

## ISSUES RAISED CONCERNING IBN ĀJURRŪM'S TEXT

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### Research Summary

The research aims to trace some of the issues that may be raised concerning Ibn Ājurrūm's text. In certain expressions, the author's intended meaning is not entirely clear at first glance, or some of his statements may give rise to misunderstanding, or he may adopt a particular grammatical view. The researcher sought to identify these issues and clarify the aspects of ambiguity or the questions they provoke. These issues include several chapters of the text, whether in definitions or in other subjects mentioned by the author. Some of them may appear contrary to what is commonly held by grammarians, or even to what the author himself explicitly stated elsewhere. They were presented in the form of discrete issues. And Allah is the only grantor of success and care.

### Introduction

There is no doubt that Ibn Ājurrūm's text has received the attention of grammarians from the time of its composition until the present day. It spread far and wide, gaining great renown, despite being one of the concise works composed as a sort of rhetorical prelude with which authors often begin their writings to indicate what they are about to embark upon. Ibn Ājurrūm's text is essentially a simple introduction that benefits beginners in the study of grammar, as it contains the essentials of this discipline in a concise form, including only the well-known chapters, presented in a clear and elegant manner, free of complication. This text has been explained in numerous explanations that vary in scope according to the approach of the commentator. For example, the explanations of Muḥammad Zaynī Daḥlān and Al-ʿAllāmah Al-ʿAshmāwī are relatively concise and not greatly expanded, whereas the explanations of Al-ʿAllāmah Al-Kafrawī and Shaykh Khālid Al-Azharī are more extensive and detailed. Moreover, these explanations were further supplemented with marginal notes containing many valuable insights, elegant linguistic points, and subtle meanings—such as the marginalia of Abū al-Najā on Shaykh Khālid al-Azharī's commentary, and that of Al-Ḥāmidī on Al-ʿAllāmah Al-Kafrawī's commentary, along with many other commentaries and annotations. Therefore, the *Ājurrūmiyyah* text has received a degree of attention unmatched by other texts. And although Ibn Ājurrūm's wording is clear, it must be remembered that it was authored by a scholar who did not write aimlessly; every chapter and expression—whether in definitions or otherwise—had a specific purpose, understood by those who reached that level of knowledge, though hidden from those who had not. In this brief research, I will present some of the issues that may arise concerning this text and which require clarification and explanation. I ask Allah for success and guidance, for He is All-Hearing and Responsive.

### Chapter One

#### Issues Concerning Nouns

##### First Issue:

The author *defines parsing* (iʿrāb) as: “the alteration of the endings of words due to the different factors acting upon them, whether expressed or implied.”<sup>(1)</sup>

The response to this limit is that he applied the source, which is the change, to the inflection, and this is one of the attributes of the changer, which is the speaker, as he made it a description of the inflection. Likewise, he made the change at the ends of the words, even though (Zayd) in things like: (Zayd came), (I saw Zayd), and (I passed by Zayd) did not change.

Al-Ṣabbān responded to this by stating that what is intended is the meaning produced by the verbal noun, namely “alteration,” or else it is to be understood as the passive verbal noun.<sup>(2)</sup>

It was also noted that some scholars found problematic the statement of source that *i’rāb* is a description of the word, and the respondent’s interpretation of “alteration” in a sense that could properly be attributed to the word—that *i’rāb* is the verbal noun of *a’raba*, meaning “to change,” both linguistically and technically—since it is in fact a description of the doer, not of the word itself. This is indicated by the grammarians’ expression “*this word is mu’rab*” in the passive form, and they have explicitly stated that the norm with technical meanings is that they are more specific than the linguistic ones, not contradictory to them. Thus, what ought to be done is to keep the verbal noun upon its apparent meaning, without resorting to forced interpretation.<sup>(1)</sup>

He then favored the latter view, so he mentioned that the grammarians’ saying that this word is built in the passive form is refuted by them, as they derived it from composition, and it is technically explained on the basis that it is semantic by requiring the last letter of the word to be in one state, which is definitely a description of the word, not by requiring the last letter of the word to be in one state. So since their saying: built does not indicate that composition is a description of the agent, their saying: inflected does not indicate that inflection is a description of the agent. And since composition is technically a description of the word, as evidenced by their definition of it, its opposite, which is inflection, is also the same. Then the change is in the sense of change, and inflection is technically transferred from the description of the agent to the description of the word, with the evidence that its opposite, which is composition, is also the same. And thus, the principle that technical meanings are more specific than linguistic ones should be maintained, unless there is evidence to the contrary.<sup>(2)</sup>

