

## Concept of Plagiarism in Arab culture and literature

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**Abstract** : This is paper discusses the concept of Plagiarism in Arab culture and literature [Elham Mazrae , Mohammad Mohammadi Tabar and Masoud Reisi. **Concept of Plagiarism in Arab culture and literature**. *J Am Sci* 2013;9(2):91-95]. (ISSN: 1545-1003). <http://www.jofamericanscience.org>. 12

Keywords: Plagiarism; Arab; culture; literature

### Introduction

Plagiarism is one of the most common phenomenon in the field of culture and literature. Arabs and non-Arabs have recognized this phenomenon and more or less are preoccupied with it. Not only has it spread through poetry but also permeated through the sciences of Akhbar and genealogy, especially the tradition. Even at the time of Prophet Muhammad himself it was so common to the extent that, he himself warned the plagiarists about the fire of hell. Generally, it could be noted that the history of plagiarism among different nations goes back to the background of the emergence of various sciences especially the emergence of literature (Poetry & Prose). In the meanwhile, there were critics who took ambush for these plagiarists and betrayed their cheatings for the people. This issue has occupied the mind of many scholars; some of them are dealing with it in a scientific method, while others in a very severe and non-scientific way like attacking the plagiarists and the supporters of them, and those who just reject all poetry of the pre-Islamic period.

It seems that in the present century this issue has been propounded intensely to the extent that some have rejected all the poetry belonging to the pre-Islamic period of Arabs under the pretext of counterfeit. Perhaps it is true to quote some of the scholars that they believe: the purpose of some orientalist and their advocates in raising doubt and skepticism about the poetry of this period is to make people doubtful about the holy verses of Quran, because referring to the poetry of this period many of the words and expressions in holy Quran can be interpreted and explained superficially.

Whatever the purpose of the supporters and opponents of plagiarism is, some of the contemporary scholars like Naser-al-din Asad and Shoughi Zeif have discussed scientifically and published invaluable books and presented them to the society of Arabic culture and literature, in order to prove the reality and truth of the poetry of pre-Islamic period.

What is presented in this article is not a new discussion, because there has been many scientific studies conducted in this field by contemporary and

ancient scientists and religious authorities, as one of the pre-Islamic poets says: Have the poets left any word unstated? This article is going to present a summary of the opinions of the opponents and supporters of plagiarism, taken from various references especially including Shoughi Zeif and Naser-al-din Asad that in order to compare the presented ideas and also the integrity and truth of the poetic lines attributed to the poets, the author referred to the only available library, the compact disk of Maktab-al-Shameleh (School of Shameleh) The author is welcoming the honorable readers' helpful ideas in this regard.

### *In the name of God, the compassionate the merciful* **The Interpretation and the concept of Plagiarism**

The word plagiarism (Entehal) in Arabic dictionary means: A individual claims that he is the writer of a poem, the ode is attributed to him while someone else is the writer (Nak-al-din Bob fala, 218/1). He attributes to himself or someone else attributes a poem to him, or claims for himself while someone else has written the poetry, he plagiarizes a poetry while others have written it; moreover, claims that he is the writer while plagiarizing, claims for it while it is not his (Nak, Taj-al-Orous, Bob nahl 7539/1). According to what has been explained in dictionary, plagiarism can be explained in summary as; plagiarism is to attribute a work of literature to oneself or someone else while it belongs to others, and that this person has not produced such a work and as they say he never has dreamed of it.

### **Plagiarism in Pre-Islamic Arab world**

Plagiarism and ascription of poem to oneself or others can be found in the Pre-Islamic period and early rise of Islam. Though the number is small, it had been persuasive enough and indicating that this literary issue had been prevalent from ancient Arabic poetry period. The accusation of the poets for stealing the literary works of others had been common and usual, as you read in A'sha's poetry: how can I claim other's poetry to be mine at this old age, Whoever does this, he is stigmatizing himself.(Nak, Taj-al-Orous, Nahl Chapter, 7539/1). And (Tahzib-al-Loghat 118/2 ) and Poetry Book (Al-A'sha P.41 Rhyme

