remarks that it imitates the nature of the action it describes.<sup>328</sup>

Ibn Jinnī also mentions words that imitate sounds of actual human sentences; such as *ḥawqala* whose definition is to say “*la ḥawla wa la quwwata illa billāh*” or similarly the verb *basmala*; to say “*bismillāh ar-Raḥmān ar-Raḥīm*”.<sup>329</sup>

Lastly, and perhaps more importantly for how it relates to the sounds of letters, and phonetics, rather than the pattern of the words, Ibn Jinnī offers a series of hypotheses

<sup>325</sup>Hinton et. al., “Introduction: Sound symbolic processes”. Hinton a.o. (1994a:1–12), 5.

<sup>326</sup>*al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, II, 152-153.

<sup>327</sup>*Za’za’a*: Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. 4th edition. Spoken Language Services, 1993, 438; *qalqala*; Ibid., 922; *ṣalṣala* Ibid., 611; *jarjara*, Ibid., 141; *qarqara*; Ibid., 888.

<sup>328</sup>Reduplication is one of the ways of sound symbolism that exists in almost every language in different ways and ratios. See Hinton et. al., 1994b. “Introduction: Sound symbolic processes”. Hinton a.o. (1994a:1–12), 9.

<sup>329</sup>*al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, II, 156.

of sound symbolism on the level of letters. This level relates to what can be summarized as three main hypothesis; (1) heaviness of letters symbolize a sense of heaviness in meanings, (2) the words that share similar letters signify similar meanings which can be a partial sharing or; (3) a complete sharing of the letter in different combinations, which he calls *al-ištiqāq al-akbar*.<sup>330</sup>

The examples with which he examples the idea is that heavier letters give heavier meanings to a word are six in total. First of them is the words *qaḍima* and *ḥaḍima* two verbs sharing two consonants and sound very similar except for the letter *-q* is a uvular consonant that is relatively heavier phoneme than the velar consonant *-ḥ*, Ibn Jinnī believes this difference in the heaviness of the letters reflect itself on the meanings for the word *qaḍima* means to eat something solid and dry, and *ḥaḍima* means to eat something soft. The letter *-qaf* was used to express eating something crunchy, reflecting the sound and the action of eating such things, whereas the word with the letter *ḥa*, sounds softer and therefore the meaning of the expression is also softer, i.e. eating something soft and moist.<sup>331</sup>

Similarly, Ibn Jinnī mentions the example of the two words that share the same first two letters *naḍaḥa* and *naḍaḥa* and having a slightly different third letter, the former with the velar sound *ḥa* and the latter with a pharyngeal letter *ḥa*. Both of the words connote the meaning of flowing of the water, however *naḍaḥa* means to water, spray,<sup>332</sup> and *naḍaḥa* means the gushing of water from its source (vehemently),<sup>333</sup> the heaviness of the letter in the latter verb symbolizes more intensity in the action of water running.<sup>334</sup> Also he notes that, the difference between the meanings of the words *qadda* which stands for cutting lengthwise,<sup>335</sup> into pieces and *qaṭṭa*, to cut crosswise, to cut a hard thing,<sup>336</sup> mirrors the difference between their last letters he explains that the letter *ṭa* in the latter word, is sharper, quicker and more restrained phoneme which helps

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<sup>330</sup> This categorization is made based on the study of *al-Ḥaṣā'is*.

<sup>331</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 157, I consulted Yavuz, "Ibn Cinni Hayatı ve Arap Gramerindeki Yeri" (Doktora Tezi, İstanbul, 1996), 119.

<sup>332</sup> Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. 4th edition. Spoken Language Services, 1993, 1140, right column.

<sup>333</sup> Lane's Lexicon, 2868, middle column.

<sup>334</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 158.

<sup>335</sup> Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. 4th edition. Spoken Language Services, 1993, 1140, right column.

<sup>336</sup> Lane's Lexicon, 2597, left column.

signify a more severe action of cutting, and cutting off rather than a long process of cutting which is expressed by the former word with the lighter, longer letter of *dal*.<sup>337</sup>

Ibn Jinnī provides several other examples of pairs of words whose difference in one of their letters mirrors a difference in their meanings.<sup>338</sup> He moves on to offer an analysis of the letters for several individual words, pointing out to their role in attaining the meaning of the expression they belong. He explains the symbolism for the verb *bahaṭa* which means “to search”: “the letter *ba*, with its sound resembles the tapping of the foot on the ground, *ha*, with its raucous sound resembles the clawing of the lion or the wolf when they are lost and *ta* is for lingering over the earth, in this way you can see how its (meaning) can be sensed by deducing.”<sup>339</sup> Another word he explains in this way is the verb *šadda*; to pull tight or tighten, fasten. He elaborates that the letter *šin*, sounds like the first sound the rope makes when it is pulled before strengthening the knot. The letter *ba* is a stronger letter than *-šin* and is contracted. He suggests that the meaning of the word can be understood from the letters, and the word's second meaning which is intensity, distress and vehemence (*šiddah*) he notes, is a metaphor to the tightness of a rope, and that this metaphor is made to make extend and exaggerate the initial meaning of the word.<sup>340</sup>

Lastly, he embarks upon the word *jarra* which stands for “to pull, to drag along”<sup>341</sup> he says, “they prioritized the letter *jim* which is a forceful letter just like the beginning of the action of pulling is difficult on both the puller and the thing that is pulled. And the letter *jim* is a continuous (sound), *mukarrar*,<sup>342</sup> similarly when something is being dragged from the ground it trembles and moves shuffling over the ground.” pointing out to how the affricative sound resembles the friction in the action of dragging. Likewise, he notes that the letter *-ra* also has a sense of continuity, probably referring

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<sup>337</sup> al-Ḥaṣā'iṣ, II, 158.

<sup>338</sup> Among other examples; *waṣala* and *wasala* and the words *qarata*, *qaraṭa* and *qarada* for details, see Ibid., II, 158-163.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., II, 163.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. 4th edition. Spoken Language Services, 1993, 139, right column.

