

The Phenomenon of Plagiarism in Pre-Islamic Poetry and Its Impact on Efforts to Interpret the Qur'an

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Abstract

The phenomenon of plagiarism in pre-Islamic poetry raises significant concerns regarding the authenticity of the pre-Islamic literary and linguistic heritage, which forms a foundation for Arabic linguistic sciences, including grammar, morphology, and rhetoric. Questioning the authenticity of this heritage could impact the basic linguistic structure of Arabic across lexical, semantic, and syntactic dimensions. This skepticism also affects Qur'anic studies, which have historically drawn upon pre-Islamic poetry and early Arabic lexicons to interpret Qur'anic vocabulary. These sources are deeply interlinked with preserved anthologies that have safeguarded this linguistic legacy, as reflected in classical exegesis and frequent references to pre-Islamic texts. This study examines the issue of plagiarism through an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction addresses the historical scope of plagiarism in global literature, focusing on its prevalence and implications. The first chapter analyzes the perspectives of classical critics, while the second chapter examines contemporary scholarly approaches, including arguments challenging the authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry. The third chapter explores historical and modern motivations for plagiarism among early and recent scholars. In the fourth chapter, I critically assess the evidence supporting plagiarism claims. The fifth chapter examines the implications of plagiarism for Qur'anic exegesis and hadith interpretation. Finally, the conclusion synthesizes these discussions and presents the key findings of this study.

Keywords: Arabic Language and Rhetoric, Plagiarism, pre-Islamic Literature, Literary Criticism, Exegetes.

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İslam Öncesi Şiirde İntihal Olgusu ve Kur'an Yorumlarına Etkisi

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Öz

İslam öncesi şiirde intihal meselesi, ilgili döneme ait edebiyat ve dil mirasına dair şüphe oluşturmaktadır. Konunun bu açıdan önemli olduğu kaydedilebilir. İslam öncesi dönem, Arap dili ve nahiv kurallarının tespiti açısından temel oluşturmaktadır. Bu yüzden döneme ait edebi metinlere nahiv, sarf, belagat gibi çeşitli Arap dil bilimlerinin inşasında sıklıkla müracaat edilmektedir. İslam öncesi şiirini inkâr etmek ve onu bütünüyle ya da kısmen sorgulamak, yalnızca bu dönemin şairlerinin şiirsel ve edebi üretimlerine yönelik bir eleştiri değil, aynı zamanda Arapça'nın sözlük, anlam ve nahiv kökenlerini sorgulayan dilsel bir şüpheciliktir. Bu şüphecilik, yaklaşımları ve mezhepleri ne olursa olsun, Kur'an-ı Kerim'i İslam öncesi şiirden alıntılar yaparak yorumlamaya alışkın olan tefsir âlimlerinin çabalarına da açık bir tehdit oluşturmaktadır. Zira Kur'an'ın kelimelerinin anlamlarını açıklamak ve ayetlerini yorumlamak için kullanılan kaynakların başında, İslam öncesi şiir ve bu şiirin derlemeleri gelmektedir. Bu nadir dilsel mirası ölümsüzleştiren divanlar, tarih boyunca kitapların satır aralarında muhafaza edilmiştir.

Makalenin son bölümünde ele alındığı üzere, müfessirlerin tefsirlerinde İslam öncesi şiirlere dayanmaları, fazla bir delil veya çıkarım gerektirmeyen açık bir gerçektir. Bu konu üzerinde çalışan bir araştırmacının yalnızca tefsir kitaplarına ve Kur'an'ın kelime dağarcığına bakması yeterlidir. Bu eserlerde, İslam öncesi şiirlerden alıntılar yapılarak âyetlerin yorumladıkları görülmektedir. İslam öncesinde yazılan şiirler, sözlük materyallerinin oluşturulmasında da önemli bir kaynak teşkil etmiştir.

Müfessirlerin dinin ana kaynağı olan Kur'an-ı Kerim'i yorumlarken kullandıkları dayanakların sorgulanması, sadece Arap dili açısından değerlendirilmemeli aynı zamanda müfessirlerin din namına söyledikleri hükümlerinin de sorgulanmasına sebep olmaktadır. Bu durum, tüm müfessirler için bir fikir birliği noktası oluşturan dilsel bir yaklaşımın önemini ortaya koymaktadır.

