IBN BĀBSHĀD: A GRAMMARIAN

Ishak Mohd. Rejab (Ph.D).

This essay is an attempt to give an account of Ibn Bābshād’s background which includes his origin, birth and intellectual activity. This will be followed by a discussion of his grammatical doctrine as observed in his book “Ṣabr al-Jumal of al-Zajjāj.”

IBN BĀBSHĀD’S ORIGIN AND BIRTH

Ibn Bābshād whose full name was Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. Ṭāhir b. Aḥmad b. Bābshād (d. 469/1077), was not an Arab by racial origin. His father and grandfather appear to have emigrated from Ḥiraq to Egypt to pursue their business, and Brockelmann suggests that they were Parsians from Daylam.

Although we have much information on the middle and later years of his life, owing to his great contemporary fame as a grammarian in Egypt, our knowledge about the earlier period of his life is very scanty. Neither the place nor the date of Ibn Bābshād’s birthday appears to be recorded. We incline, however, to agree with the view expressed by Muḥammad al-Ṭanṭāwī that Ibn Bābshād was probably born in Egypt. Our conclusion is based, firstly, on a statement by Jalāl al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf al-Qifrī to the effect that his father and grandfather emigrated from Ḥiraq to Egypt to pursue their business. (we have been unable to ascertain whether or not they ever left Egypt subsequently. Secondly, his nisbah “the Egyptian” tends to indicate that he was born

in Egypt, since the nishab is often referred to a person’s birthplace as well as his origin, family, trade or sect. It is likely, too, that he was born not later than the year 400 A.H., for his biographers tell us that Abū Yaʕqūb Yūsuf b. Yaʕqūb b. Ismāʕīl b. Khurrazād al-Najīramī al-Saʕtārī (one of Ibn Bābshād’s teachers) died in the year 432 A.H. It is possible, therefore, that he was born between the years 390 and 400 A.H.

SCHOLARSHIP AND INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY
It is particularly difficult to estimate the scope of Ibn Bābshād’s intellectual background for the data that are recorded are both diffuse and given in very general terms. The following account may serve as an example:

"He went to ʕIraq as a trader in pearls, and there applied himself to study under the supervision of the scholars of ʕIraq. On his return to Egypt, he was employed in the chancery office".

Although Jalāl al-Dīn ʕAbd al-Rahmān al-Suyūṭī, ʕUmar Riḍā Khālah and some other biographers state that Ibn Bābshād travelled to ʕIraq and studied there, none of them mentions any particular ʕIraqi scholar as his mentor. We are therefore restricted to examining the data available on his teachers in Egypt. These scholars include:

(a) Abū Yaʕqūb b. Ismāʕīl b. Khurrazād al-Najīramī al-Saʕtārī, who died in Egypt in the year 432 A.H. He was a native of Baghrah and later settled in Egypt where Ibn Bābshād learned from him hadīths which Abū Yaʕqūb taught on the authority of Abū Yaḥyā Zakariyyā b. Yaḥyā b. Khallād al-Sājjī (d. 307/919).

10Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 17.
11Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 17.
12See above p. 1.
Abu Ya'qūb was not only a traditionist, but also an eminent philologist. Abu al-Abbas Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad. Ibn Khalikān, describes him as coming from a family of linguistic scholars, all of whom were gifted with outstanding ability and possessed reliable information on the subject of philology. Abu Ya'qūb was reckoned to be the most excellent in his family of scholars.\(^\text{15}\)

Ibn Khalikān also states that in Egypt most of the existing works in philology, Arabic poetry and the battle — epics of the pagan Arabs were handed down by Abū Ya’qūb, who was an authoritative transmitter.\(^\text{16}\)

On account of the excellence of his works on these subjects, the people of Fustāt were anxious to obtain his books, and a copy of the poetical works of Jarīr made by Abū Ya’qūb is reported to have commanded a price of ten dinars.\(^\text{17}\)

This information leads us to suppose that Ibn Bābshād probably also studied philology and Arabic poetry from Abū Ya’qūb.

(b) Al-Qāsim al-Wāṣifī

Remarkably little is known about the life of al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Muḥāshir (Brockelmann mentions Munāzir)\(^\text{18}\) al-Wāṣifī al-Nahwī al-Dārīr, Abū Naṣr, and we do not know the date of his birth or death, though the biographers tell us that he died in Egypt.\(^\text{19}\)

In a brief article of him, Yaqūt states that, before settling permanently in Egypt, al-Qāsim had travelled to several countries, and his visits included one to Baghad where he met disciples of Abū al-Ḥāfīḍ al-Fārsī,\(^\text{20}\) (among them, probably, Ī′ālī b. Ṣlāh b. al-Fārābī b. Sālīh al-Rāshidi who died in Baghad in the year 420 A.H.\(^\text{21}\), and Aḥmad b. Bakr al-Ḥāfīḍ, Abū Ṭālib, who died in the year 406 A.H.\(^\text{22}\)

In Egypt, where he married Ibn Bābshād’s sister\(^\text{23}\) and settled, al-Qāsim devoted himself to teaching. Many Egyptians studied under him, including


\(^{16}\) \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. 7, p. 75.

