

A Look at The History of Arabic Oratory: On the Example of the Khataaba(Oration) Of The Pre-Islamic Age

AUTHOR(S): FERUZA DJURAEVA SHUKUROVNA

Abstract

The article discusses the famous Arabic oratory and its history in world literature and history. The author discusses the fact that the Arabs were masters of the art of speech in the age of ignorance, and analyzes what factors underlie of this power. In her opinion, the first basis of Arabic oratory or public speech is the power of the Arabic language and its unlimited opportunities. The second foundation is based on the national values and character of the Arab people: that they have admired to express various moments of their lives since ancient times; to be proud of their origin, to remember unforgettable days and glorious deeds. Moreover, as a third basis, the author considers the author's ability to create speech. The author of the article also expresses her disagreement about the fact that the pre-Islamic period in the history of the Arab people is called "the age of ignorance" and connects her worldview with the opinions of famous European and Arab scientists.

Key words: Arabic, oratory, ignorance, power of the word, the main thing, basics, values, language capabilities, speaker, speech,

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About Author

FERUZA DJURAEVA SHUKUROVNA
“ARABIC PHILOLOGY” DEPARTMENT,
FACULTY, INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER
TASHKENT STATE INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES, UZBEKISTAN.
E-Mail: fairuz1@yandex.ru



According to many scholars who have studied the history of Arabic literature, Arabs have long been masters of oratory and rhetoric. The famous Russian Orientalist I. M. Filshinsky writes: "During certain seasons the exhibitions were held, at which Bedouin poets and orators, speakers competed with each other in the art of poetry and rhetoric. Over the centuries, such a tradition has been accepted. ¹Arabs have long appreciated oratory art and the skillful use of the word. There is no doubt that the culture of Arab speech that existed in the ages of ignorance and reached us indicates that Arabs were highly developed in the early centuries AD. "²

How long does the antiquity mean in Arabs? Where is the beginning of Arab oratory art, which we have got now and which we recognize as the literary and cultural heritage of the centuries closest to us?

"But about the Arabs, they are known for not writing the history of the language of their literature. But the truth is they have done it before other people in this area, as in other areas."³

According to Jurjiy Zaydan, although Arabs did not pay much attention to the history of their language, the high artistic heritage created in that language, emphasizes that language and its potential are highly valued and that Arabs have developed a language that is older than other peoples of the world. Nevertheless, the earliest literal examples of the ages of ignorance have not survived. Therefore, "due to the lack of factors contributing to its definition, no one can argue about what the language of Arabic literature was before the beginning of history; or about the belief that, Arabs were sunk into their ignorance and disorders until the time of second ignorance (Jurjiy Zaidan divides the period of ignorance into two: 1. Ancient age or first ignorance - from centuries BC to 500 A.D. 2. The second ignorance - from 500 to 622 BC, i.e. before the emergence of Islam) and had nothing except to do the invasive actions or robberies in Hijaz, Damascus, Najd and in other Arab lands. The discriminative features of this language, although its speakers are Bedouins- habitants of deserts, prove that they had a high level of mental development. "⁴

At the same time, we do not agree that the pre-Islamic period in Arab history was called the ages of ignorance. Instead, we cite the opinions of European scientists who studied the history and culture of Arabs in detail: " The term jaahiliyah, usually rendered "time of ignorance " or "barbarism' , in reality means the period in which Arabia had no dispensation, no inspired prophet ,no revealed book; for ignorance and barbarism can hardly be applied to such a cultured and lettered societies that developed by the South Arabians"⁵ , or " The Arabian civilization into which the Prophet Mohammed was born had long been a literate and

¹И.М. Фильштинский История арабской литературы V-X века. Москва главная редакция восточной литературы, 1985. стр.245 I.M.Filshinskiy "The history of Arabic literature V-VII ages".

² ² Arabic literature to the end of the umayyad period The Cambridge history of arabic literature © Cambridge University Press 1983.p.115.

