

## **The Persian Effect on Abdulsamad Bin Babak's Poetry**

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### **Abstract**

Abdulsamad Bin Babak is an Arabic poet who belongs to Saleem tribe, Baghdad, where he died there in the year 410 A.H- 1020 A.C. He moved a lot between Iraq and Persia in the courts of Buyid princes. Due to his travels and visits to Persia, there is a vivid impact of Persian language, culture, traditions in his poetry. The study attempts to reveal this effect on cultural exchange between the two neighbouring nations, the Arab and the Persian.

**Keywords:** Ibn Babak, Persian effect, Abdulsamad Bin Mansour, Persian words and Buyid state.

### **Introduction:**

The mutual effect between neighbouring nations is one of the important aspects of comparative literature. This issue is larger of literature, it includes culture: literature, habits and traditions.....etc. The studies have revealed that there is mutual influence between Arabs and Persians. What is important for us is what appeared in the field of literature and the influence of Persian culture on Arabic literature in particular. This kind of influence goes back to pre- Islamic period, where researchers find out certain Persian vocabularies in literature but they modified according to Arabic terms through Arabicization and translation, and the written Arabicized books are full of clear examples. (Abdultawab 1999: 359). If the matter is limited to vocabularies since the two cultures were independent and they don't have points in common that depended on Islamic religion, the melting of the two cultures within each other is evident in the foundations of the Abbasid society. The researcher refers to this fact in their studies. (Dhaif 1976: 21).

Since our discussion here is general, the 10<sup>th</sup> century (A.C) has witnessed an important transformation of the emergence of Persian emirates that gained independence from Abbasid state. These emirates tried to enliven Persian language when it was at the verge of extinction due to use of Arabic language, which was the official language of Islamic state. (Almadani 2020 : 601 ) Moreover, it was the language used by Muslims in their worship. In this particular century, Ibn Babak has lived in Persia and Badghad.

### **Ibn Babak:**

He is Abualqassim Abdulsamad Bin Mansour Bin Al-Hasan known by (Ibn Babak). He was born in Baghdad or its outskirts, then he moved around the country eulogizing kings princes to get prizes from them . (Khudheir 1976 :14). The evident proof of Persian influence on his life and culture is the name. (Babak) is a Persian word means (honest) or (strong) , also, (Babak) is one of the Persian great kings (Al-Saeedi 2007: 104).

Ibn Babak has lived the larger part of his life moving in Persia in the Buyid and Ghaznavid courts that came after Samanid state in late 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The capital was Bukhara and the most prosperous parts was Khorasan, which was far from Arab centres in Iraq, so Persian language and literature are flourished rapidly and before other countries. (Azzam 2013: 49). Then, Persian culture started to occupy its place in whole Persia, where Arab language and literature covered Persia along two centuries in the zenith of Abbasid state power and the influence of the centre of power in (Baghdad) on all regions of Abbasid state. During 10<sup>th</sup> century, Shahnameh, the Persian epic appeared, and the Persian language regained its status in daily use and scientific and literary writings. Then, the impact of this language started to appear in Arabic literature and language (Al-Zuhairy 1949: 152).

During 10<sup>th</sup> century, the Persian poetry is characterized by mentioning Persian kings like Ardeshir, Jamshid, Fereydoun and Rostam. They included in the Arabic poetry who lived in Persia. (Azzam 2013: 58).

Ibn Babak has revealed that he took the lead of the Persians in their way of life and habits. He wrote for some his Persian friends:

"Why these worthless relics of wine and fruits Passed away from me as wandered suns?  
And I agonized to remember as bereaved and puzzled mother who lost her son. As if I didn't become Khosrow's sons worshiper And my eulogizing refresh not their memory of the history of their great old fathers."\*(Ibn Babak 1: 215 A)

Due to the situation to unfriendliness with one his Persian friends, he wrote these stanzas reprove him mildly in which he declared that he was sad and sorry. He reminds his friend that he has glorified deified Persian kings in his writings in addition to remember the feats of great Persian warriors. After reading Ibn Babak's poems collection, we will find the traces of Persian effect in his poetry:

### **First: His relation to Buyids and Ghaznavid**

Buyid are Persian nation that emerged in the first half of 10<sup>th</sup> century and the extended to include Iraq and other regions. They occupied Baghdad in 945 A.C. and it became part of their authority though they have kept the Abbasid caliph in his office, but this is an honorific position, a minister without portfolio, the real authority was in the hand if the buyid ruler . ( Eqbal 1989 :66).

\*the researcher interprets the meaning of the poetic stanzas rather than translating poetry itself.

Ibn Babak has communicated with many rulers and kings like Uqaylid in Mosul and Ghaznavid in Khorasan. But he contacted buyids more than any other kings and rulers, and he eulogized them, got their prizes and enjoyed the luxurious life of their courts. The most prominent minister was Al-Sahib Bin Abad (died 995 A.C) , who was a famous poet . His court was the destination where poets , writers and scientists gathered and debated . Ibn Babak was loyal to his friend even after his death when he elegized him in his poems (Khudheir 1976 : 36-37).