\(^{17}\) \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. 7, p. 75.


\(^{22}\) Yaqūt, \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. 1, p. 381.

\(^{23}\) Yaqūt, \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. 6, p. 199.

65
Ibn Bābshād, who respected him not only as a teacher but also as a master to whom he offered his services.24

As an author, al-Qāsim wrote some books on grammar and Arabic literature including šahr al-Lūma25 (probably that of Ibn Jinnī), šahr al-Jumal of al-Za'jājī26, šahr Kūtāb al-Ḥamāsah of Abū Tammān,27 and another book on grammar, the title of which appears to be unknown.28

The list of al-Qāsim’s works shows us that he was interested in grammar and Arabic literature in general, and in the works of Ibn Jinnī, al-Za’jājī and Abū Tammān in particular.

It is noteworthy that both the Jumal and Lūma enjoyed a high reputation among students of Arabic grammar,29 and it is probable that al-Qāsim, who was himself very interested in these books, taught them to his disciples and drew attention to their importance. Al-Qāsim’s commentary on the Jumal by al-Za’jājī may well have been one of the factors that led Ibn Bābshād to write a commentary on the same work.

(c) Yahya b. _SIGNAL_ al-Khāṭîb al-Tibrizi

Another scholar, who was a younger contemporary of Ibn Bābshād but nevertheless contributed to his education, was Abū Zakariyya Yahya b. _SIGNAL_ al-Ṣuyūṭī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Bistām al-Shaibání al-Khāṭîb al-Tibrizi (al-Ṣuyūṭī calls him Ibn al-Khāṭîb al-Tibrizi).30

He was born in the year 421 A.H., and died in 502 A.H.31 His nisbah indicates that he was a native of Tibriz in Azerbaijan which Yaquṭ describes as a place producing many scholars and literary men,32 among whom al-Khāṭîb al-Tibrizi was regarded as an authority on philology and Arabic grammar.33

Al-Khāṭîb al-Tibrizi not only enjoyed a high reputation as a scholar but was also a prolific author, writing works34 on Arabic grammar, Arabic literature and prosody. These include Šahr al-Ḥamāsah of Abū Tammān,

24 Yaquṭ, _Ibid._, Vol. 6, p. 199.
34 Yaquṭ, _Ibid._, Vol. 6, p. 192.
Sharb siqät al-Zand of Abū al-Ṣāliḥ al-Ma‘arrī, Sharb al-Muṣafḍaliyyāt, Sharb al-Muṣallaqat al-Sab’ah\(^3\), (al-Suyūṭī says al-Qasa‘id al-Ṣāḥib\(^4\))


Yāqūt and Ibn Khallikān report that al-Khatīb al-Ṭibrīzī travelled to Egypt when he was still very young,\(^9\) soon returning to Baghdad, where he spent most of his time in academic pursuits at the Niṣāmīyyah school.\(^10\)

We are informed that Ibn Bābschād, who seems to have had an insatiable passion for knowledge, studied Arabic language (اللغة)\(^11\) under the much younger al-Khatīb al-Ṭibrīzī during the latter’s stay in Egypt.

(d) Ismā‘īl al-Ḥaddād

His full name was Ismā‘īl b. Ṭāmr b. Ismā‘īl b. Rashīd al-Ḥaddād, and he was known as Muṭḥammad al-Miqri. He died in Egypt in the year 429 A.H.\(^12\)

Many Egyptians are reported to have studied the Ḡārā‘at under him, among them Abu al-Qasim Yusuf al-Hudailī,\(^13\) and although the biographers appear not to have indicated whether or not Ibn Bābschād ever

\(^{35}\) Ibid.


\(^{40}\) al-Anbārī, Nusba al-Ṭabi‘ah fi Tabaqāt al-Udabā‘, p. 372.


\(^{45}\) Ibid.
studied this subject under Ismāʿīl al-Ḥaddād, we may assume that he did so, on the basis of his own statement:

وهي (أي قراءة الصلاة والزكاة والحياة بالتفخيم) قراءة ورش من ناحية طريق ابن عزيز المتفرغة إلى شيخنا أسامة

الحدر.

We may infer from the above examination of his mentors in Egypt and their chosen subjects that Ibn Bābshād was educated in the linguistic and literary sciences (فَهْنَاؤُ الْأَدْبِ) and was also interested in the ḥadīth and qirāʿāt.