Ra'e). Abu Abideh cited in ibn-Salam says: Gharad-ibn-Hanash one of the poets of Ghatfan tribe who had less poetry but the quality was high, the poets of his tribe used to steal his poetry and ascribe it to themselves, including Zahir who attributes his poetries to himself. Such as the line: if I rely on it while there is no such support until Ghatfan tribe needs it, the day it deviates from the right path, they say that, a Ja'di generous went to Imam Ali (A) and Imam Hassan (A) asked for a poem, he read the following lines:

Thank God, the God who there is no equivalent for him

Whoever does not confess this  
He had been cruel to himself

Imam Hassan (A) told him, O' father of Leili, we imagined these lines belonged to Omayeh-ibn-Abisalt. He swore to God that those lines were his and whoever plagiarizes Omayeh's poems is a thief (meaning he should be punished as a thief). A good sample for this discussion is the poems of Mazar-ibn-Zarar who introduced himself and his poetry in several lines and replies to Ka'b-ibn-Zahir in that, I got angry on you when you attributed my poetry to someone else I do not rely on people and do not steal poetry. He is rejecting plagiarism and attributing the poetry of the other poets to himself, referring to the plagiarism of the poetry from Farzadgh.

Farzadgh in describing the poetry of Alghameh, the great poet, he says no one can ascribe Alghameh's poetry to himself, because his poetry is so peculiar and unique in style that whoever attributes it to himself can be found out immediately that it belongs to Alghameh:

Alghameh the great poet

To him all the jewelries and the treasure of the kings belong

His word and speech cannot be stolen  
(Alaghani, Akhbar of Alghameh, 206/10, 392/5) and  
(Ma'ahed-al-Tansis Ala Shavahed-al-Talkhis) 62/1)

### Conclusion

It could be understood from these instances that plagiarism and attributing one's poetry to another poet is a usual phenomenon and had been recognized. Plagiarism had existed from the time when poetry existed.

### The Ambush of reliable narrators and morphology and syntax scientists

The linguists (morphology and syntax) have been aware of the issue of plagiarism and rejected many of the poems that had been attributed to the pre-Islamic poets. For example Abu Amr-ibn-al-Ola Asha'ri recites the poems from Zu-al-Ashah Odvani and then says: other poems attributed to him are forgery. Moreover, Abu Amr Sheibani rejects the following line which is attributed to Antareh: Do you

recognize the house after bearing all those sufferings and efforts.

It is also quoted from Asmaei that, "I stayed in Medina and didn't find a true ode, unless it was quoted or forged from a book or a page. He also says: Many of the poems ascribed to Amr-al-Gheis belong to Sa'alik (a group of poets) and most of the poems Mohalhel belong to them too. (Nase-al-din Asad, pp. 327-328) or Abu Obeideh believes that the poems that are ascribed to Hareth-ibn-Halzeh are counterfeited and only the last five lines are true or he has brought over four lines from Ouf-ibn-Atyieh and in his view the rest are forged (Naser-al-din Asad, p.329)

Mafzal-al-Dhabi criticizes Hemad -al-Ravieh, he also criticizes his professor, Khalaf Ahmar and accuses him of plagiarism. In addition, Ibn Hesham criticizes ibn Issac, his professor, who ascribed the poems of a poet to another poet. For example, he attributed poetry to Zeid-ibn-Amr-ibn-Nofail while it belonged to Omayeh-ibn-Abi Salt. (naser-al-din asad, pp. 338-339)

### Abu Hatem sajestani's pointing to plagiarism

Among the ancient scholars who considered plagiarism are Abu hatem Sajestani Jahez and Ibn Ghatifeh and Ibn salam. Abu Hatem mentions three lines belonging to Amr-ibn- Sa'labe and then says: Atar-ibn-masa'b thinks that khalaf Ahmar has forged and plagiarized this last line or rejected this line from Zohair

I have shouldered the responsibilities of life  
Who could be eighty five years old  
O' base-born tolerate this much suffering  
Or he quotes from Asmaei and says that this ode belongs to a poet called Anas-ibn-Zanim (Asad, p.331).

### Jahez Pointing at plagiarism

Jahez also explains in his book the plagiarized and subjected poem in three ways:

1. He mentions the name of the poet and then says if he has written this line, this is a phrase which shows doubt and uncertainty meaning that Jahez looks at this poem with skepticism and not with certainty
2. Pointing exactly at the plagiarized poem for instance the plagiarized poem by Nabegheh such as: you are never treacherous at depositary like Noah who did not betray or he brings over three lines from a person called Ghilan-ibn-salameh and then says this lines that we have belong to Masib-ibn-Alas.
3. He recites poems that the narrators have said they are pre-Islamic but according to their content which includes some adventurous and issues related to the Islamic era or cited a little before that, are not accepted as pre-Islamic. For example in this poem the

falling of stars as a sign of the birth of prophet is described (Naser-al-din Asad, p.333).