³ Журжий Зайдон "Таариху аадааби ал луғатил арабиййати" с-13,Муассасату ал Хиндаави ли аттаълими ва ас сақаафати,ал Қаахирату,2012.Available at:<http://www.hindawi.org>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Philip, K. Xitti "History of the Arabs" The third edition .revised. Macmillan and Co., Limited.St. Martin's street, London 1946.Part 1, Pre Islamic age /p-90 Available at: www.thecsspoint.com

highly organized society. The people who scribbled on these rocks cannot but have belonged to a society with a high degree of literacy”⁶.

The reason why European scholars make such an assessment of the pre-Islamic period of the Arabs is the fact that the results of their researches and, of course, the historical, cultural, literary and other sources of art on which the Arabs relied, were preserved.

However, unlike European scholars, the Arabs themselves interpret the case why they call the pre-Islamic period as an ignorance in different ways. Before Islam, Arabs were "in darkness, in ignorance, had some kind of violent, harmful practice that was contrary to humanity, its rights and interests."⁷ Their approach must also be recognized, that they lived according to these traditions before Islam and that Islam revealed them.

It is known that before Islam, Arabs did not have a written language. However, Western scholars note "Letters in the language of Najran, probably Arabic, are mentioned in the Letter of Simeon of Beth Arsham, recently brought to light, and the Najran chiefs used to inherit writings or books from one another. At Husn Mabraq of Wadl am-Naqa', in the territory of the Nakha' tribe of the southern Yemen, "Himyari" and Kufic rock inscriptions figure side by side, and very early Arabic rock inscriptions or graffiti are to be found in many parts of western Arabia"⁸.

Such information does not sufficiently substantiate the prevalence and mass development of writing among the Arabs, since during the Arabs' ignorance all information was transmitted orally from the narrators: "even before Islam oral transmission was concurrently a necessary means for remembering and preserving knowledge. Verse, which to this day plays an essential and often utilitarian role in the social life of the countryside, was in ancient Arabia a most important vehicle for transmitting information, but rhymed prose {saj} was used also".⁹ Since the early Arabic khutbas were initially transmitted orally, none can be definitively authenticated, nor can individual lines or words".⁹ From this, it is clear that in the period of ignorance the most basic forms of transmitting information, at the same time, literature were poetry and rhyming. All the literary sources that have come down to us are passed on by mouth to mouth of very influential Arab narrators and passed down from generation to generation.

Examples of the art of public speaking among Arabs are khataabas (i.e. khutbas) orations or sermons. The concept of the rhyming word mentioned in the above quote also applies to sermons. "Although we received examples of poetry from Arabs in the pre-Islamic period, the word prose was also at the level of art. For Arabs, some of the social-household affairs, conversations between some people, attracting people to useful activities, which is found in

⁶ Arabic literature to the end of the umayyad period The Cambridge history of arabic literature © Cambridge University Press 1983.p.114.

⁷ Закий Мубарак "Ан наср ал фанний фил қарн ар робий ал хижриййи"1-жилд,57-6,Муассасатул Ҳиндави Ал Қоҳира 1934й.

⁸Arabic literature to the end of the umayyad period The Cambridge history of arabic literature © Cambridge University Press 1983.p.115.

⁹ See: Arabic literature to the end of the umayyad period The Cambridge history of arabic literature © Cambridge University Press 1983. p.115.;Tahera Qutbuddin," Khutba:The Evolution of Early Arabic Oration" in Classical Arabic Humanities in their own Terms:Festschrift for Wolfhart Heinrichs,ed.Beatrice Gruendler and Michael Cooperson,Brill,2008,p.187

the prose form. Moreover, for this reason it is called the “conversation- muhaadasa” or the reciprocal address “tackhotub”. The public speech of a smart, eloquent person in a meeting on an important occasion is called “khataaba”¹⁰