<sup>342</sup> Here the author points out to the affricative nature of the letter *jim*.

to the trill in the pronunciation of the letter,<sup>343</sup> moreover the letter is doubled in the word *jarra* and thus “it is chosen appropriate for this meaning among other letters”<sup>344</sup>

Through the aforementioned examples, Ibn Jinnī suggests that letters that construct a meaningful part of speech make up the meaning of that word in a way that either resembles onomatopoeia or a metaphor, *isti ‘āra*, that is built upon a sound symbolism intrinsic to that letters sound and way of pronunciation. He is very established in this idea of sound symbolism, remarking:

If you come across an example whose meaning you cannot be guided to understand in the way that we have exemplified, that which is does not confirm what we have conveyed, this means one of two things; either that it exists but you do not comprehend it or that for this language, there are implicit origins or sources and reasons in its development that failed to reach us. As Sibawayh says, the knowledge that is available to the firstcomers might not reach those who come later.<sup>345</sup>

He explains that the signs of the expressions’ resemblance to meanings with which one could reason a connection, might have disappeared and the thoughts and meanings they were associated with might be shifted in many different ways, in a way that refers to semantic change in languages.<sup>346</sup>

Following the above examples of words and drawing attention to their onomatopoeic character, Ibn Jinnī takes a step further and makes a point about individual letters; “if (the letters) *dal*, *ta*, *ṭa*, *ra*, lam and nun came together, accompanied by the letter *fa*’, in most of the cases the word will have meanings of weakness and lack of strength.”<sup>347</sup>

The author provides around eighteen examples of such words and their cognates which all share a common meaning related to a characteristic of weakness.

And this and many others of its kind, is a matter that if you entered from its door and contemplated on it, you improve your way of thinking, it gives you its reins it mounts you high up on it. And it reveals to you its splendors and beauties. But if you deny it,

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<sup>343</sup> The terms trill and affricate are terms used in phonetics to describe the pronunciation of these letters, for an explanation of these terms see, Encyclopedia of Arabic, Ed. Kees Versteegh, III, Brill, 2006 and Hinton et. al., 1994b. “Introduction: Sound symbolic processes”. Hinton a.o. (1994a:1–12), 599.

<sup>344</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, II, 164.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 164-5, see “Semantic Change” in Victoria Fromkin, Robert Rodman, Nina Hyams, *An introduction to language, Ninth edition* (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Boston, 2011), 508.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 166.

and say it is a random thing, and a way that is difficult and impossible, you prohibit yourself of its delights and you close the door to the favors it will bring.<sup>348</sup>

Upon these examples he remarks that this is only what is apparent of the delicacies of the language, the wisdom is much higher and dexterous.

And like this, to the selection of the letters in how they imitate the sounds of the incidents they express, they add to the meanings by their order, and by prioritizing what signifies the beginning of the action, and delaying what describes the ending of it and positioning in middle what happens in the middle of the occurrence, putting forth the letters for the intended meanings and the aim that is pursued.<sup>349</sup>

One of the instances where he revisits the idea of the naturalist theory for the origin of language is his study of *al-ištiqāq al-akbar*, greater derivation. *Al-Ištiqāq al-akbar* is a semantic analysis of different permutations of unilateral roots, by which Ibn Jinnī proposes an intrinsic relation between a signifier and signified, highlighting the idea of correctness of names.<sup>350</sup> This kind of anagrammatic method in lexicology was used by early lexicographers before Ibn Jinnī,<sup>351</sup> providing Ibn Jinnī the accumulated data to work on and develop his idea of the greater derivation.

Ibn Jinnī classifies two kinds of derivations; the first ‘smaller’ derivation, he says, it the derivation of a root to its different forms both in the nominal and verbal cases where as the bigger ‘greater’ derivation is when “you take a trilateral root and you find one (common) meaning for the root and its six permutations”.<sup>352</sup> Ibn Jinnī names the latter derivation *al-ištiqāq al-akbar*.<sup>353</sup> As Sohn observes with *al-ištiqāq al-akbar*, “Ibn Jinnī attempts to establish how signifiers, the transpositions of triradical roots, reflect the essence of the signified...”<sup>354</sup> The common meaning of the unilateral words,

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Myungin Sohn, “Exploring hikma (wisdom) in the Arabic Language: Ibn Jinnī’s (d. 392/1002) Theory of al-ishtiqaq al-kabir (The Greater Derivation) in the Arabic Linguistic Tradition” (Unpublished undergraduate thesis, New York University Abu Dhabi, 2017), 54. See *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, II, 133-139.

<sup>351</sup> I. Sara, S.J. Solomon, “The classical Arabic Lexicographical Tradition”, *The Oxford Handbook of Arabic Linguistics*, (Ed. Jonathan Owens, Oxford University Press, New York, 2013), 526.

<sup>352</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, II, 134.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>354</sup> Myungin Sohn, “Exploring hikma (wisdom) in the Arabic Language: Ibn Jinnī’s (d. 392/1002) Theory of al-ishtiqaq al-kabir (The Greater Derivation) in the Arabic Linguistic Tradition” (Unpublished undergraduate thesis, New York University Abu Dhabi, 2017), 22. Sohn’s thesis brings forth how the demonstrative logic used in analysing *al-ištiqāq al-akbar* could be perceived as a way to understand the giver of the language (Ibid., 26ff).

as Sohn suggests, may be reinforcing the idea of correctness of names, hence suggesting another level of sound symbolism.

Ibn Jinnī gives the example of the letters *j-b-r* and states that all permutations of these three letters have the common meaning of strength and intensity.<sup>355</sup>

*Jabara*: to help someone back on their feet (e.g. one fallen into poverty)<sup>356</sup> Ibn Jinnī explains it stands for strengthening someone.

*Jaraba*: to test; as in *rajul mujarrab*; an experienced man, ergo his experience made him strong in his work.

*Bajara*: as in *abjar*; an obese person, who is “strong of a belly”.

*Baraja*: as in *burj*; a tower,<sup>357</sup> which signifies a strength in standing on its own.

*Rabaja*: as in *rabajay*; and that is a man who is proud with most of his actions. Hence, he is gratifying himself and strengthening his affairs.