Ibn Ghatibeh Pointing at Plagiarism

Ibn Ghatibeh also points at plagiarism such as quotes A'sha:

Everywhere and every place and in the last travel there was peace and tranquility.

Then he adds:

“this is a forged poem and among the attributed poem to him I cannot see a nice line except :

O' the best man who rides a camel and do not get drinks from a misery's hand

Ibn Ghatibeh recites seven lines from Labid which the last line is everybody would see the result of his efforts one day the time when the results will become obvious by God. He says: the poem is written in the Islamic period and is similar to God's words (revelation) when saying: “And exudes everything from the hearts.” Or that Labid before converting to Islam believed in judgment day or probably the poem is not true (Asad, 335).

### **Ibn Mo'taz and Plagiarism**

He in Tabaghat-e- Fohoul-al-Shoara in the chapter about Akhbar Khalaf-al-Ahmar argues that Khalaf Ahmar was unfamiliar with syntax and morphology but he was specialist in genealogy and the history of Arabs. He was a favorable, famous poet and had a lot of poetic lines no one had as much poetry as he had among his contemporaries, until he became sick and died because of that illness. Before his death, he said, “the lines that I recited for such and such a person are not his, but they are mine and I am the writer and I ask for absolution from god. “he was busy praying for a while and never wrote poems again. De'bel said, that Khalaf Ahmar had told him that they had imitated from Ta'bat Sharan (title of a poem) and quoted his words verbatim that he said, “a nation who dies dastardly is never murdered.” De'bel continues that Khalaf had told him; this is my own poem and not from Ta'bat Sharan (Tabaghat-al-Shoara, Akhbar Khalaf-al-Ahmar chapter, 42/1).

### **Yaghut Hamavi and Plagiarism**

He writes from Abu-al-Taib-al-Loghavi that, Khalaf used to forge poetry and attribute them to Arabs and no one could recognize its originality, then he proceeded to asceticism and every night finish reading the holy Quran. Some of the rulers offered him lots of property to give his idea about the poetic lines that they doubted but he refused. (Mo'jam-al-O'daba, Khalaf-ibn-Hayan Chapter 460/1)

### **Ibn Khalekan and plagiarism**

He quotes Abu Zeid Ansari and says that Khalaf Ahmad told him that, “I came to Kufah to

write poems about them, they were jealous with me then I gave them counterfeited poetry and received genuine poems then I became ill and told them I repented and these are my own poetry but they did not believe me, this is the reason they stayed being attributed to Arab. (Vafayat-al-Ayan).

Ibn Salam is the first scholar who has considered the issue of plagiarism extensively and comprehensively. He set forth some reasons for forgery of some poetry that narrators have mentioned. Such as;

a) There is no evidence about what narrators are attributing to pre-Islamic period, this kind of poetry is not narrated from the residents of desert and is not exposed to reliable scientists

b) Weak, forged, plagiarized, and counterfeited poetry is too much in it and there is no use in it, there is no evidence and proof to prove its Arabian nature. No literature in it and no meaning and interpretation to be extracted, and proverbs praise or celebration, no sarcasm, no wonderful honor and no new and fresh advantage.

### **Reasons and Motivation behind Plagiarism according to Ibn Salam views**

He believes there are two factors which cause plagiarism. a) Tribes, who wanted to increase the poetry in order to increase their past good deeds, and honors b)counterfeiter narrators (Shooghi Zeif, Al-Asr-Al-Jaheli , p.164). Ibn Salam says, “when Arabs resorted to writing and reciting poetry and mentioning their past wonderful works and honors, some tribes felt that they had less nice deeds in the past as a result these tribes in order to catch up with the other tribes who had more poetry and honor started to write poems imitating the style of their poets and then narrators added to their poems