To recognize the great development of the Arabic language and to think of its users, we must dwell on the values of the Arab people in the ignorance and social life of people. ” At the times of ignorance, most Arab tribes lived in deserts. There were no general laws, no state, and no society. Most of the internal problems that troubled the Bedouins were the looting of neighboring tribes. They needed the art of expression to describe their psyche, their mood, to protect their possessions, their desires, to fight for the language and pedigree, to be proud of themselves, to prove that they are virtuous. The khataaba was a necessity for them and was innate.”¹¹

Thus, the main factor in oratory is language, its capabilities, opportunities. If the language itself is weak, the vocabulary is poor, then oratory in such a language may either not exist, or a very small extent only in certain circles. However, “the Arabic language is superior to words, their internal structure and the elegance of the art of expression. It has own unique and suitable words for each meaning intended for expression, even for small subparts of the meaning.”¹²

Even Arabic words are enough for the finest and most precise points in the definition of meaning, exactly or similarly. In this language, hundreds of synonyms with the same meaning and sometimes antonyms can be seen in one word. At this stage, the Arab literary critic Jurjiy Zaydan points out, that the Arabic language has enormous lexical richness, even as an example for every hour of the day, and different words that describe the different appearance of the word “moon” in the sky at night.

Khataaba, which rose from the level of everyday speech among Arabs and became an example of artistic eloquence, turned out to be a virtue of this people who live in endless deserts, first of all, of their ancestors, victories, happy or bad feelings that hurt them when they accept the environment...

For this reason, even in their ignorance, this people, with their language, which has very beautiful, musical tone and huge vocabulary, “created many scenes of Bedouin life:

1. The resettlement of the Bedouins from one land to another to search for fertile, nutritious pastures; the abundant lake, blessing of rain;
2. Encouraging enmity and hatred, demanding blood revenge or exchanging it of compensation to animals; proud of victories, boasting of their origin, proud of various memorabilia;
3. Explaining what they see, reporting events, situations, moods, telling stories, as well as emotional and mental states: accepting something with pain, suffering or pleasure, understanding, praise and humiliation.¹³

Unfortunately, we did not receive the earliest texts of khataabas or sermons of ignorance time Arabs. We

¹⁰“Ал васиит фи-л-адаби-л-арабиййи ва таарихиҳи”Таълиф Аш Шайх Аҳмад ал Искандарий ва аш шайх Мустафо ЁАнаани .Ат табъатул увла ,1919, с-19.

¹¹ Ibid p.21.

¹² Журжий Зайдон “Таариху аадааби ал луғатил арабиййати” с-58, Муассасату ал Ҳиндаави ли аттаълиими ва ас сақаафати,ал Қаахирату,2012.Available at:<http://www.hindawi.org>

¹³ Ibid

also do not know if the sermon existed as a poem when the Arabs were gathered, or if its range was higher than the poem. However, like poetry, it awakened conscience, affected the mind and emotions of a person. The need for a khataaba has grown exponentially in order to provide strong evidence, and some affairs have been developed to decorate it with various artistic means, using saj-rhymed prose. The main criteria to evaluate prominent khatib or orator (speaker) was his power of influence and mastery to explain issues in a very simple and easy way.”¹⁴

The khataaba satisfied almost all the needs of the Arabs for the language, however, oratory requires a lot of knowledge. ” The semantic connection of words is more complicated than sound, and this requires thinking. If it is limited by hearing, then its semantic aspect includes, firstly, feelings other than hearing, and secondly, things that cannot be felt, therefore, along with other features of the language, its artistic capabilities. The main sources of this possibility are ambiguity, significance and constructive language units”¹⁵.

“Thus, harmony in the language is one of the sources of the beauty of speech, and experienced speakers can use it unlimitedly. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the selective use of consonants should not detract from meaning. We must not forget the original meaning. If not, the orator looks like the fashionista who wears harmful clothes because of fashion.”¹⁶

Arabic public speech in the ages of ignorance was long or short, it could be said anywhere. Mostly the preachers tried to be short in their speech, choosing words and phrases that were memorable, impressive, because they were easy to remember and quickly spread to distant lands. The sermon contained a number of famous proverbs, sayings and instructions.