I say: From this it becomes clear that there is no agreement concerning the author’s wording in the definition of *syntax* —“alteration”. Is it to be understood as employing the verbal noun while intending its effect, namely *change* on the grounds that alteration is an attribute of the speaker, not of *i’rāb*, which in fact refers to the change that occurs at the end due to governing factors, Or is the wording to be left as it is, since alteration, which is *i’rāb*, can rightly be attributed to the word, For they have said concerning *composition* that it is “the requirement of the ending of a word to remain in one fixed state,” which is certainly a description of the word. Thus, its counterpart, *syntax*, would also apply, and the term “alteration” should remain as it stands, with *i’rāb* understood as having been transferred from being a description of the agent to being a description of the word—by way of the contrast between *Sentence construction and syntax*, as al-Ṣabbān explained.

<sup>1</sup> See: The same source, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> See: The same source, p. 108.

The disagreement then extends to what the author intended by this wording—namely, that in his view syntax is conceptual rather than verbal. That is to say, syntax for him is not the outward effect itself; the *ḍammah*, *fathah*, and *kasrah* are merely signs and indicators of syntax. According to his position, syntax itself is the transition from *ḍamm* to *fath* to *kasr*.

Al-Ashmūnī explained that there are two views regarding the technical meaning of syntax: the first holds that it is verbal, a view chosen by the versifier and attributed to the leading scholars, and defined in *al-Tashīl* as “that which is brought to indicate the requirement of the governing factor, whether by a vowel, a letter, a *sukūn*, or an omission.” The second view holds that syntax is conceptual, with the vowels serving only as indicators of it; this was adopted by al-A‘lam, many others, and is apparently the doctrine of Sībawayh, who defined it as “the alteration of the endings of words due to the different factors acting upon them, either expressed or implied.” However, the first view is deemed closer to correctness, since the second would entail that the initial alteration is not syntax, on the grounds that governing factors had not yet varied which is not the case.<sup>(1)</sup>

As for the wording “the endings of words,” the ending itself does not actually change. This is clarified in other definitions, such as that mentioned by the author of *Dalīl al-Ṭālibīn*, who defined grammar as “knowledge of the principles by which the states of the endings of words are known, in terms of *Sentence construction and syntax*.”<sup>(2)</sup> Thus, it is to be understood as referring to the states of the endings of words, since it is the state that changes.

**Second Issue:** The author stated in the chapter on the subject and predicate that the subject is “the noun in the nominative, is devoid of verbal factors.”<sup>(3)</sup>

The response to the restriction of the bare to verbal factors is that it excludes the name of (*inna*) and the acquittal, although it is permissible to raise its description to the place, so it is a subject and not bare.

Al-Sabban answered him about that, and he mentioned that considering the nominative case is invalid, because the letter is like nothingness in its consideration, and it is only taken into account if the accusative case is considered. Thus, our sheikh transmitted the question and answer and approved them, and some followed him. In the answer, there is an acknowledgment that it is a subject, and what appears to me to be forbidden is evidenced by what will come in the chapters on (*inna* and *la*) that raising the attribute to the place is based on the statement that it is not a condition for observing the place that the thing that is secured remains; that is, the seeker of that place is due to the lack of the thing that is secured here, which is the subject, and if the lack of the beginning is the lack of the subject, and then the objection does not return from its origin, so reflect.<sup>(1)</sup>

**I say:** It has become clear to me that what the author stated in his statement is not valid, as Al-Sabban explained. This is because the nominative case of the adjective in the two chapters of “in” and “la” is in the place of their subject. This is because after the verbal operator has entered, there is no reason to apply the subject to the noun, due to the absence of the initial agent in the subject. And Allah knows best.

<sup>1</sup> See: Ashmouni’s Commentary 1/20

<sup>2</sup> See: Students’ Guide 12, and Al-Sabban’s Commentary 1/24.

<sup>3</sup> See: Text of Al-Ajrumiyyah, p. 4.

**Third Issue:** The author mentioned in the chapter on nominative cases (the object whose agent is not named).

An objection to this expression is that it does not include the substitution of the verbal noun, the adverb, or the prepositional phrase, and it also entails the permissibility of substituting the second object in the verbs of the pattern *kasā* and to give in the place of the subject.