*Rajaba*: as in *rajjaba*; to gratify and empower someone.<sup>358</sup>

Ibn Jinnī supports his point of a common general meaning of strength and intensity for the combinations of the letters *j-b-r* by giving the above examples and contemplating on their meanings. He follows with the example of the root letters *s-w-q* with the general meaning of powerfulness and polity,<sup>359</sup> and the letters *s-l-m* with the general meaning of friendliness and kindness.<sup>360</sup> As we can see in the example of *j-b-r* what is important is that the root letters of a word is a permutation of the letters, the words do not need to be in the same form. Ibn Jinnī seems to have chosen the example of words that are common in the language from diverse forms and states, it could be a verb or a derived noun or an infinitive noun, whatever it is, it, the role of the ‘*muštaqqiyy*’, the deducer of derivations,<sup>361</sup> is to point to the common meanings that prevail among the different words of the same letters.

This manner of playing with the permutations of trilateral roots was not a unique theory for Ibn Jinnī. Bakalla notes, for instance, Ibn Faris was also preoccupied with a similar

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<sup>355</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 135.

<sup>356</sup> Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. Edited by J. Milton Cowan. 4th edition. Spoken Language Services, 1993, 132, right column.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 63, left column.

<sup>358</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 135-136 I sufficed to the definitions Ibn Jinni presents for most of the words.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

endeavor, however he restricted his study to three permutations of a trilateral root.<sup>362</sup> Other scholars of lexicography and grammar were also entertained by this same phenomenon which was called by *qalb* by some of them.<sup>363</sup>

*Al-Ištiqāq al-Akbar*, is more than just an etymological muse for Ibn Jinnī. He uses this method to point out differences between words that have similar meanings. In one of the first chapters of *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, when he is addressing the difference between speech, *kalam* and saying, *qawl*, he consults the method of *al-ištiqāq al-akbar*.<sup>364</sup>

From the aforementioned examples of Ibn Jinnī's study of different categories of sound symbolisms, from the level of morphological forms of expressions to the onomatopoeic characteristics of quadrilaterals and trilaterals, his induction of how each letter, and group of letters symbolizes certain meanings, including his theory of *al-ištiqāq al-akbar*, we see a manifestation of the naturalist view of the origin of language, on the level of lexicology and morphology in Arabic grammar. Ibn Jinnī shows in a demonstrative way, how this view is a sound view for him: "It is said that the origin of all languages come from the sounds of the denominated things, like the hissing of the wind, the roar of thunder, the rustling of the water... And then the languages were born out of them. For me this is a sound aspect and an acceptable opinion."<sup>365</sup> and in this way he points to its benefit as a theoretically foundational basis for his study of sound symbolism in Arabic language. I believe this statement summarizes his scope of the study of sound symbolism; "other than the selection of the letters in how they imitate the sounds of the incidents they express, the meanings are conveyed by the order of the letters, and by prioritizing what signifies the beginning of an action, and delaying what describes the ending of it and positioning in the middle what happens in the middle of the occurrence, placing the letters for the intended meaning."<sup>366</sup> He repeatedly remarks along with his analysis; that comprehending the sound symbolisms in Arabic language is the door to understanding the *ḥikma*, wisdom of the coiner of this language.<sup>367</sup> Weiss points out that such

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<sup>362</sup> Ramzi Baalbaki, *The Arabic lexicographical tradition: from the 2nd/8th to the 12th/18th century*, (2014), 280-8.

<sup>363</sup> Shah, "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the Tawqīf-iṣṭilāḥ Antithesis and the Majāz Controversy — Part I", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999), 34-36.

<sup>364</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 3ff.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47.

<sup>366</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 162.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 162, 164.

speculations might lead to the general understanding that language entirely originates out of the similarities between vocal sounds and meanings.<sup>368</sup>

Let us also point out how Ibn Jinnī's framing of the sound symbolism keeps it safe from the criticism against the naturalist view in his time. One of the criticisms for the naturalist view was that if expressions signified their meanings intrinsically, *bi dawātihā*, then every human being would know all the languages; because this is not the case, the naturalist view of the origin of language is impossible.<sup>369</sup> Ibn Jinnī explains that if the sound symbolism is not clear to the observer, this indicates one of two things; either the observer does not comprehend it, or that it is because the language has come to this stage through various changes, and with the passing of time it is possible that the reasons and the origins that were clear to people in the beginning would not be very clear in later times. Supporting this idea with a citation from Sibawayh that "the knowledge that is available to the firstcomers might not reach those who come later."<sup>370</sup>

Another criticism that Weiss counts is the impossibility of an expression signifying a non-existent thing. How can an expression symbolize a meaning that does not exist whereas there exist in language words that express non-existing things.<sup>371</sup> Ibn Jinnī's analysis of words involve meanings of actions and feelings such as *baḥata*, to search and *šadda* to tighten or to be intense, hence from his general framework, we can infer that he could as well make an attempt to analyze the words that denote non-existing things and or confess the inaccessibility of the connection to him at this stage of the language.

While demonstrating the perceptions around the nature of the givenness of language in the science of *wad'*, Weiss explains, that "the establishment of expressions was understood in a simple, straight-forward manner: the author of language forms ideas of all the things that make up the world; for these ideas he appoints expressions, so that the ideas become the meanings of the expressions. Thus, meanings are located in

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<sup>368</sup> Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 12-13.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 16-17, *al-Muzhir*, 16. Before we continue, it must be mentioned that these criticisms were directed at the theory of Abbad b. Suleyman by later scholars (Ibid.), but we do not have any evidence to support Ibn Jinni had been a receiver of such criticisms himself.

<sup>370</sup> al-Ḥaṣā'is, II, 164.

<sup>371</sup> Weiss, "Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of "Wad' al-Lugha" and Its Development" (Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966), 17.

the mind of the author of language.”<sup>372</sup> For Ibn Jinnī a direct correlation between expressions and meanings might not be easy to observe, and this might be thanks to the cognition of meanings in the brain as Weiss explains it. Moreover, cognition is different from human to human, from people to people and from language to language. Therefore, the logical rebuttal to the naturalist view; “the impossibility of knowing every language or necessity that every language would be the same” renders a different dimension. The idea of arbitrary connection between expressions and meanings is threatened with the thought of the naming occurring on a cognitive level, on the level of comprehension and reflection.