It should be noted that at first “the Arabs initially used the word in its original meaning depending on the situation; then they used figurative meaning of the word, and it became a new expression - a metaphor. Therefore, when we read ancient Arabic verses, we see less metaphor than in our word. In this sense, there must be a strong connection between the original and figurative meanings of the word. Arabs used many synonyms in ignorance as well.”¹⁷

In the times of ignorance, with the exception of the marriage sermon, the preacher must stand on the ground or on horseback, so that his voice can be heard at great distances, so that he can show and see the consequences of his personality, as well as, express his impression,

¹⁴ Ал вазиит фи-л-адаби-л-арабиййи ва таарихиҳи”Таълиф Аш Шайх Аҳмад ал Искандарий ва аш шайх Мустафо Ёанаани .Ат таъатул увла ,1919, с-19.

¹⁵ Алибек Рустамий Алибек Рустамий .Сўз ҳақида сўз.16-бет. Тошкент, Ўзбекистон ЛКСМ Марказий комитети “Ёш гвардия” нашриёти, 1987
Available at: www.ziyouz.com.kutubxonasi

¹⁶ Алибек Рустамий Алибек Рустамий .Сўз ҳақида сўз.17-бет. Тошкент, Ўзбекистон ЛКСМ Марказий комитети “Ёш гвардия” нашриёти, 1987 .Available at: www.ziyouz.com.kutubxonasi

¹⁷ See: Ал вазиит фи-л-адаби-л-арабиййи ва таарихиҳи”Таълиф Аш Шайх Аҳмад ал Искандарий ва аш шайх Мустафо Ёанаани .Ат таъатул увла ,1919, с-19.

especially the movement of his hands. And it became a tradition. Sometimes he leaned on a spear or bow, stick or cane and made gestures in his important speeches.”

In conclusion, one can be told, that Arabic language has been rich in music, melody, and many meaningful phonetic words from the earliest times of ignorance and has not yet lost its miraculous power. “No people in the world, perhaps, manifest such enthusiastic admiration for literary expression and are so moved by the word, spoken or written, as the Arabs. Hardly any language seems capable of exercising over the minds of its users such irresistible influence as Arabic. Modern audiences in Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo can be stirred to the highest degree by the recital of poems, only vaguely comprehended, and by the delivery of orations in the classical tongue, thought it be only partially understood. The rhythm, rhyme, the music, produce on them the effect of what they call “lawful magic” (*sihr halal*).¹⁸

To conceive the right and very elegant ways to make “lawful magic” (*sihr halal*) and apply it appropriately is a great experience and skill of great orator. Because «the language is the mirror of its owners and the storage of their literature.”¹⁹

The earliest known form of prose in Arabic, the *khutba*, *khataaba* (oration, address, speech) and conversions, testaments, narratives, proverbs, stories and sayings (words of wisdom) are extant in such classical anthologies as “*Amaali*” (Al-Qaali), “*Al Bayan va -t-Tabyiin*” (Al-Jahiz), “*Ikd al-Farid*” (Ibn Abd Rabbihi al-Andalusi), “*Al-Kamil*” (Al-Mubarrad), “*Kitab al-Agani*” (Abul Faraj al-Isfahani), “*Tarihu At-Tabari*” (At-Tabari), “*Muruj az Zahab*” (Al-Mas’udi) and in a number of other literary and historical

¹⁸ Philip, K. Xitti “History of the Arabs” The third edition. revised. Macmillan and Co., Limited.St. Martin’s street, London 1946.Part 1, Pre Islamic age /p-90 Available at: www.thecsspoint.com

¹⁹ See: Журжий Зайдон “Таариху аадааби ал луғатил арабиййати”, Муассасату ал Ҳиндави ли аттаълиими ва ас сақаафати, ал Қаахирату,2012.Available at: <http://www.hindawi.org>

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