

The Ancient Literary Works Diaspora of Language Evolution Sustainable

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ABSTRACT

The critics on its literary authenticity would reveal whether it was real or just a fabrication. The Epic Gilgamesh was ascertained by Said Ghanimi to be unauthentic. The contentions by S. N. Kramer and Taha Baqir were with regard to the differences of language usage in the Epic Gilgamesh either Sumerian or Akkadian as well. The acknowledgment of the West on Iliad and Odyssey by Homer as the first document written in world history was unfounded although this was highlighted by B. Lansberger in 7th conference in Paris on 1958. The Code Hamurabbi is a well-preserved Babylonian Code of laws, unfortunately, it was considered as a fabrication of Old Testament which came 800 years later, especially on the narration of Big Flood Story as mentioned in the Book of Genesis. It is regrettable that the paucity of materials on the ancient history of the ancient people available from the Muslim sources poses as constrain on this study. The research is compelled to refer almost entirely to Western and Jews sources. Thus, the approach used in this study is based primarily on historical and linguistic analysis of ancient literary works.

INTRODUCTION

Muslim perspective as well as other religions,' the most important to ask was, what was the language spoken by Adam (pbuh) From the words of Allah in the Qur'an '*And He taught Adam the names*' (al-Baqarah: 31). Raphael Loewe a historian on ancient Babylon said the language of Aramaic was the language spoken by Adam (Raphael Loewe, 1994: 103). We are in agreement with this conception because if Adam spoke the language of Aramaic then it is possible that the order given to Adam directly from God was Arabic in command usage. In view of this is it acceptable as suggested by some historians that the first language of the human race was Arabic?

The Conflict of Language Usage

Some orientalists claim that Adam spoke the Aramaic language which was the language of the descendants of Noah (pbuh) (Raphael Loewe, 1994 :103). The renown names of his off springs were five: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud and Aram (Genesis 10:22). An issue arising here is Why Adam did not speak the language of Shem who was the second eldest son of Noah or the language of Yafith, the eldest son of him? A quote from the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) stated that Shem was father of the Arabs, Yapith father of Rome and Ham father of African people. We opine that the verse *And We said, "O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat therefrom in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers."* (al Baqarah: 35) clearly demonstrated God spoke directly to Adam without intermediary and what would this mean? According to Wafi, Semitic language was said to be in existence in around 2400 BC. They migrated to the countries of the east between two rivers and settled in areas around the Tigris River which was located at the town of Ashur. A group of the Semitic migrated southwards and mingled with the local inhabitants and their language through the process of the journey was named Akkad or Babylon-Asshur (S.N. Kramer, 1963: 269-273). This was evidenced by emergence of conurbations in areas where they inhabited as exemplified by Tal Emrnah. It was assumed that the Akkadian represented the eastern branch of the hose of Semitic language (Wafi, 1988: 27). Erica Reiner (2013) agreed with Wafi who stated that a compilation of

words of commendations written around 1000 BC was found to contain many grammatical errors in the Semitic copy – those were the translations borrowed from Akkad. The translation was believed to have been done to obtain religious liturgy in the language of Sumerian for the purpose of recitation or prayers that was considered authentic and valid (Erica Reiner, 1994: 90-98). Some historians gathered evidence to surmise that Akkad was the official language while it was written in Cuneiform seen from the plentiful discovery of pieces of Akkadian dishes which contained agreement on sales of land. The writings of Cuneiform had been mentioned in Canaanite language. It was mentioned that written rules were subject to enforcement through official texts (words) of the authentic canons (law). This enforcement of the laws explained why Assyrian chiefs did not involve in dispute with Palestine. Some small portion of endorsed stones containing Assyrian letters issued during the reign of King Sargon as discovered also attested to the perception of the significance of the Semitic language (Adolphe Lods, 1996: 3). The use of the term ‘the language of Semitic by Schlozer was based on the findings from the engraved relics. He believed that all the Semitic languages were in the peninsular Arabia. But it is a wonder why the Semitic language was not typified as the language of the peninsular? What is the purpose behind the term Semitic? It has been conjectured that the languages of Semitics have an affinity with Shem, the son Noah. All these languages flowed to a place “the peninsular” (Baghdad Observer, 27 October, No. 3259)¹. And with later migration the languages spread to places in northern, southern and eastern parts causing the rise of civilizations with marked influence upon culture, language, society and politics and economy of the eastern region. Some studies perceived that the Sumerian civilization was the most advanced of the ancient nations in enclaves of their own. It is now known that other nations existed after the golden age of the Akkad-Babylon, therefore it is not logical to claim that the Sumerian were by themselves in isolation from the rest of the surrounding nations! As we know, Arab historians categorize three sub-groups of Arab ancient civilizations: the Baidah, Aribah and Mustaribah. The Baidah were mentioned in the narratives but they belonged to the extinct peoples of the Aad and Thamud. The descendants of the Aribah carried the Arab traits exemplified by the tribes of Qahtan and Jurhum in Yemen and the tribes of Amaliqah (Jawad Ali, 1976: 294-380, As-Suyuti, 1998: 1: 29). The Mustaribah Arabs are the descendants of Ishmael (pbuh). He was recognized as Arab but through actions and deeds. Prophet Ishmael was a naturalized Arab by acquiring standard Arabic language and other traits from the Jurhum tribe (As-Suyuti, 1998: 1: 433). The important message could be revealed is the important and prominent language at that time was Arabic *Fushah* (standard Arabic). This brought Ishmael (pbuh) to learnt from Jurhum’s tribe.