Al-Sabban stated that the phrase "the substitute for the subject" is more appropriate and concise than what many have said: "the object whose subject is not named," since it applies to a dinar from "Zaid gave a dinar," and it does not apply to an adverbial phrase or anything else that replaces the subject. However, it is countered that the object whose subject is not named has become like a proper noun by predominance over what replaces the subject, whether an object or something else.<sup>(2)</sup>

Abū Ḥayyān mentioned this term in the chapter on the object whose agent is not named, calling it "the deputy subject." I have not seen this expression used by anyone other than this author, for the grammarians generally phrase it as "the chapter on the object whose agent is not named." In any case, there is no harm in terminology.<sup>(1)</sup>

Some of the Basri grammarians—among them, as explicitly stated by some, Ibn Durustawayh—held that the object whose agent is not named is in fact a pronoun referring back to the verbal noun understood from the verb. The estimation in an expression like ("Zayd was made to travel") would be: that is, "the travelling." This view was also adopted by Abū Zayd al-Suhaylī and his student Abū ‘Alī al-Rundī. Al-Suhaylī argued against allowing the prepositional phrase to take the place of the object whose agent is not named, on the grounds that when such an object is advanced, it becomes a subject—just as the agent, when advanced, becomes a subject. Thus one may say ("Zayd was struck"), just as one says ("Zayd struck"); but one does not say ("by Zayd it was travelled"), making by Zayd into a subject. so if it is found in the speech of the Arabs "travel with Zayd", then the place is taken by the subject of the pronoun of the verbal noun.<sup>(2)</sup>

There is no doubt that the phrase is long (the object whose agent is not named) as it is six words, and as for the agent's deputy, this is three words in the sentence, likewise (the object whose agent is not named) is true of a dinar, such as: I give Zaid a dinar, I give this is a past tense verb with a changed form and Zaid is a subject's deputy, and this dinar is an object whose agent is not named, so then what is included in it is what is originally excluded, and its not being true of the adverbial phrase and other things that replace the agent, this subject's deputy is more general, and as for the object whose agent is not named, then we need the adverbial phrase whose agent is not named, the verbal noun whose agent is not named, and the prepositional phrase whose agent is not named; Because we have specified the ruling to the direct object, and then the adverbial phrase, the prepositional phrase, and the verbal noun are excluded, and therefore we said:

The one who replaces the subject is more effective, and the answer is that it has become a proper noun by force, the direct object whose subject is named has become

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<sup>1</sup> See: Al-Sabban's commentary 1/276.

<sup>2</sup> See: Al-Sabban's commentary 685.

<sup>2</sup> See: Appendix and Supplement 6/225.

<sup>2</sup> See: Appendix and Supplement 6/229.

a proper noun by force, like the sound feminine plural, then the direct object is called a direct object in consideration of the origin; because the direct object, the prepositional phrase, and the adverbial phrase do not replace the subject if the direct object is present; it is their master, and then if the direct object is present it is not possible to establish something else as is the doctrine of the Basri grammarians in contrast to the Kufans, so if it is said: The direct object whose subject is not named is expressed by the origin, then it has become a proper noun by force over what replaces the subject <sup>(1)</sup>.

**I say:** It has become clear to me that the author's expression is based on what the ancient grammarians followed, who use the expression (the object whose agent is not named) to refer to the agent's deputy, which is one of the expressions used by the later grammarians. What was raised against the expression of the ancients as an objection is that it became a noun by predominance over the agent's deputy, so it does not prevent something other than the object from acting as the agent. Likewise, the statement about the representation of the adverbial and the prepositional phrase did not agree on the word, as has become clear, and Allah knows best.

**Fourth issue:** The author stated that the predicate is the raised noun to which it is attributed <sup>(2)</sup>.

The response to this is that it does not include the predicate if it is a sentence or a quasi-sentence.

The scholar Abu al-Naja mentioned that the response to this objection is that he limited himself to the noun because the origin of the predicate is that it is by the noun, and he mentioned that it is responded to that the text then did not define anything except the single predicate and did not define it if it occurred as a sentence or something similar, so there is a deficiency in it, so the first thing that the commentator did is that what is meant by the noun is what includes the noun in reality or interpretation, and the sentence that occurs as predicate is interpreted by the noun and the preposition and the noun that occurs as predicate, and likewise the circumstance, each of them is related to something deleted that is the news in reality, and it is either a noun in reality or interpretation <sup>(3)</sup>.