Perhaps the most celebrated grammatical and traditionist of his time in Egypt, Ibn Bābshād appears to have spent much of his life in academic pursuits. He held a tutorial circle in the ʿAmr b. ʿAl-ʾĀṣ mosque where he gave lectures on Arabic grammar and transmitted hadith.⁴⁷

Many Egyptians studied Arabic grammar under him until the number of his students declines as a result of the Egyptian famine of 459–465 A.H. He says:

"ألَّا إنِّهُمْ المُقَدْسَةُ مِنْذَ أَمْعِنَتْ نِسْفًا وَثَلَاثَينَ سَنَةٍ (أَي تَقْرِيبًا) فِي سَنَةٍ ۴۲۰ هـ) عَلَى جَمَاعَةٍ يَزِيدُونَ عَلَى الْكَثْرَةِ. وَالْأَمَرُ الْمَوْلُ (عِنْدَا مَا أَمْلِي شَرِحَ المُقَدْسَةِ عَلَى أَيْبَةِ الْفَاسِخِ لَخَلْفِ اْبْرَاهِيمِ) وَذَلِكَ فِي سَنَةٍ ۴۲۰ هـ تَقْرِيبًا عَلَى ما هُوَ مَعْلُومٌ. وَمُشَاهِدَ المُقَلِّةَ.

⁴⁸ Ibn Bābshād, Sharh al-Muqaddimah fī al-Nabawī, (British Museum Manuscript, No. 918 or 3955, fol. 2a.)
Notable among his students were Muhammad b. Barakat b. Hilal al-Sa'idi (d.520/1126), and `Abd al-Rahman b. Atiq b. Khalaf Abū al-Qasim b. Abi Bakr b. Abi Sa'id9 b. al-Fahham al-Saqal (Brockelmann records al-`Iqilili)50 to whom Ibn Babshud dictated a commentary on Kitab al-Muqaddimah fi al-Nahwu51 in the year 466 A.H.52

Ibn Babshud not only enjoyed a high reputation as a scholar but was also a prolific author. He wrote several books on grammar, these include Kitab al-Muqaddimah fi al-Nahwu,53 Sharh al-Muqaddimah fi al-Nahwu,54 Sharh al-Usul li Ibn Sarraj,55 Sharh al-Nukshab,56 Ta`fiq al-Ghurfah,57 and Sharh al-Jumal li-Zayjai.58

IBN BĀBSHĀD'S GRAMMATICAL DOCTRINE

The growth of grammatical studies in Egypt began in the second/eighth century and increased remarkably in the fourth/tenth century, during the period of the Ikhshidid dynasty.59 There appears to be nothing, however, to suggest that Egyptian grammarians established a grammatical school like those that apparently grew up in Basrah, Kufah and Baghdad. Consequently, Egyptian grammarians tended to be classified as the followers of either the Basran, Kufan or Baghdadian school. Al-Wali al-Muhammad al-Tamimi al-Mas'udi60 (known as Wallad al-Mas'idi al-Tamimi) who, after studying Arabic grammar with a grammarian from Madinah, completed his studies under al-Khalil b. Ahmad al-Farahidi (d.170/786–7) at Basrah, was believed to be an adherent of the Basran school, `Ali b. al-Hasan al-`Ibni, known as Kura' b. al-Namli (d.320/932) was regarded by

50 C. Brockelmann, G.A.I, Sup. 1, p. 529.
51 Ibn Babshud, Sharh al-Muqaddimah fi al-Nahwu, (British Museum Manuscript, No. 918, or. 3955, fol. 1b.
52 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Shauqi Daif (Dr.) al-Madarij al-Nahwiyah, Dar al-Ma`rif, Cairo, 1968, p. 329.
Yaqūt as a member of the Kūfan school, whilst Abū Ja'far al-Nahjūrī, Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Ismā'īl al-Mu'addib (d. 338/950) a grammarian who was described as blending the doctrines of the Baṣrīs and Kūfīs, was considered by Saʻūdī Dā‘ī to be a member of the Baḥraḏā’i school.

Saʻūdī Dā‘ī considers that Ibn Bābahā’s ideas sometimes coincided with those of the Kūfīs, sometimes with the Baḥraḏā’i and at other times with the Baṣrīs, but we are inclined to agree with Abū al-Barakāt Kamāl al-Dīn Ābd al-Rahmān b. Muḥammad al-Anbārī who suggests that he favoured the ideas of the Baṣrī school.

Ibn Bābahā seems to have had a critical and discerning mind and to support only those theories that he considered tenable. His acquaintance with the works of different scholars from various schools must have broadened his outlook and made him more tolerant of the views of scholars outside the Baṣrī school, even when he disagreed with them. This tolerance, however, does not basically alter our conclusion that he was, on balance, an adherent of the Baṣrī school. His Shahr al-Jumal lil-Al-Zajjāji, a grammatical document that in essence expounds the ideas of the Baṣrī school, is the basis for our argument that he was primarily a Baṣrī.