Discovery of Antiquity of peninsular Arabia

The above classification further clarified that the Arabs had from antiquity settled in the land of peninsular Arabia. This is further evidenced by large amounts of relics found in Yemen comprising remains of places of worship, grand pillars, monuments and memorials, bracelets and armlets. In the north of Hejaz were discovered remnants of the Thamudic at the border with Syria. (As-Suyuti, 1998: 1: 50-52). It was known that in the days of second period of Jahiliyya they had achieved a level of language regarded as par excellent over and above other known languages of the time with respect to styles, linguistic forms, meanings, structure and syntax. Their spoken words, their poetry and plays displayed the use of standard Arabic with eloquence and accent similar to the language of the Qur’an. It was not probable that Arabic became a developed language one or two centuries before Islam as claimed by some orientalists. This highly advanced level of language must have much deeper roots in early ancient times. The pertinent question at this point: What is the original source of standard Arabic that became a highly developed language one or two centuries before Islam? According to Jawad Ali, Arabic could be traced to Babylon Akkadian or other kingships of Jurhum². By the 20th century BC, Babylon reigned over the whole of Iraq and their language was regarded as Arabic (Magik Khair Bik, 1992: 16-17). A.F.L Beeston was in agreement with this view as articulated in his article “the evolution of Arabic language”. He propounded that Arabic language surpassed the languages of other nations in age (A.F.L. Beeston & T.M. Johnstone, 1983: 1-26). Arabic was already used in the commands on what was considered legal and illegal in

¹ Arabic Translation and Intercultural Dialogue Association <http://www.atida.org/> . Professor Sami Said al-Ahmad has replaced the term Semitic with another term ‘the language of al-Jaziriyah’ otherwise Professor Abdul Wahab Muhammad al-Jaburi has introduced the term to ‘the languages of al-Aribah’ <http://www.atida.org/forums/showthread.php?t=10419>.

² The Code Hammurabi older 800 years than the Old Testament.

decrees based on the laws of the Hammurabi (Code of Hammurabi). The laws were well defined using appropriate expressions befitting the solemnity of the messages it contained. The evidence of this were found in engraved relics in the kingship of Susa written in the letters of the Mismarri on big pillars of black stones said to be in existence in 1800 BC. The inscriptions on stones contained laws from an advanced culture. The Hammurabi was also said to have set up schools to nurture their young ones though it was said that the disciplining method employed was rather oppressive according to modern standard. It is marvelous indeed that they already set up schools in their ancient towns 4000 years ago. They were known to have used stone slates where lessons for the children were inscribed consisting of exercises in arithmetic, spelling, multiplication tables etc. Search in their settlements yielded artifacts in the forms of books, wills or agreements, mathematics problems, astronomic observatory, historical texts and religious scriptures. There evidences to show their women were treated favorably. What has been established was that the kingship of Hammurabi was an Arab kingship which could be considered as the oldest civilization on earth governed by laws and with devotion to knowledge. Over centuries their language, beliefs and thinking had undergone changes and they had also endured changes in climate during the period. It was found in comparison that the proto Jahiliyyah and the Jahiliyyah of the second period also shared some aspects of the core language, religion, mannerism. They were governed by shared common values in their dealings with their fellow men. The prophet Job (pbuh) had been recognized as an Arab. (Genesis: 10). The Arabs were the first in the production of poetry. The poetries in Arabic were later translated into Hebrew. This demonstrated that Arab's venture into literature was earlier than those of Iliad and Odyssey even the Mahabharat of the Hindus (Jurji Zaydan, 2011: 26).

According to Jurji Zaydan the language of Hammurabi or Akkadian provided a typical image of being Arab in the Jahiliyya age. This could be a basis to confirm that they belong to Semitic language. In the north were found relics written in their letters while the relics of Thamudic, Lahiyanic and Safawic were the relics of Arab jahili in the northern region indicating they had dwelled there since the earliest of time. Their language was very advanced with grammatical order and structure. This showed the ancient language of northern Arab settlers reached maturity long before the production of poetry by Imru al-Qais in *Mudar* Arabic. The other relics were the Nabatean which was found since the 3rd century of 270 AD. These comprised relics of Um al-Jamal and also the relics Zenobia all located in the south eastern Aleppo discovered in 511 AD. Also, the relics of Haran in 568 AD (2011: 26).