### 3.3.3. *Language Change*

Another implication of the study of the origin of language on the Arabic grammar is how it frames the phenomena of language change. Language change happens on many levels and for many reasons in every human language; from sound changes to phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic changes have been taking place in every living language.<sup>373</sup> Medieval linguists of Arabic language were aware of an ongoing change in language which might not have been observable within their lifetime, but whose occurrence they recognized in one way or another.

Versteegh notes that the way Arabic grammarians approached language change was different from the western Arabists. The way Arabic grammarians studied language change was within the framework of these correct models of Arabic whereas the western Arabists analyze the change in the nature of the language in sedentary populations, before and after the conquests, too. For with the conquest of non-Arab regions, a give and take between the languages led to a different level of simplification of the correct form of Arabic.<sup>374</sup>

The dialect of Hijaz which is the language of the Prophet’s tribe and the language of the Revelation, was regarded the most correct model of Arabic,<sup>375</sup> other regional pre-

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>373</sup> Fromkin et. al., *An introduction to language*, Ninth edition, (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Boston, 2011), 488

<sup>374</sup> Ibid. I prefer to use a “simplification” instead of pidginization for I would not be able to make a conclusive remark on the nature of the language in such a state for my lack of study of its examples and the concept of pidginization.

<sup>375</sup> The translation of the term *faṣīḥ* is controversial and is peripheral to the purpose of the paper we may suffice with perhaps overly simplistic yet hopefully basically adequate rendering of “correct” or “correct model”.

Islamic models were also considered correct after the Hijaz model.<sup>376</sup> Additionally, it should be noted that the language of the Bedouin was perceived as more correct than the language of the sedentary population.

It would be wrong to say Arabic grammarians disregarded the status of the emerging colloquial variations of the language, for how else could they judge their state of corruption if they had not analyzed the state of that language. In fact, Ibn Jinnī tackles the matter on several different occasions. However, in this section we will focus on Ibn Jinnī's study of change in the classical variation of the Arabic language. The change in this case, from the eyes of Ibn Jinnī, can be roughly divided into two main categories; (1) change for the worse,<sup>377</sup> which is either the developing extinction of the level of correctness -that could be found in Bedouin who resided or were in contact with the sedentary population, or the change in the language of Arabs as a result of the expansion of the arabophone population onto non-Arab territories; (2) change for a course, i.e. change that took place in the correct form of the Arabic language at some point in the past for reasons of easiness on the tongue, frequency of usage, or many other needs by users of the language. This section will focus on the analysis of the second kind of change, however Ibn Jinnī's judgement of the change for the worse will be summarized in the next paragraph.

Change for the worse was always an acknowledged phenomena by Arabic lexicographers, who felt the need to spend years studying and compiling the language of the Bedouin to document and better their knowledge of the correct model of Arabic, which suggests that the language of the sedentary people was regarded as somehow corrupted. Ibn Jinnī explains why one does not take the language of the sedentary people over the Bedouin people as a point of reference in language; “for the deficiency, corruption and their foul and obscenity [in their language], if we knew they conserved the correct form of Arabic we would need to refer to them just as we refer to the people of the desert.”<sup>378</sup> Ergo, Ibn Jinnī refers to a change perhaps in the sense of informality and lack of seriousness, for he notes, although the language of the sedentary shares the

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<sup>376</sup>Versteegh, “Linguistic attitudes and the Origin of speech in the Arab World”, *Understanding Arabic: Essays in Contemporary Arabic Linguistics in Honor of El-Said Badawi*, (Ed. El-Said M. Badawi, Alaa Elgibali, American Univ in Cairo Press, 1996), 16.

<sup>377</sup> This term is coined in this research to summarize how the Arabic grammarians evaluated the language as corrupt (*fasad*).

<sup>378</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 5.

phonetics and writing of the correct speech of the Arabs, they lack observation of declensions and rules of a correct speech.<sup>379</sup>

However, these scholars of language, for their conservative approach to what was defined as the correct Arabic, were thought that they denied the concept of change in Arabic language. For instance Versteegh states that “Ibn Jinnī denies diachronic/historical character of the grammarian's representations because he believes Arabic language does not undergo any change”.<sup>380</sup> It is true, that one version of Arabic was deemed the most correct form of the language and the sedentary dialects were often times considered a corrupt version of the Arabic language, for it overwent change both in lexicon and usage of the language mostly due to its contact with other languages with the expansion of the Islam. The increasing contact with non-Arabs and disconnection to the desert triggered a language change that was regarded as corruption in the language.<sup>381</sup> This resulted in the standardization of the language, and grammarians took to collecting and recording a corpus for the correct language. On the other hand, the Arabic grammarians, including Ibn Jinnī, did not deny the idea of change within the correct version, other than the change in the way of what they regarded ‘corruption’.

Another leg to the main category of the change for the worse is the corruption of the language of the Bedouin population. Baalbaki states that the lexicographers considered the sedentary population as a source for documenting *kalām al-‘Arab* until the end of the second/eighth century, however, after this time their language was considered corrupt and was no longer taken as a reference point in grammar.<sup>382</sup> The Bedouin language continued to serve as a corpus for sound Arabic language, however that too only lasted for another two centuries, and, in the end of fourth/tenth century the language of the Bedouin was also approached critically and was considered changing away from the correct form of speech.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>380</sup> Versteegh, “Linguistic attitudes and the Origin of speech in the Arab World”, *Understanding Arabic: Essays in Contemporary Arabic Linguistics in Honor of El-Said Badawi*, (Ed. El-Said M. Badawi, Alaa Elgibali, American Univ in Cairo Press, 1996, 19. And *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, II, 257.

<sup>381</sup> Kees Versteegh, *The Arabic Language, Second Edition*, Edinburg University Press, Edinburg, 2014. 53, 59.