Hiç şüphe yok ki, İslam öncesi şiirde intihal ve sahtecilik bulunmaktadır; ancak bu vakianın kabulü bütün bir literatürün yok sayılması anlamına gelmemektedir. Nitekim günümüze kadar ulaşmış çok sayıda güvenilir şiirler bulunmaktadır. Bunlar râvîler tarafından doğrulanarak aktarılmış ve farklı eserlerle günümüze kadar taşınmıştır. el-Mufaddal el-Dabbi, el-Esma'i ve Ebu Amr İbn el-Ala'nın şiirlerini buna örnek olarak zikredebiliriz. Zaman zaman, ravilerin aktardığı şiirlerin doğruluğunda tereddüt oluşabilir, hatta şiirler arasında intihal yapılmış olanlar da bulunabilir. Ancak bu durum, doğru araştırma teknikleriyle tespit edilmesi mümkün hususlardır. Dolayısıyla buradan yola çıkarak İslam öncesi şiirlerin tamamını sorgulamak ve bunlar üzerinde şüphe oluşturmak ilmi bir yaklaşım değildir. Ayrıca bu tür şüphecilik yaklaşımlar, yalnızca İslam öncesi şiirle sınırlı olmayıp bütün tarihsel bilgiler için de geçerli olabilir.

Yukarıda belirtilenler doğrultusunda, intihal konusunu ele alan bu çalışma, giriş, beş bölüm ve sonuçtan oluşmaktadır. Giriş bölümünde, genel olarak edebiyatta intihal olgusunun tarihsel boyutu, yaygınlığı, edebiyat ve dil kaynakları üzerindeki etkisi gibi çeşitli yönler ele alınmıştır. Birinci bölümde, konunun eski edebiyat eleştirmenlerine göre tarihçesi incelenmektedir. İkinci bölümde, bu yaklaşımların modern çağdaki gelişimi, Margoliouth ve onu takip eden Arap düşünürlerinden Taha Hüseyin gibi isimlerin sunduğu öneriler incelenmiştir. İslam öncesi şiirde intihal meselesi ve bunun sonucunda ortaya çıkan meseleler hakkında Mustafa Sadık El-Rafi'i ve Mahmud Şakir'in düşünceleri ve eleştirileri tespit edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Şakir'in özellikle el-Mutenebbi'nin divanına yazdığı değerli önsözde, bu konulara dikkat çekmesi önemlidir. Mahmud Şakir aynı zamanda Taha Hüseyin'in öğrencisi olarak, dönemin İslam öncesi şiir teorisine aşina olan isimlerden biridir. Nasireddin Esad, Masadir el-Şiir el-Cahili adlı eserinde, Şevki Daif ise "Tarih el-Edep el-Arabi" adlı kitabında bu konuları ayrıntılı olarak ele almıştır. Üçüncü bölüm, geçmişle günümüz arasındaki intihal sebeplerine ve mutakaddimûn ile mutahirûn arasındaki farklılıklara ayrılmıştır. Dördüncü bölümde, intihal

iddiasında bulunanların delilleri tartışılmıştır. Beşinci bölüm ise intihalin, Kur'an müfessirleri ve Peygamber'in sünnetini tefsir eden âlimlerin çabaları üzerindeki etkileri incelenmiştir.

Bu makale, araştırmacının İslam öncesi şiirde intihal meselesinin özelliklerini ve bu meselenin tarihsel sürekliliğini geçmişten günümüze kadar tasvir etmeye yönelik ciddi bir girişimdir. Aynı zamanda bu konuyla ilgili değerlendirmeler, yalnızca İslam öncesi şiirle sınırlı kalmayıp, Arap dili, Kur'an-ı Kerim, genel olarak Arapça metinlerin yorumlanma yöntemi, nahiv kökenleri, kuralları ve delillerine kadar uzanmaktadır. Muhammed İbn Selam el-Cumahi gibi geçmiş ve çağdaş dönem alimleri arasındaki intihal teorisinin özellikleri ile bu teorisinin modern dönem temsilcilerinden en öne çıkan olan Margoliouth arasındaki yaklaşımlar ele alınmıştır. Sonrasında, sırasıyla Mustafa Sâdık el-Râfi', Taha Hüseyin ve diğer çağdaş âlimlerin görüşleri tartışılarak; bu görüşlerin dayandığı sözler, sebepler ve sonuçların detayları incelenmiştir.

