CHAPTER SIX

THE INFLUENCE OF GREEK LOGIC

'Some people, whose fables one should refuse to accept, think that those who are called the philosophers had a declension and grammatical writings of their own.'

We have already discussed the transfer of cultural life in the 9th/3rd century to Baghdad and the consequences of this for Arabic grammar and linguistics. The 'mixing of the two schools' of Baṣra and Kūfa did not lead to a reconciliation of opinions—in this respect Weil and Fleisch are right—, it only brought together linguists from different groups, with the result that gradually the old distinctions between Baṣrian and Kūfan grammarians disappeared. No longer did grammarians adhere to either the Baṣrian or the Kūfan system, but they were free to choose one of two existing opinions on any particular grammatical problem. This new development is described by Mubārak in the following way: 'Grammar in the (10th) 4th century in Baghdad did not become a grammar with different schools based on biases and emotions; the leaders followed their own various opinions, and some of them—like ar-Rummānī—followed their rationally founded logico-theological convictions, so that the influence of those convictions was discernible in their grammatical methods ... Their scholars used to study the theories of both schools and choose between them, without prejudice in what they chose: some of them usually preferred the school of Baṣra, so that it became possible to call them a continuation of the Baṣrian school in Baghdad; a few others became a continuation of the Kūfan school; still others were Baghdadians, mixing the two sorts of grammar or taking from both of them.' This makes clear how it was possible for the old distinctions to disappear and at the same time to persist, not as a distinction between two groups of grammarians, but as a distinction between two different opinions. It also explains why a Baghdadian school suo iure never existed. The non-existence of a 'Baghdadian' school is one of the reasons for Fleisch to conclude that only at Baghdad did grammarians organize

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themselves into two different groups, the ‘Baṣrians’ and the ‘Kūfans’. However, a ‘Baghdadian’ school could not even exist, because the grammarians in that city had at their disposal two conflicting opinions on almost every grammatical problem, and they could freely choose either one of them without subjecting themselves to any party discipline. It was only on those secondary points left ‘unsolved’ by the Baṣrians and the Kūfans, that they could advance a theory of their own—which is then mentioned as a theory of the ‘Baghdadians’, in so far as a *communis opinio* was reached on those points.

One could object that in that case there was no progress at all in Arabic grammar after its transfer to Baghdad. This, of course, is not true. Grammar then occupied itself with problems of a different nature to those of the preceding period. We shall have to distinguish between those elements that were old and constituted a legacy of the past, and those that were new. The latter category will concern us in this chapter.

The new generation of grammarians put to use the achievements of an older period to solve analogous problems. Their methods were more refined, although substantially their theories remained the same. More and more complicated problems were invented in order to have something to solve —this activity being one of the favourite pastimes of almost all grammarians: we need only refer to the eternal hair-splitting about the declension of unusual proper names, or about the construction of almost incomprehensible sentences. What is more, every grammarian was obliged to defend time and again the theory he had adopted about a specific problem, and he had consequently to invent even more ingenuous arguments with which to confound his adversary.

One could make yet another objection to this way of viewing the condition of Arabic grammar in the 9th/3rd and the 10th/4th century: why was it so frequently Kūfan grammar that was considered wrong, and why were the Kūfān grammarians so heavily attacked? We could answer, of course, that the vast reputation of men like al-Ḥalīl and Sibawaihi and of al-Māzīnī and al-Mubarrad prevailed over the

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3 Fleisch, 1961. 12. Such a specific theory of the Baghdadians is mentioned for instance, with respect to the nominative of the subject in a sentence like *zaidun akram-tuhu* (Zaid, 1 honoured him) (b. Gin. Ḥaṣ. 1, 199, 6 sqq.), to a morphological question (b. Gin. *Kitāb al-muqtaṣab*, ed. E. Pröbster, Leipzig, 1904 (1968?) 3, 2; 4: 15), and to a phonetic question (the vocalization of the gutturals with an ‘a’, ib. 2, 9, 6-7); cf. Daif, 1968, 245-8.