Ibn Salam and Criticizing Ibn Isaac

Ibn Salam criticized Ibn Isaac severely who is the author of Sireye Nabavi and said about him, he has quoted in his book about the men who have never written any poetry; moreover, he has brought over poems from women, above all he has attributed a lot of poems to A'd and Samoud tribes that are not poems but a group of words chained together, ordered and have rhyme. (Naser-Al-Din Asad, p.336) Ibn Salam by relying on many reasons, including the best evidence which is the holy Quran rejects the poems that are attributed to A'd and Samoud tribes and argues that ; “Doesn't Ibn Isaac refer to his conscience and doesn't think that who has maintained these poems and transmitted throughout several centuries. While God is saying : Descendants of cruel people have been cut” or somewhere else in Holy Quran is said that there is no trace of A'd and Samoud tribes left. “And God eradicated the first tribes of A'd and Samoud and is left nothing from them.” (Al-Najm, 50-

51). Also says, "Do you see any trace of them." (Al-Hagheh, XIII) the criticism of the scholar of the poetry counterfeiters and weak and accused narrators did not result in the rejection of the whole pre-Islamic poetry, but they accepted the supported poetry and the ones that had been recited by reliable narrators and the narration of the accused people would be accepted if it was exposed and compared with other narrators.

The issue of plagiarism in the past, persuaded orientalist to doubt the validity of pre-Islamic poetry and even reject it completely, and also find fault with many of the obvious realities of holy Quran. The first orientalist who set forth the issue of plagiarism for discussion was Nouledkeh (1861). He used the results of the studies that had been conducted on scientific languages and the role and rituals that acquired from Hemair and Saba in Souther Yemen in the discussion of plagiarism. He also compared Arabic with other languages including Greek and especially Homer literary works and also German literature, in order to generalize the results that were acquired by Ibn-e-Salam and to manifest that all pre-Islamic poetry is forger, eight years later, Albert Wilhelm in 1872 at the introduction of the poetry books (the six pre-Islamic poets) set forth this issue for further consideration 1904 Kaliman Hower published a powerful article titled new sources of Quran.

In 1905 Samuel Merglyooth published his book entitled Muhammad and the Rise of Islam, then his article (Muhammad) was published in encyclopedia (Al-Din and Al-Akhlagh). He has also discussed the plagiarism and forgery of the pre-Islamic poetry. Although many scientists including his fellow citizen, Layl, replied him, he continued to poison the Arabic literature and culture. In 1916, his main purpose became obvious by publishing principles of Arabic poetry as an article. It is nothing except the magic of holy Quran and its superiority over Arabic words. (The article Alghat-Al-Ejaz-Al-Qurani Be Ghaziat-Al-Shak Fi She'r-Al\_Jaheli), the web site of the scholar and writer Maghrebi, Abbass Arhileh).

#### **A Summary of the Reasons for Rejecting the Pre-Islamic Poetry by Merglyooth**

If the pre-Islamic poetry had been genuine, it should have reflected the different dialects of the pre-Islamic Arab world, and the difference between these dialects. Like North Adnani and South Hemairi. Dr. Shooghi Zeif replies; the eloquent and rhetorical language that was prevalent in pre-Islamic period (Quran was revealed in this language) and the poets wrote poems in this language, and this dialect is Ghoreish. This dialect was picked up because of economical, social, political, and religious reasons. The poets had left their local dialects, the same as the contemporary poets do. Whereas, there are different

dialects in their country and cities, but they write poems in eloquent and rhetorical Arabic language. (Al-Asr-Al-Jaheli, p.167).

Merglyooth's other reason is that the inscriptions and the art crafts that are discovered in the pre-Islamic civilized kingdoms, especially Yemen, indicates no sign of poetic (literary) activities in these areas. Therefore, how is it possible for uncivilized desert-wanderer Arabs to write these poems, while the civilized people and kingdoms of this area didn't?

To answer this assertion, Shooghi Zeif recites the answer of one of the western scientists called Brouinlesh who believes the rhythm and rhyme of poetry does not depend on the civilization and culture, and social conditions, since the tribes who are apparently away from civilization and culture like Eskimos who have a lot of poetry. (Al-Asr-Al-Jaheli, p.167)

#### **Arabic Scholars (Ulamah) and Plagiarism**

Among the Arab scientist in twentieth century, Mustafa Sadegh Rafei has discussed the issue of plagiarism broadly. In pre-Islamic poetry in his book "History of the Arabic literature." But he has only relied on the ideas and opinions of the ancient scholars.