It is noted in Ibn Babak's eulogies that he had exaggerated and cringe poems as it was prevailing in the relation Persians with their kings and rulers. He said,

"If spears and swords fight to rule, I will unsheathe my solid spear. The sword that sheds blood and death on its sharp edge, You assumed the office as if it is thirsty for the fresh, cold and pure water. You turned it to great orchard of lofty trees, that you cherished and protected ." (Ibn Babak 1: 23 A)

Here, Ibn Babak added the glorification features on the Persian kings as the Persian poets did with their kings and he cringed for them.

Although Ghaznavid were Turkish, they appeared in Iran and used Persian language as an official one, but in the Islamic cultural framework only not in the ethnic aspect. (Yalouh, Rachid 2014: 153). He said eulogizing Mahmood of Ghazni :

"O, king take your enemies by surprise in the early morning, attack them and smash like glass. As the night falls, make them like wood for you. They are like Abi Muslim who worked diligently for the Abbasid but pride has derailed his ideas and aspirations, and because of his sick ambition, he wouldn't rule out."

Though the poet is an Arab, his ethnicity does not prevent him from motivating Mahmood of Ghazni in his war against Arab tribes that disobeyed his authority. The poet considered Mahmood of Ghazni an extension to the Persian Abu Muslim Al-Khorasani in his leadership to the Abbasid revolution against Umayyad state that supported by Arab tribes on the contrary to the Abbasid that supported by Persians to revolt.

## **Second: Call for Sasanian Persian figures:**

The most repeated names in his poetry was Khosrow. It is repeated for (28) times in addition to other names like (Sasan), (Shapur), (Shahenshah) and (Hormuz). Moreover, his poetry is full of words like (Persia) and (Persian). It is noted that the poet through employing all these names, he preferred the life of city rather than nomad life related to pre-Islam life of Arabs. He clearly expresses this in his poetry:

"Khosrows' house never being on a hill in (Tawadhih) or in (Jalji), but they are the crown's place that aspires for honour, and he is highborn man of great palaces." (Ibn Babak 1: 163 B)

He declares that the king whom he eulogized belongs Khosrow's dynasty and he is one of the great Persian kings who did not live in houses made of animals hair in (Tawadhah) and (darat Juljul) and they the names of two places in found Imru'a Al-Qais hanging poems who was one of the greatest Arab poets. Here, Ibn Babak degraded nomad Arabs and elevated the civilized Persian kings.

### **Third: Persian locations:**

Ibn Babak mentioned several Persian places that related to his visits and travelling, and he employed them to create certain poetic images in poems. He documented the places he visited and events happened there. (Al-Rey) has been repeated (29) times and (Gorgan) (15) times in addition to other names like (Hamadān), (Nishapur), (Sheraz), (Khorasan) and (Nahavand). He wrote:

"These camels we ride have left Najd and Ajra'a AlHima, AlRaqqatain gardens and Hulwan Mountain heading to Sudabad Mountain, its plain and Sawa mound to Qasran then to Al-Rey and white villages and Simnan mountains. The camels saw that all eyes were directed towards to Jurjan green gardens, where the prince whom power and resolution have bent down to him, and he was very generous awakened slept people to get his prizes." (Ibn Babak 1: 195 B)

Moreover, these places have occupied certain place in his poetic images. He used them figuratively because of their height as mountains and plateaus or related to nature's beauty or greenery:

"If this hard going man sits with Arwand Mountain, the mountain will move from annoyance." (Ibn Babak 1:18 A)

Arwand is a mountain in Persia overlooks Hamadan city and it is known for the dwellers of the city. The poet uses it in his poetic image. The satirized man cannot be stood by any human even if he sits with mountain, it will move from its location

### **Fourth: using astrological terms in his poetry:**

Persia is nation known for their interest in astrology because their culture and traditions are related to stars. The beginning of the Persian year is related directly to constellation and horoscopes even most of their historians related the events to astrology. The news of their fortune- teller regarding the birth of Christ is an evident of their interest in this field. "They have deep knowledge in stars and observatories" (Ibn Al-Ibri 1992:47).

Many words related to stars are present in the poetry of Ibn Babak. For example (star or stars) have repeated more than 200 times, planet is repeated more than 82 times, Gemini is mentioned 37 times, Pleiades is 35 times in addition to Sirius, Saturn, Mars and Scorpio. He also mentioned the words related to astrology like (universe), which is mentioned 24 times and ( pole ) for 18 times, and (transfer) for 11 times. Also, he referred to the relation

horoscopes with fortune and misfortune that were mentioned 11 times and the word (circles) for 9 times: He said:

"I saw your horoscopes, planets and stars, and they told me that would get what wish of honour, power and strength. The stars told me that luck followed you and obeyed you and you were the first man in the race" (Ibn Babak 1: 73 B)