The Baṣrī, whom G. Weil calls “rationalist” grammarians, had affected a predilection for detecting the reason (العلامة) for every grammatical rule or norm (القاعدة). This task was apparently first undertaken by Abū ʿAbdullāh b. Abī Ḥaṣāq (d. 117 A.H.), a client of the family of al-Hadramīs and then continued by the Baṣrīs, including al-Khallīl b. Ahmad al-Faraḥī (d. 170/786-7).


64 Ibid., p. 336.


66 See Below pp. 9-11.


Sibawaihi, for instance, states that al-Khalîl explained why "ال unlawful " and the " thẻ ص " were not permitted to be prefixed to "اء ل الأ ل". Wazm the Khalil on the "اء ل الأ" is unique in that it is a direct call to "اء ل الأ". In a similar case, a name is mentioned, which seems to be "اء ل الأ". A man called "اء ل" raped a woman, and she called for help. The woman called "اء ل" and was heard. But when the man heard her call, he attacked her. In this case, "اء ل" was refused, but "اء L" was accepted. 69

Later, this method was adopted by Ibn Bâbshâd who also undertook in particular to establish the relationship between the reason (معلبة) and the grammatical rule (المصدر). Numerous instances of this can be found, such as when he argues that the verbal noun is the asl (الأصل) of the verb:

وهما المصدر أصل الفعل من حيث كان المصدر يدل على العصر والفعل يدل على الخصوص والعموم قبل الخصوص. This explanation is similar to that of the other Baqraus on this point.71

Similarly, when dealing with recorded deviations from the grammatical norm, Ibn Bâbshâd appears to have followed the example of the other

69 Sibawaih, al-Kisa, Bulaq, 1316–1317, p. 310.
Bagrans. He first endeavours to harmonize the deviation with the norm by means of Taqdir.\(^{72}\) Where he fails with this method, he either declares the discrepancy to be a special case, such as an instance of poetical licence\(^{73}\) (ضرورة الشعر) or a rarity or irregularity\(^{74}\).

النادر أو الشائع

which generates no further formations on the same pattern. This attitude demonstrates how keen Ibn Bābshīd was, like other grammarians, to impose grammatical theories on linguistic practice.

Where disputes arise between the Bagrans and Kūfars, we notice that Ibn Bābshīd’s view usually coincides with that of the Bagrans. For example, he agrees with the Bagrans that "الاسم" is derived from "السمو" and not, as the Kūfars argue, from "السمة".

واشتقت (الاسم) من لفظة السمو، وقيل (بمعنى بذلك الكوفيين)

هو مشتق من السمة لأنه صارمة للسمى. تعلى هذا القول

الحذف من منه فاعله. وعلي القول الأول الحذف وف من منه

لائمه وهو الصحيح.

He rejects the view of al-Zajjājī that "كيفما" is a word (like

كيفما) implying a conditional meaning. According to him, al-Zajjājī’s view coincides with that of the Kūfars, and not that of the Bagrans:


\(^{73}\) Cf. \textit{Ibid.}, fol. 98b.

\(^{74}\) Cf. \textit{Ibid.}, 80b–81a.

\(^{75}\) Cf. \textit{Ibid.}, foll. 1b–2a.
In addition, it is notable that Ibn Bābshād, frequently refers to the Basrans as "اصحاينا" ("we are Basrans").

However, although Ibn Bābshād may be considered a Basran, he does not entirely ignore the merits of Kūfans, and sometimes accepts their views, albeit sparingly. For example, he agrees with the Kūfans' opinion that when "ظرف الزمن" is the predicate is a nominal sentence of a subject considered to occupy the entire time referred to, it should be in the nominative case literally "Fasting is today" (i.e. Fasting lasts the whole day); but wherever the subject occupies less than the full time – span, "ظرف الزمن" is better treated as accusative "أكل اليوم", literally, "Eating is today" (Eating takes place during some part of time today). 78

We may conclude that Ibn Bābshād was one of the best known grammarians and authors on grammatical studies of fifth/eleventh century Egypt.

We find that his linguistic doctrine and grammatical arguments coincided in the main with those of the other Basran scholars, and we are consequently inclined to agree with Ibn al-Anbārī in associating him with the grammatical school of Basrah. 79 Nevertheless, his acquaintance with the works of scholars from other schools made him tolerant of their differing view, however little he may have agreed with them.

76 ibid., fol. 11b.
77 Cf. ibid., Vol. 2, fol. 223a.
78 ibid., fol. 31a.
79 See Above, p. 8.