SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There can be no doubt that the medieval Arab grammarians, as shown by Goldenberg (1988), had a concept of predication; they fully recognized the basic subject-predicate relationship, irrespective of sentence types. But it is equally clear that they viewed this relationship as realized in two (or three) different forms based on two (or three) modes of ‘amal. It was only in a relatively late period that these modes of ‘amal started to be explicitly referred to as sentence types.

Within their discussion of each sentence type, the grammarians pointed to the available word-order patterns. Thus, for the fi’l+fā’il type (jumla fi’liyya), based on the ‘amal of the verb, they admitted, apart from the basic pattern VSO, the two secondary variations VOS and OVS, each implementing a certain pragmatic function based on the principle of al-‘ināya wa-l-īhtimām.

As for the mubtada’+xabar type (jumla ismiyya), based on the ‘amal of the ibtidā’, they recognized that the xabar might be realized either as a nominal or as an adverbial/prepositional phrase, or otherwise, as a clause. This made the question of inversion in this case much more complex, particularly in cases where the xabar was a participle or an adverbial/prepositional phrase. The grammarians ran into difficulties trying to fit these cases into their theory of ‘amal. For many grammarians, qā’imun Zaydun and fiḥā Zaydun were regarded as the inverted versions of Zaydun qā’imun and Zaydun fiḥā, respectively, that is, as a jumla ismiyya displaying a xabar-mubtada’ order. Others, however, opted for analyzing qā’imun Zaydun into a mubtada’ followed by a fā’il sadda masadd al-xabar, with characteristics of both jumla fi’liyya and jumla ismiyya. Cases like fiḥā Zaydun gave rise to an attempt to extend the theory of ‘amal by recognizing fiḥā as an āmil assigning the raf case to Zaydun. For the proponents of this analysis the structure fiḥā Zaydun represented a sentence type in its own right (jumla zarfiyya). Yet the vast majority of grammarians never accepted this kind of extension of the theory of ‘amal. They insisted on categorizing fiḥā Zaydun as jumla ismiyya, explaining the raf case of Zaydun (and the naṣb of fiḥā) by an underlying verb or participle (the istaqrarra/mustaqirrun hypothesis). The concept of jumla zarfiyya thus remained marginal in medieval Arabic grammatical theory. From a modern linguistic
viewpoint, however, it looks as though one would be fully justified in categorizing sentences consisting of a predicative adverbial/prepositional phrase followed by a subject nominal (particularly when the latter is indefinite) as representing a sentence type in its own right.

On the whole, the medieval grammarians treated sentences such as (1) Zaydun munṭaliqun, (2) Zaydun yanṭaliq and (3) Zaydun yanṭaliq ʿabūhu as representing two sub-types of jumla ismiyya: (1) was presented as a jumla ismiyya displaying a phrasal (mufrad) xabar, whereas each of (2) and (3) was viewed as a jumla ismiyya displaying a clausal (jumla) xabar. As we saw in Chapter Five, the principle of ibtidāʾ, underlying the jumla ismiyya in its various forms, was applied by the grammarians also to structures introduced by ʾinna, kāna and ḥanna (and their respective “sisters”).

As for the options of inversion in T2-sentences, the vast majority of grammarians never accepted yanṭaliq Zaydun as an inverted jumla ismiyya, or Zaydun yanṭaliq as an inverted jumla fuṭliyya. We have seen that the latter position was outrightly rejected by some modern writers. For a linguist working within the Greenbergian paradigm, ʿaraba ʿAbdu-llāhi Zaydan and ʿAbdu-llāhi ʿaraba Zaydan represent two word-order patterns (VSO and SVO respectively) rather than two sentence types. (As we have seen, some do not draw any clear-cut distinction between sentence types and word-order patterns.) And Zaydun darabtuḥu is by and large viewed as a case of topicalization/extraposition/left dislocation. We noted some cases where the latter structure was described in the medieval literature in terms of movement transformation. But the vast majority of grammarians viewed Zaydun darabtuḥu as analogous to Zaydun munṭaliqun rather than as the result of some transformational rule applied to darabtu Zaydan.

Likewise, the concept of SV(O) has been shown to be inconsistent with the grammarians’ analysis and, indeed, inapplicable to the structure of Written Arabic. In contrast to V in SV(O), in ʿAbdu-llāhi qāma, qāma was analyzed, as a clause, into fiʾl+fāʾil; it was never viewed as an “empty” verb. As was indicated, the analysis of such sentences into S2+P2clause, rather than as SV cases (in the Greenbergian sense), obviates the awkward argument that Arabic shows full grammatical agreement between subject and predicate in SV cases, but not in VS cases (representing, in the Greenbergian paradigm, just the reverse order of SV).