Summary of the factors that affect the forgery of poetry from Rafei's point of view;

1. Tribes, especially those who recognized that their poetry and historical events were small especially Ghoreish tribe.
2. A poem that was forged as an evidence to interpret strange and unknown words in syntax especially by Kufah's.
3. A poem that was forged by Mo'tazeleh or other Motakalemin to acknowledge their religion.
4. The proving poems that were recited between the news and history were forged because the number of narrators increased and they wanted to attract more audience between the mythology and epics.
5. Expanding of narration: the narrators expanded the narration to compete together and recited poems from outstanding poets who had never written or added them to their odes.

But after him, Dr. Taha Hussein in his book "A-she'r Al-Jaheli" poetry of the pre-Islamic period –dealt with this issue that instigated many of the radical Islamists and researchers following that he Published Fil-Adab-Al-Jaheli (about pre-Islamic literature). And dealt with this issue widely extensively. (Shooghi Zeif-Al-Asr-Al-Jaheli, p.170). Taha Hussein who was influenced by the ideas of Merglyooth add fuel to the fire of this discussion. (Ashhar-Al-Rudoud Ala Ketab Fi She'r-Al-Jaheli from Taha Hussein). He concluded that the absolute excess of the literature which is called pre-Islamic is not per-Islamic at all, not even a line of it, but it is written after Islam and is post-Islamic that

reflects most of the wishes, needs and requests of Muslims, rather than the life of people before Islam. I almost doubt the pre-Islamic poetry because it indicates and implies at nothing of that period in extracting literary images of that period it is not suitable to rely on this poetry.

In brief, what Taha Hussein presents as reasons and logics to reject this poetry is that this poetry does not reflect the religious, political, and economical life of Arabs before Islam, as it does not present any images of the dialects of the tribes and the differences between their dialects, including the difference with the dialect of Hemyarian. Many books and articles are published to reply Taha Hussein and resolve his doubts such as;

- a) Taht Ra'yat-Al-Quran, by Mustafa Sadegh-Al-Rafaei
- b) Mohazerat Fi Ketab-Al-She'r-Al-Jaheli by Sheikh Muhammad Khezri
- c) Naghze Ketab Fi She'r -Al-Jaheli by Sheikh Muhammad Khezri-Al-Hussein
- d) Naghd-e- Ketab Fi She'r-Al-Jaheli by professor Farid Vajdi
- e) Al Shahab-Al-Rased by Dr. Muhammad Lotfi Jomeh
- f) Al Naghd-Al-Tahlili Fi Ketab-Al-Adab-Al Jaheli by Muhammad Ahmad-Al-Ghamravi.

### Conclusion

The summary and the conclusion of the study is the same as what Sir. Shooghi Zeif says; the truth is that there is a large number of forgery in pre-Islamic poetry, but this issue had not been unknown by the ancient scholars and they had criticized it severely. They also considered it from different perspectives, structurally and lexically and from the aspect of narration. In other words, they have exposed it to national and international criticism, so it is better people like Merglyooth and Taha Hussein do not exaggerate in rejecting all the pre-Islamic poetry, but believe what reliable narrators such as Abu Amr-Ibn-Al-O'la and Mofzal Dhahi and Esmaci and Abu Zeid Ansari have narrated and have consensus opinion about it. And do not reject some of them on the basis of guess and estimate. Like naming a poetry for a poet which is not related to his historical period or there exist name of places that are far away from the living place, or attribute an Islamic oriented poetry to non-Islamic period that makes us understand the forgery and plagiarism in these poems. (Al-Asr-Al-Jaheli, p.175).

Suppose that all the pre-Islamic poetry is forgery, then this forgery is so much based on the style and techniques that the difference between the original and forged poetry is not recognizable. Consequently there must have been and original and

genuine pattern poetry of pre-Islamic poetry that the people copied it. (Shooghi, Al-Jaheli, p.167).

As the author of Al-Mofsal says; plagiarism has not been easy work, the counterfeiter had a knowledge, science, and power about the methods of pre-Islamic poetry. Hamad-Al-Ravieh a great scholar and a famous narrator, as Mofzal Dhahi says they had knowledge of the methods and techniques of the ancient poets and forged poetry according to their methodology and style. (Al-Mofzal Vol.9, p.496).

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12/29/2012