<sup>382</sup> Baalbaki, *The Arabic lexicographical tradition: from the 2nd/8th to the 12th/18th century*, 2014, 30-31.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

Baalbaki points out that this time frame was confirmed by Ibn Jinnī.<sup>384</sup> Ibn Jinnī remarks on how the language of the sedentary population is not taken as a reference to the correct usage of Arabic because of their lack of compliance to the rulings of the correct Arabic, and that the opposite would be true that they would still be a reference point if they have complied to these rulings. By the same token, he suggests that if we knew that the Bedouin no longer complied to the rulings of the sound Arabic, their language would no longer serve as a corpus either to this he adds: “... this is the case in our day today, for we hardly see a Bedouin with *faṣīḥ* (correct) [Arabic].”<sup>385</sup> Ibn Jinnī provides examples of his encounters with Bedouins who lack correctness of speech, and, his reports of the situation marks the end of the corpus collection through the speech of the Bedouin.<sup>386</sup>

In fact, Ibn Jinnī goes beyond accepting the language change, he establishes a theoretical framework for the idea of ongoing change as he discusses the issue of the origin of language. Both the revelationalist and conventionalist views that Ibn Jinnī frames, as we have pointed out in the previous section conforms with the idea of ongoing change in language.<sup>387</sup> In this section we will be looking out for the implication of this very idea, which was not difficult to find for Ibn Jinnī offers pages of analysis and anecdotes for changes that occur in the Arabic language.

Ibn Jinnī’s study of language change, covers many topics, however, we will be touching upon examples of what can be categorized as; phonological, morphological change and lexical change.<sup>388</sup> Although Ibn Jinnī studies these various aspects of change in scattered way and sometimes inadvertently throughout his works, his overall scope of study of language change is very wide. Morphological change involves the transformations certain words and usages go through due to frequency of usage or easiness on the tongue on the level of letters within a morphological unit, the lexical change can take place through addition of new words in the language which might be in the way of analogy to what already exists (word coinage), in the way of burrowing,

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, II, 5, The translation of the term *faṣīḥ* is controversial and is peripheral to the purpose of the paper we may suffice with perhaps overly simplistic yet hopefully basically adequate rendering of “correct”.

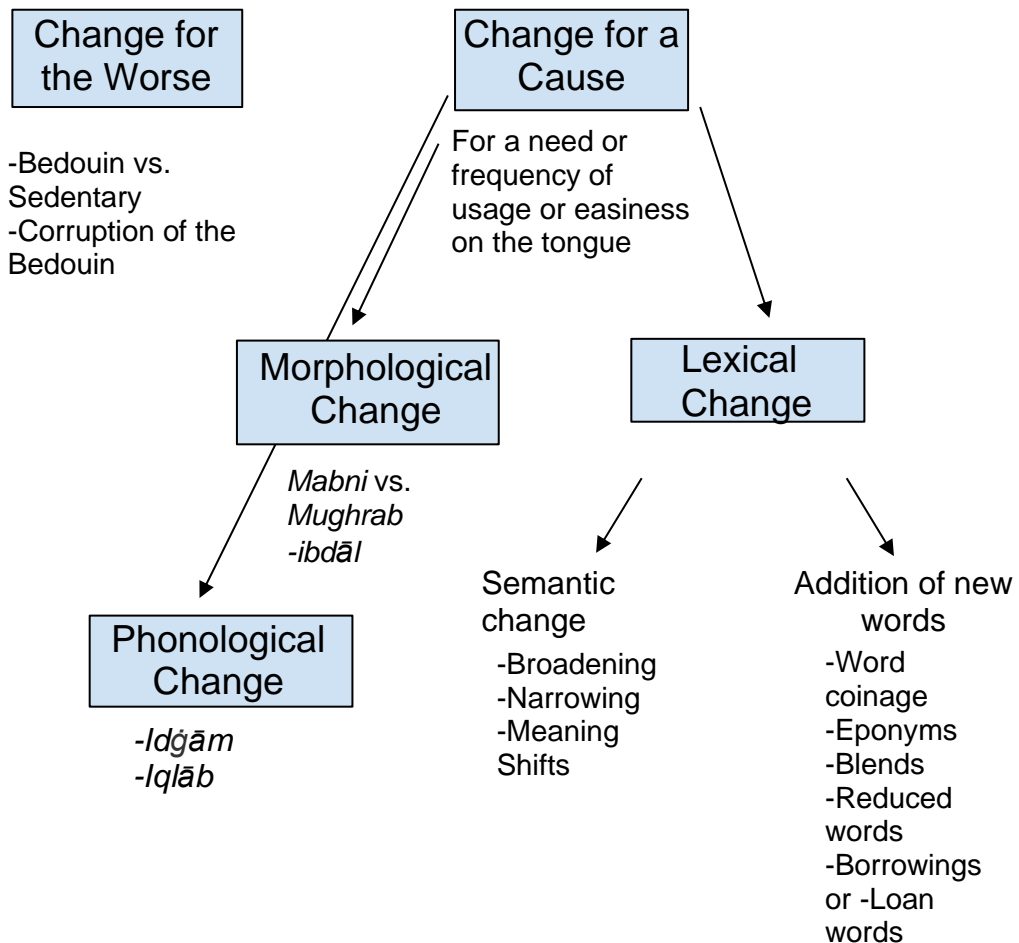
<sup>386</sup> Baalbaki, “Arabic Linguistic Tradition I: Nahw and Sarf”, *The Oxford Handbook of Arabic Linguistics*, 2013, 30-31.

<sup>387</sup> See section number 3.2.5. of this thesis on Ibn Jinnī’s Position.

<sup>388</sup> In classifying Ibn Jinnī’s study of language change, I consulted: Fromkin et. al., *An introduction to language, Ninth edition*, Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Boston, 2011, 488-531.

blending, reducing words or in the way of eponyms. Lexical change can also take place through semantic change which refers to meaning shifts, broadening and narrowing of meanings; it also covers synonyms, metaphors and idioms in the language.

### *Language Change in Arabic in Al-Ḥaṣā'is*



*Figure 2: Categories Ibn Jinnī studies in language change.*<sup>389</sup>

<sup>389</sup> The categories and subcategories are guided by the related chapter of the book *An introduction to language, Ninth edition* by Fromkin et. al. (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Boston, 2011, 488-531). Ibn Jinni does not organize his study as such; however, we chose to adopt this categorization for the convenience of this research.