From the point of view of Jawad Ali these ancient people described above were Arabs both in appearance and in blood. They were born and bred in the country of the Arabs. They were not migrants from any other place anywhere else. They never had outside guests who lived with them. So they were pure Arabs and their language was untainted by any other language. Relating to the perception of Jawad Ali, it is wrong to say that the Qur'an is not in authentic Arabic. It is in pure Arabic elevated and consolidated by Islamic messages. The Arabic of the Qur'an becomes the standard language of the Arabs. Indeed, there is a claim that the ancient writings of the Arabs were written in Torah from the books of Hebrew written in ancient language of ancient Greeks or Latin. It is also wrong to say that the language of the Qur'an is a dialect of a tribe living in the country of the Arabs whose language became the written language of the Arabs. (Jawad Ali, 1976: 1:33-34). The translation of Epic Gilgamesh (the earliest discovered engravements) into Arabic happened much later. It was known that the information contained in Mesopotamia Valley that came to be known was not fully refined or true. This was because not all orientalists were along the same path or intent in the interpreting ancient relics. It could not be denied that there were those who sincerely studied ancient relics to discover the true happenings of ancient times. Studies on discovered relics have clearly established that Arabic is the most advanced of the ancient languages. It is also seen that there were other advanced ancient writings identified from relics left behind by ancient civilizations shared similar features with Arabic ancient writings. Similarities in word order, grammatical structure and sound system seem to suggest that these languages were off shoots of Arabic or originally from the same ancestral stock. It can therefore be safely concluded that Arabic is the mother language of the peninsular Arabia. Also, it is the language of the Semitic not as claimed by "Schlozer". It is regretted that some orientalists tended to ignore certain findings and elevated some others, for example they regarded the writings of the Semitic as the most advanced compared to Akkadian and Semitic which had an affinity with ancient Arabic writings.

Discovery of relics left by the civilizations of Mesopotamia is an example of the fruit of diligence, concern and

interest of Western archeologists and orientalists. They have worked hard to search for the relics, collect, document data and interpret them. They deserve praise for their zealous and continuing efforts. They uphold that the findings in the Mesopotamia serve as a benchmark for comparison with other ancient civilizations. On the basis of their comparison, they could make plausible claims that particular ancient civilizations and languages were superior to others. This became documented sources on human development over the ages for the world to ponder and wonder. Since the orientalists were in the field earlier than others and exerted efforts in studying ancient relics what they say become accepted as true. Intentionally, they could paint the picture of ancient civilizations to give undue credit to some civilizations and deny some others. Their presumptions therefore become the yardstick in determining which civilizations are recognized as being the forerunner in culture and language. They determine who pioneered in the creation of writing and in the production of literary works in ancient times. They could do this with confidence that their assumptions or views are correct as their knowledge of the ancient past are more comprehensive because they possess the main or major sources of information on many nations of antiquity (Mazin Mitbaqani, 2000: 7-11, 14). Without doubt Muslims had lately shown great interest to study nations of antiquity but their numbers of experts are much smaller in comparison to the others.

CONCLUSION

The exposition thus far seems to confirm that Arabic is a language of antiquity and was the most advanced in comparison to languages of other civilizations existing at that ancient time. Another interesting observation is that many ancient languages showed some semblances with Arabic in syntax, grammatical structure and sound of utterances. It can be established that they are of the same language family. In fact, in comparison there were other writings with words similar to Arabic which were more advanced and in much earlier time than the Cuneiform. According to Beeston some findings in the form of writings of the early *Furat* (proto-Euphrates) indicated that they lived to the south of the river Euphrates around five or four thousand years BC. This finding lend support to Jurji Zaydan opinion that peninsular Arabia belong to the Arabs and the Arabs were the ancient people who had inhabited and established their possession of the peninsular since ancient times. Some considered that the writing of Cuneiform was among the most advanced in word arrangements or organization of writings because some languages of the Semitic for example Akkadian were found to be written in Cuneiform letters. In order to put a slight on the achievements of ancient Arabs in writing some orientalists recognized that the writings of the ancient *Furat* (Euphrate) are superior in organization compared to the writings of the Sumerian. This point does not reduce the position of Sumerian as *Furates* were also a clan of the Arabs. Jurji Zaydan is unbiased when he states that the Arabs were the most advanced nation in peninsular Arabia in ancient time. He also categorically states that the Arab peninsular belongs to the Arabs since time immemorial. Some orientalists including Zaydan though not an Arab dare to say what they believe to be true though contrary to the views of many others. This attitude among orientalists objectively seeking to know the truth is indeed praise worthy. When it concerns the affairs of Muslims who else would come up as the spoke persons for the Muslims if not the Muslim scholars? It is very encouraging now in the twenty first century Muslim scholars have been vocal on issues related to Muslims and have provided answers to clarify misinterpretations from non-Muslim scholars in many fields of knowledge. Likewise, the views presented in this paper is also with the idea of continuing the trend of research in order to rebuttal misconceptions and incorrect interpretations with regard to ancient history touching upon language and literature related to or belonging to the Muslims ummah.