What attracted our attention is that Ibn Babak talked a lot about luck and fortune. He reflected what was prevailing in the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.C. Most of the intellectualists and wise people suffer from lack of care and attention while ignorant people got fame and wealth and prestigious status. This attitude is common at that time where people believed in horoscopes and stars. The word luck is mentioned 195 times in addition to other related words like (misfortune), (fortunate) and (fate). Also, he used the Persian word (luck) that corresponds to Arabic word (luck) for (5) times. He said:

"Time wanted to capture me and tied me and if I capture him (time), I will release him. I didn't make mistake for him, if I do, I will apologize. If (time) is incarnated in man and made mistake to me, I would forgive him. I turn away from and leave, but connect others though time is hateful, malicious and the reason is my skill, and every skillful man has no luck." (Ibn Babak 2: 55 B).

#### **Fifth: References to Zoroastrianism and its instructions:**

The dominant social Persian manifestation in Ibn Babak's poetry is Persian festivals and celebrations. He composed more than 60 poems including 28 poems for Nowruz, 27 one for festival and 5 for igniting fire feast. Most of these poems were composed to eulogize Persian kings and princes. Ibn Babak includes all these feast, festivals and celebrations and all other related original Persian culture of Zoroastrianism. He said:

"The king stirs the huge fire to restore Ardashir's and Dara's glory. Burn your enemies and make it a guide for lost and hungry people in the night. Make fire like the flocks of birds that separated like torn dress." (Ibn Babak 1: 69 A).

#### **Sixth: Flowers and Basils:**

The poet's interest in roses and flowers was great due to his interest in nature and its beauty in addition to the influence of Persians on his poetic image. Narcissus was mentioned 15 times in addition to other words related to flowers like (iris, calendula and nenuphar). In a drink session in full- flowers and roses garden, he said:

"we have basils of Khosrow that attracted eyes, and Calendula that receives rays of sun to show delicate, shiny and beautiful scene as if to see fire in heavens" (Ibn Babak1: 209 A)

The poet described the charming surrounding nature full of roses and basils.

#### **Seventh: The entrance of Persian words:**

During the Abbasid era, the Persian words have entered the daily life of people and writers are part of society. So, they used these words in their poetry and prose and most of these words related directly to civilization, food, drinks, dresses, housing, medications, administrative and industrial terms. In Ibn Babak's poetry, we find words like (sikbaj (meat cooked in vinegar), waltz, chardaq, brake, Dathy, sugarij, ewan, sabat, basin, jawashin, pallium, dawawich, silk cloth, sandal, seaming, mandolin, chess, divider, nenuphar, antidote and paper). In the following poetry, we find the poet changes the Arabic word into another Persian one:

"She made me happy and sent a precious gift for me, this is the real noble- good manners not like two cups of yogurt" (Ibn Babak 1: 121 A)

He used the Persian word (dogh) in lieu of Arabic one (Laban 'yogurt'). Also, he derived verbs from Persian words like (Moharij 'clown') from the word (Mahrajan 'festival') and (takharsan 'mute' as a verb) derived from (Khorasan 'name of place').

The reasons can be attributed to the Persian influential attendance in the Abbasid period especially that was related to systems of culture, administration and etiquette. The researchers found out that "some poets have used in their poetry some Persian words in witty and humors manner" (Dhaif: 142)

Arabs have taken many Persian habits, traditions whom mixed with them for long period of time. Ibn Babak has shown this clearly:

"I don't have wine but I like you wildy, and I learn from you because Arabs have no idea about (etiquette) so they learn from Persia" (Ibn Babak 2: 20 A).

## Conclusion

The researcher has summarized the findings of the paper in the following points:

- a) The mutual relationship between the two civilizations, the Arab and the Persian, is not a new one. But the influence includes political, social, intellectual and cultural structures for Arab nations. Also, it leaves its imprints on the Persian society, language and literature.
- b) Ibn Babak though he was not the only one to be influenced by the Persian, he was influenced more than others. This influence has penetrated every corner of his life, culture and doctrine that followed Buyid's state. Although he was not a devoted person, he was a poet of lust, debauchery and wine.
- c) The Persian effect on Ibn Babak's poetry is represented in several aspects, first, he preferred the urban life that was related to Persian civilization in comparison to the nomadic type of Arab life who lived in the barn desert. So, many Persian words have entered into his poetry especially that related to food, drinks, architecture, medications, professions and industry.
- d) Employing Sasanian Persian figures eulogize those old kings as their successors and they are originated from them.

- e) Focusing on the Persian feasts, festivals and occasions that are related to Zoroastrianism, the old Persian religion and other occasions like Nowruz.
- f) He interested in astrology and fortune- telling that closely related to this kind of practice and common in the Persian culture. Persians had observatories and they interested in stars and pessimism and optimism regarding events of life.
- g) The Persian interest in the flowers, fruits and trees a clear impact on Ibn Babak's poetry. He employed this kind of nature in his poetry to form his poetic images and metaphors especially places he had visited or lived in.

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