Ibn Jinnī considers morphological changes as a way a language develops; on a chapter where he studies the shifting of the letters for easiness on the tongue, the phenomenon called *qalb*, he states “ This (phenomenon) and others like it, are ways through which the language expands (*ittisa*)... ”<sup>390</sup> For morphological changes we see the words *ibdāl* or *qalb* are used often times to refer to changes of letters in a given word, explained either by way of shifting places, changing for an easier letter on the tongue with regards to the rest of the letters and vowels in the word, or by adding or removing certain letters to make it easier on the tongue (*istiḥsān*). One of the examples he provides of such word changes are; *qaḍaya* (to tear something) the word’s root letters were originally *qa-ḍa-ḍa* however to avoid heaviness in articulations, when conjugated it was transformed into *qaḍḍaytu* (I tore) rather than *qaḍaḍtu*. Afterwards the word changed into “*qaḍaytu*” without the repetition of *ḍaḍ*, and the word’s origin seemingly switched onto *qa-ḍa-ya* from *qa-ḍa-ḍa*.<sup>391</sup>

Another change on the level of morphology is the change in the status of the declensions of words. Some words are declensionable *mu’rab* which means that their case endings change due to the role they have in a given sentence, and some are not declensionable *mabni* whose case endings do not observe any changes; such as pronouns (with the exception of duals) in Arabic. Ibn Jinnī suggests that the difference between *mu’rab* and *mabni* is a matter of change. The once *mu’rab* word became *mabni* due to frequency in usage.<sup>392</sup>

For phonological changes Ibn Jinnī firstly explains *iqḷāb*, which is a certain form of transformation of a letter in a word<sup>393</sup>, Ibn Jinnī gives the examples the word ‘*aṃbar*’ should originally be ‘*aṇbar*’ due to its root letters ‘*a-n-b*’ however the silent *nun* followed by a voiced letter *ba* has turned into the letter *mim* for easiness on the tongue. He gives many other examples of this phenomena. Another kind of phonological change is *idḡām* where one speaker changes the first letter for the following letter (complete progressive assimilation) as seen in the example of the sentence “*marra’ayta?*” (who did you see?) which is written as “*man ra’ayta?*” the voiceless

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<sup>390</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*, II, 88.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-91.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32.

<sup>393</sup> Ibn Jinni does not use the term *iqḷāb*, however this term is used in the science of recitation of Qur’an to define the very same phenomena of changing the letter silent nun into *mim* if preceded by the vowelled letter *ba*. Therefore, the term *iqḷāb* is used here for its narrowness in describing the kind of morphological change Ibn Jinni explains.

*nun* in the preceding word is turned into *ra* to match the following *ra* when pronounced, and hence make the articulation easier on the tongue.<sup>394</sup>

On the lexical level, Ibn Jinnī touches upon many ways in which lexical repertoire of a language goes through expansion and change. The addition of new words, he says, take place only in accordance with what already exists in the language. What comes later in language does not contradict the rulings of what precedes.<sup>395</sup> Hence when a need to name a new thing emerges in the language, that takes place in accordance with the preexisting forms in the language. For instance, the word *kitāb* means book, and in the emergence of a library, the form of *nomina loci*, nouns of place, could be coined to denote library, *maktaba*, in accordance with the preexisting form *maf'ala* for time and place. Hence word coinage performed by the craftsman of the new tools and instruments they invent, as mentioned in the chapter on the origin of language, might fall into this category of change in Arabic language. What is important for Ibn Jinnī is that this change takes place in accordance with a correct model of Arabic.

Ibn Jinnī addresses the phenomena of eponyms, which are “words that are coined from proper names”<sup>396</sup> in the third book of *al-Ḥaṣā'is* in the chapter titled “the specification of proper names to meanings of adjectives”.<sup>397</sup> He gives the example from a line of poetry which ends on a statement “all pretty girls are a treacherous (*hind*)”, *kullu ḡāniya hindun* and explains that the word *hind* in the sentence comes from the proper female name *Hind* which has been used as an adjective to mean disloyal, deceitful.<sup>398</sup>

Going a step further, for loan words or borrowings, Ibn Jinnī marks; “whatever is in accordance with the speech of Arabs, is considered speech of Arabs”<sup>399</sup> and he explains this with the example of the sentence; “*taba al-ḥuškunān*”<sup>400</sup> (the bread was delicious), to which his teacher Abu Ali comments: “this is from the speech of the Arabs, for you

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<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>396</sup> Fromkin et. al., *An introduction to language, Ninth edition*, Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Boston, 2011, 502.

<sup>397</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, III, 270.

<sup>398</sup> Because he focuses more on its categorical use as an adjective than its history as an eponym, we are not provided by any information as to who this *Hind* in history may have been.

<sup>399</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 356.

<sup>400</sup> *Ḥuškunān* or *ḥuškumān* is a borrowed word from Persian which stands for a kind of sweet bread or biscuits. Cf. Abu Mansur, *al-Jawaliqi al-Mu'arrab min al-kalam al 'a'jami ala huruf al-mu'jam*, Ed. F. Abdurrahim, Dar al-Qalam, Damascus, 1th print. 1990, 283.

have brought it into the speech of Arabs by committing it to the rules of the Arabic language.<sup>401</sup> Ibn Jinnī adds that this confirms the idea that if a foreign word has been used in accordance with the rulings of Arabic language, this means its usage has been accepted within the speech of the Arabs.<sup>402</sup>

Ibn Jinnī highlights the importance of a cause for a change; there should be a need for the addition of the new things. This need could be lack of a word that describes a new phenomenon or heaviness on the tongue to articulate it, or frequency of usage which triggers many changes as well as adding new abbreviated words such as *ḥawqala* for saying “*lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā billāh*”.

In all the examples of the categories of change in language, Ibn Jinnī highlights the importance of the model in accordance with which new additions may be made. It could be a form of morphological pattern, or a form borrowed, or an eponym--which would have slightly different rulings of conjugation than originally Arabic vocabulary--they all commit to the rulings of what has been given in the language before them, and are used in accordance with their rulings and forms.