**I say:** It became clear to me that there is a deficiency in the author's expression. I respond that his limiting himself to mentioning the report with the raised noun, because that is the origin of it, is not sufficient to prevent its lack of truthfulness in relation to other reports, so he did not clarify it, and Allah knows best.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Issues Concerning Verbs and Tools**

**Issue One:** The author stated that the imperative verb is always in the jussive mood: <sup>(1)</sup> The objection to this is that the imperative verb is indeclinable, so how could he describe it as being (in the jussive), when jussive is one of the marks of declension?

The Kufians went to the fact that the imperative verb is jussive with a deleted (L) and it is a present tense verb from which the present tense letter was deleted; because if it were not like that, then there would be no reason for the necessity of deleting the last letter of the weak verb from it, and it is weak because it is possible that the reason for deleting the last letter of the weak verb from the imperative verb is to seek alleviation <sup>(2)</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Al-Hazimi's Commentary on Ibn Malik's Alfiyyah, 1/47.

<sup>2</sup> See: Text of Al-Ajrumiyyah, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> See: Abu al-Naja's Jashiyyah on Khalid al-Azhari's Commentary on Text of Al-Ajrumiyyah, p. 54.



The reason for the imperative verb being constructed is the absence of the reason for its syntax, which is that it resembles a noun. The present tense is only inflected due to its resemblance to a noun, either because it is permissible to accept different meanings in one form, or because of the possibility of ambiguity, specificity, and accepting the (L) of initiation, and running on the movements and pauses of the active participle. This and its resemblance are missing from the imperative verb, so it must be constructed like the past tense. <sup>(3)</sup>

What is correct, as we mentioned, is that the imperative verb is constructed, and the view that it is jussive with the (L) of command is weak; because the application of the jussive letter with a deleted letter is like the application of the preposition with a deleted letter. We previously mentioned that the Kufians are lenient in the application of letters, and therefore they allow them to be applied with a deleted letter. The most correct view is that it is not correct for a letter to be applied with a deleted letter, because it is weak, because the application is the origin of verbs, and the application of the letter is a branch, so it is weak and only works apparently. Similarly, the lam of command is a letter that works the jussive, so in that case we say: it works apparent because its application while it is apparent is weak, because it is a letter, and the origin of the letter is that it does not work, so how about if it is deleted?!<sup>1</sup>

So it is even more likely that it is even weaker. This is the reason for invalidating the doctrine of the Kufians.<sup>(1)</sup>

In the language, jussive means cutting. It is said, "I cut something, I cut it, I cut it, I cut it, I connected it, I separated it, I cut it, I cut it, I separated it, I cut it, I cut it, I have one meaning. So the meaning of jussive is to cut off the vowel from the word. This is its origin. Then what was done by deleting a letter was made from it, according to this, because deleting the vowel and the letter are both united by deletion. Al-Mazini used to say: jussive is cutting off the i'rab (declension).<sup>(2)</sup>

**I say:** The author's statement apparently refers to his statement according to the Kufian school of thought that the imperative verb is originally in the jussive mood due to the omitted (L) of the imperative, and the well-known statement, as has been made clear, is that the imperative verb is in the subjunctive mood, or we can direct his statement and that he intended by the jussive mood to be based on the linguistic meaning of the jussive mood, which is cutting off, so the imperative is cut off from the vowel either by sukoon in the sound final letter or by deleting its final letter if it is weak in the final letter, meaning that it is cut off from the declension, so it is in the subjunctive mood, and Allah knows best.

**Second issue:** The author mentioned that among the nasabs which render the present tense verb in the accusative (naṣb) are the responses introduced by **fa'** and **wāw**. <sup>(3)</sup>

He replied that the answer with the letter fa and waw is the one that makes the present tense verb nasb.

The answer to that is that this speech contains an inversion, so this phrase is inverted and the original is to say: and the fa and waw that occur in the answer; because the accusative according to the Kufians is the waw itself and not the answer, and here he said: and the answer with fa means that the answer with fa is the accusative, we say: <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: Text of Al-Ajrūmiyyah 2.

<sup>2</sup> See: Explanation of At-Tashil by Ibn Malik 4/62.

<sup>3</sup> See: Introduction to the Rules with Explanation of At-Tashil Al-Fawa'id 9/1309.

<sup>2</sup> See: Fath Rabb al-Bariyah fi Sharh Nazm al-Ajrūmiyyah, 247.

<sup>2</sup> See: Al-Idah fi Ilal al-Nahw, 94.