Ibn Jinnī explains that something new might look different than a previous given pattern, however it could be in accordance with another pattern. An example of this might be the irregular plural forms of words. For words in certain patterns there can be a common irregular plural form, however that is not a conclusive distinction and one cannot count on the commonness of the form as a given pattern to drive an irregular plural form from any other similar singular word. This is because its plural form might be a different one and this can only be done through knowledge of that particular word and its forms.<sup>403</sup> To exemplify from the English language, different patterns can be observed in the negative forms of adjectives or adverbs in English such as typical-atypical, important-unimportant, normal-abnormal where the negating suffixes cannot be used randomly to any word that we desire to negate whereas regular plurals have a simple pattern of adding -s, -es, -ies at the end of nouns which can be

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<sup>401</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, I, 357.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>403</sup> *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, II, 42, Ibn Jinni explains how someone can who does not know the Arabic can drive different forms of a word. For the forms such as the doer form, *isim fa'il*, the object form, *isim maf'ul*, regular plural forms and infinitive noun form, for instance, one can drive them based on patterns, however it is not the case for the types of irregular forms where there might be several patterns (*qiyās*) on which they might be based.

used with every word. Hence not every category of word can be derived based on one pattern. Therefore, Ibn Jinnī suggests, the deductive use of analogy, *qiyās*, does not work at every aspect of the language and cannot be used to invent words in every form, as can be seen in the example of irregular plural forms in Arabic. This idea of a model I believe could be valid for other languages, too, in a sense change occur within the borders of a given system in every language.

In this way, Ibn Jinnī explains the nature of language change in Arabic. In the chapter on the origin of language he theoretically establishes the idea of ongoing language change, in his wider body of works as we have pointed out in this chapter, he explains in detail how this change happens in Arabic language. Language change is mostly related to the idea of *muwāḍa‘a* when it involves direct human initiative such as coining a new word and it is directly connected to the human nature in other cases when the frequency of usage or difficulty on the tongue determines the language change. However, all this change takes place in accordance with what has been established in the language, and this, as Ibn Jinnī states, could either be by God’s institution or by His facilitating the mankind to do so through revelation or inspiration.

## CONCLUSION

After considering the historical background, we have looked at how he provides an account of the origin of the language which exists in dialogue with, yet is independent from the debates of his time, we see that his idiosyncratic view is free from the theological colorings that were prominent in his day, yet is nonetheless critical in informing the theoretical and methodological bases for his study of grammar. This latter finding we have established through reference to three matters in Ibn Jinnī's *uṣūl*, which, though in themselves phonological, morphological, and/or syntactical, are nonetheless directly underwritten by his origin of language theories.

The main questions of this investigation have been: (1) What are Ibn Jinnī's views of the origin of language? (2) What is his synthesis of different positions that were present in his time? Which leads the way for the main research question of (3) How do Ibn Jinnī's views on the origin of language serve as a theoretical or methodological foundation to his study of grammar?

To answer our questions within a framework that helps us conceptualize the work within the wider picture of the history of scientific traditions in Islamic civilization, we have first attempted to summarize the historical stage that the author of our text, Ibn Jinnī, lived in. We have pointed out the historical precedents that facilitated the production of massive amounts of work in various fields, and particularly in that of grammar. We have discussed the disciplinary stage and the naming stage of the science of grammar in the Islamic scientific tradition. We have consulted Açıkgenç's periodization and perspective, and also definitions of the sciences of *uṣūl*, and in framing the focus text as a product of the discipline of *uṣūl al-naḥw*, which is the science that addresses the theoretical and methodological issues that the science of grammar rests.<sup>404</sup>

We have provided a brief history of Ibn Jinnī, his life, education and works, with a focus on *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, the book where he addressed the issue of the origin of language.

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<sup>404</sup> Baalbaki, "Arabic Linguistic Tradition I: Nahw and Sarf", 104.

We have drawn a picture of the nature of the discussions around the issue of origin of language in the fourth/tenth century. We have referred to the theological tensions that governed the development of the discussions at the time, and briefly explained the key terminology for our close reading of the text.

In the third chapter, the main body of this investigation, we have firstly analyzed the text and demonstrated its relation to the issue of origin of language; as a result of our analysis, we established where his study of the origin of language might fall among the discussions that took place in the fourth/tenth century. Ibn Jinnī accurately lays out the opposing viewpoints of the discussions, faithfully portrays their arguments and terminologies.

Ibn Jinnī, while presenting the different views, namely revelationalist and conventionalist, of the origin of language, offers his own synthetic argument. He does this by expressing his agreements and disagreements with the existing views, cutting through circularities in his peers' arguments, and by isolating his theory from any theological commitments. Through our analysis of the text and its possible implications we have speculated on the position of Ibn Jinnī, which has been interpreted in many ways in the Arabic literary tradition as well as modern scholarship. His position is layered, and from a theological point of view constitutes non-committal *waqf*. We have concluded that his study of the origin of languages completes a picture where Ibn Jinnī seems to support a primarily divine origin of language that does not exclude human convention and is complemented by what we have called a naturalist view for the origin of language.

Through the lenses of the theoretical framework he offers in the chapter on the origin of language, we analyze Ibn Jinnī's opinions from other chapters on the category of nouns as a part of speech, his study of sound symbolism and conception of language change in Arabic language. As a result of our analysis of the metalinguistic implications of these arguments we see that Ibn Jinnī's theories of the origin of language significantly underwrite his system of grammatical thought.

Ibn Jinnī's study of the origin of language has a universalistic approach which makes it a historically important text for the contemporary discipline of philosophy of language. We have signaled explicit and subtle ways the text represents the discussions of its time. The text, aside from its objective narration of different opinions on the

origin of language, offers Ibn Jinnī's own theory of the origin of language that differs from the revelationalist view of the Traditionalists and the conventionalist view of the Mu'tazilites. We believe that his position aims at drawing a theoretical framework to his study of Arabic language rather than taking sides in the theological debates that evolved around the (un)createdness of God's Speech.

With regards to language change, through the secondary literature, I have also come to realize the lack of thorough analysis of how the medieval scholars of Arabic language perceived and analyzed what they called the corrupt version of the Arabic. Contemporary scholars' remarks are often reductive or generalized, sometimes shadowing the linguists' analysis of change in language with a labelling that spuriously suggests that they refuse the idea of change outright.

All the conclusions in a way confirm the purpose of *al-Ḥaṣā'is*, a book which is said to mark the disciplinary stage of the science of grammar in Islamic civilization. As Açıkgenç points out, the study of a scientific product within the framework of the perspective of scientific tradition "is very useful not only to question our methodology used today in history of science and philosophy, but [is also useful] in any comparative study of intellectual history".<sup>405</sup> Ibn Jinnī's contribution to the theoretical and methodological foundations of Arabic grammar takes place in an advanced stage of discipline of philology in Islamic Civilization. The work belongs to a stage of scientific tradition that may correspond to the stage of the science of contemporary linguistics. This may bring the work to a level comparable with the products of the contemporary discipline of philosophy of language. Hopefully one of the benefits of this thesis will be to highlight potential contributions of Ibn Jinnī's development of theoretical framing to the modern discipline of linguistics and philosophy of language.

Contemporary scholars such as Suleiman and Yunus Ali have been bringing the works of medieval Muslim scholars, with their vast horizons of possible contributions to modern linguistics and philosophy, to the radar of contemporary scholarship. I hope this sampling of the influence of Ibn Jinnī's theory of the origin of language as a theoretical foundation for his study of the Arabic grammar, may demonstrate the cohesion of his theoretical framework to the nature of Arabic language.

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<sup>405</sup>Açıkgenç, *Islamic Scientific Tradition in History* (Penerbit IKIM, Kuala Lumpur, 2014), X.

Our study of Ibn Jinnī's theory of the origin of language and its implications on his grammatical theory confirm Suleiman's finding that when the epistemological status of Arabic grammar and its assertions about the language are taken into account, "the Arabic Grammar is neither a universalist nor a restricted linguistic model, but rather a language-specific model which predominantly adheres to a 'realist' view of human language."<sup>406</sup> Based on my analysis of Ibn Jinnī's theory of the origin of language I might suggest that its approach is, in fact, universalist, almost in a way that presages the universalizing aspirations of modern linguistics.

But his study of grammar within the theoretical framework drawn by the study of the origin of language fits into the language-specific approach that proposes a realist view of human language.<sup>407</sup> This makes it possible to enlarge the implications of the theory of origin of language as studied in the model of Arabic grammar over any other language.

As have mentioned how Ibn Jinnī's study of the issue of origin of language is for any and every language, however it serves as a theoretical framework for his study of Arabic language. The implications of the idea of gradual formation and changing of language is universal without saying. This thesis could hopefully be a starting point for such a comprehensive cross-linguistic study of the implications of Ibn Jinnī's theory of the origin of language on world languages. It would be interesting to examine if the study of other languages would support the theory of origin of language that Ibn Jinnī has developed.

Similar in modern linguistics is Chomsky's theory of the origin of language and his theory of universal grammar.<sup>408</sup> The innate ability to language would appear congruent both with the divine origin of language and the subsequent human role of innovation. The theory's support with universal or generative grammar also mirrors how Ibn Jinnī's theory backs up and is backed up by the study of Arabic grammar According to generative grammar, language first exists in our brains for the action of thinking (hence its designation as "inside language"; this is very similar to Ibn Jinnī's

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<sup>406</sup> As explained in this thesis in Chapter 3.2.6 on Ibn Jinnī's Position.

<sup>407</sup> Suleiman, "On the Underlying Foundations of Arabic Grammar: A Preliminary Investigation." *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 16, no. 2 (1989), 176.

<sup>408</sup> Berwick, Robert C. and Chomsky, Noam. "Why only us: language and evolution", Cambridge, MA : The MIT Press, [2016], 1-6, 90-98.

recognition of the innate ability of the Arabs to distinguish what is right and wrong in speech. This idea of inside language, taking place on the level of thoughts and ideas was later articulated by the grammarians such as al-Jurjani (d. 816/1413).<sup>409</sup>

*“And He taught Adam all the names, all of them, then He laid them before the angels and said “tell me the names of these, if you are truthful.”<sup>410</sup>*

*“They said, “May you be glorified! We have knowledge only of what You have taught us. You are the All Knowing and All Wise.”<sup>411</sup> (Q. 2:31,32)*

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<sup>409</sup>Weiss, “Language in Orthodox Muslim Thought: A study of “Wad’ al-Lugha” and Its Development”, Princeton University, Ph.D., 1966, 91.

<sup>410</sup>Trans. “The study Quran: a new translation and commentary”, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, (Editor in chief) General Ed. Caner K. Dağlı, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E.B. Lumbard, Ass. Ed. Muhammed Rustom, First Edition, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2015, 22.

<sup>411</sup>Trans. Abdel Haleem, M.A.S., “The Qur’an: A new translation” (Oxford world’s classics), Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, 7.

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## CIRRICULUM VITAE

### Personal Information:

Name-Surname: Hatice Sak

Email (1): hatice.sak@ibnhaldun.edu.tr

Email (2): hatice\_sak@hotmail.com

### Education:

2015-2019 MA in Civilization Studies, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul, Turkey.

2011-2015 BA in English Language Teaching, Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Turkey.

2008-2009 A year of Arabic Language Courses, Qasid Arabic Institute, Amman, Jordan.

### Experience:

2017, Fall Teaching Assistant for Academic Turkish Course, Alliance of Civilizations Institute, Ibn Haldun University, Turkey.

2017- Nov. Internship for Turkish Language Teaching certificate program, DİLMER, Karaköy, Istanbul.

2014-2015 Part time student employee at the Secretary of the Faculty of Education, Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Turkey.

2014-2015 Internship in English Language Teaching, Özel Ümraniye İrfan İlkokulu, Turkey.

2011-2012 Language instructor for beginner and pre-intermediate Arabic and English, Akide Şekeri Derneği, Istanbul.

Projects:

2014-2015 Yaşam Sevincine Kelebek Etkisi, A project of community service, Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Turkey.

Presentations:

2019 Apr. “The Issue of the Origin of Language in Ibn Jinnī’s *al-Ḥaṣā’iṣ*”, 2<sup>nd</sup> Graduate Conference in Civilization Studies; Being Human and Human Being: Civilizational Perspectives, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul.

2016 Nov. “Reading the Modernization of Iran through Multiple Modernities Paradigm”, International Conference of Young Scholars in Civilization Studies: Interdisciplinary Research in Civilization Studies, Fatih Sultan Mehmet University, Istanbul.