No, the answer is not the accusative according to the Kufian school of thought, but rather the fa and waw that occur in the answer, so in the sentence there is an advance and a delay meaning there is an inversion in it <sup>(1)</sup>.

The author of the commentary on Abu al-Naja stated that if he had said: "The fa' and waw are in the answer," it would have been more correct, because the answer is in the accusative case, not the subject. <sup>(2)</sup>.

**I say:** The author's expression appears to be in accordance with the Kufi doctrine of thought, but it is countered by the fact that he attributed the accusative to the verb in the response to the request clause that preceded it. It may be said that he applied the answer to the fa' and waw in order to understand the addressee, or to express the whole and mean the part, because the present tense verb occurs directly after them, so it is not countered that the verb puts itself in the accusative case, and Allah knows best.

**Issue Three:** The author stated that the jussive particles are eighteen (18). <sup>(3)</sup>. The objection to this is that he actually enumerated more than that number.

The scholar Abu al-Naja mentioned in his commentary on the words of Sheikh Khalid al-Azhari that it may be said: If we approved on the apparent meaning, then what makes one verb jussive is eight (lam, lamma, al-lam, al-lama, the lam of command, the lam of supplication, the prohibitive la, and the supplication la). If we build on the investigation, then they are four, so counting them as six does not agree with the apparent meaning or the investigation. It is answered that he looked at the apparent image, then the image of lam is not the image of al-lam and the image of lamma is not the image of al-lamma, and the image of the lam of command and the lam of supplication is one, and so is the prohibitive la and the supplication la, so he counted the first four as four and the second four as two <sup>(4)</sup>.

Therefore, it would be eighteen if we exclude "if" from it because it is only made jussive in poetry, and Allah knows best<sup>1</sup>.

**Fourth issue:** The author stated that the accusatives are fifteen <sup>(1)</sup>.

The response to this is that when they were counted as fourteen, they were not fifteen. The response to this is what Dr. Ḥasan Al-Ḥifzī, the commentator on al-Ājurrūmiyyah, mentioned: when enumerating these matters, an error appears in the total count. If we count the accusatives one by one, the total decreases; if we count them collectively—such as adjective, conjunction, emphasis, and apposition—as a single accusative, the total drops to fourteen, even though the text initially stated fifteen. He said: "The accusatives are fifteen." But if each accusative is counted separately, they exceed fifteen. So what is the problem and its solution? The solution, as found in some manuscripts of al-Muqaddimah al-Ājurrūmiyyah, is that in them the chapter "Zanna and its sisters" is included. Thus, when all the accusatives are grouped

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3 See: Text of al-Ajrumiyyah, p. 3.

<sup>1</sup> See: Fath al-Bariyyah fi Sharh Nazm al-Ajrumiyyah, 276.

2 See: Abu al-Naja's Commentary on Sheikh Khalid al-Azhari's Commentary, p. 44.

3 See: Text of al-Ajrumiyyah, p. 3.

4 See: Commentary by the scholar Abu al-Naja on Sheikh Khalid al-Azhari's Commentary on Text of al-Ajrumiyyah, pp. 44-45.

as one and the chapter of *Zanna* and its sisters is added as the final category, the count aligns correctly. However, the copy we currently have does not contain that chapter.<sup>(2)</sup>

**I say:** It becomes clear from this explanation that the accusatives, together with the chapter of *Zanna* and its sisters—which the author mentioned under the section on the accusatives that enter upon the subject and predicate—amount to fifteen, if the dependents are counted collectively as one category, as has been clarified. And Allah knows best.<sup>1</sup>

## Conclusion

1. It has become clear that the author, in some of his views, followed the Kufan doctrine, and it seems that he combined opinions from both schools without committing to one in particular.
2. Despite the small size and brevity of the *Ajurrumiyya* text, it encompassed the fundamental principles upon which Arabic grammar is built.
3. Some of the objections raised against the author's text may be attributed to the difference between the way early scholars expressed themselves and the terminology used by later linguists.
4. What has been seen as shortcomings in the text may also be due to the author's method of composition, which was based on brevity and conciseness — as in his definition of the predicate, where he limited it to the “nominative noun,” and we have explained the inadequacy of this wording.
5. No matter how advanced a scholar becomes in understanding and knowledge, his opinions remain liable to error, ambiguity, or forgetfulness. Thus, the science of the Arabic language cannot be fully encompassed by any human being, except a prophet or an angel who is divinely guided.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Text of *Ajrumiyyah* 5.

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