İslam öncesinde yazılan şiirlerin öneminin vurgulandığı, Margoliouth'un ve Taha Hüseyin'in görüşlerinin eleştirildiği bu makalede, ilgili döneme ait şiirlerin birçoğunun ilmi açıdan güvenilir olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca adı geçen şahsiyetlerden sonra akademik alanda İslam öncesi döneme dair pek çok çalışma yapıldığı, bu çalışmalarda şiirin yazım tarzı, leçesi vb. bilgilerden yola çıkarak dönemle ilişkisinin ortaya konulduğu kaydedilmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap Dili ve Belagatı, İntihal, İslam Öncesi Edebiyat, Edebi Eleştiri, Müfessir.

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Introduction

Forgery and plagiarism are general literary phenomena that transcend specific nations or generations. The Arabs, like other nations with literary output, recognized these concepts, as did the pre-Islamic era, the Umayyad era, and the Abbasid era. Plagiarism and fabrication are not confined solely to language; they extend to all fields that rely on transmission, preservation, and presentation as means of documentation. Indeed, even in our present day, we still encounter plagiarism, despite the advanced tools of modern civilization, which should theoretically safeguard our works from these phenomena if such protection were attainable.

The widespread availability of writing and the extensive distribution of printing in its various forms and styles have not prevented poets from being attributed with verses they did not compose, nor did these advancements protect the true works of poets from the encroachment of imitators and plagiarists. Plagiarism has not been limited to poetry alone; it extends to all areas linked to general literature, including genealogy, historical accounts, and records dating back to pre-Islamic times.

It is no exaggeration to say that the fabrications in Hadith began during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and continued afterward, reaching a scale that prompted scholars to create an unparalleled system of criticism and verification, far exceeding the imaginations of fabricators and plagiarists across the ages.¹

Undoubtedly, these principles and rules were not restricted to the science of Hadith alone; they extended to all fields where transmission was essential, especially language, which is the foundation of linguistic evidence and essential for interpreting texts of various forms and purposes. Arabic scholars and critics exerted great efforts to critically examine pre-Islamic poetry, distinguishing the authentic from the fabricated. Renowned critics confronted the creators and plagiarists of poetry, exposing the falseness of their works. There is no doubt that the methodologies used by Qur'anic exegetes.

This research paper employs a combination of methodologies. The inductive approach is used to trace the issue of plagiarism through the works of early scholars, later scholars, and contemporary Orientalists, both Western and Arab, examining its history, causes, and analytical context. The deductive method is also employed, evident in deriving the underlying causes of plagiarism and establishing conclusions based on supporting premises and evidence, linking them to the factors

¹ Al-Assad, Nasser al-Din, *Sources of Pre-Islamic Poetry* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma 'Arif,1988), 321.

involved. Additionally, the research incorporates a critical approach, which emerges in presenting and analyzing evidence, addressing ambiguities and objections, and clarifying the impact this debate has had on the efforts of Qur'anic exegetes.

1. The Historical Development of the Issue of Plagiarism in Pre-Islamic Poetry Among Classical Literary Critics:

Muhammad ibn Sallam al-Jumahi, who passed away in 232 AH, author of *Tabaqat Fuhul al-Shu'ara'* (The Classes of Master Poets), is widely regarded as one of the earliest and most authoritative voices to discuss the phenomenon of plagiarism in ancient Arabic literature, especially in poetry, with scientific precision and objectivity. His approach was marked by balance; he neither exaggerated the presence of plagiarism to the point of casting doubt over all literary heritage, nor did he entirely dismiss it, disregarding established facts and clear evidence attesting to the reality of this phenomenon.

Ibn Sallam skillfully described the phenomenon, outlining its elements by explaining its underlying causes and detailing its impact on Arabic literature and linguistic authority. He then explored the methods used by eminent Arabic scholars and critics to distinguish genuine literature from fabricated and plagiarized works. This balanced approach assigned the phenomenon its rightful scale without exaggeration or alarmism. He expressed this succinctly, saying:

“In poetry, there is much that is fabricated, contrived, and void of any merit—no value in Arabic, no beneficial literature, no extractable meaning, no proverbial wisdom, no splendid praise, no biting satire, no impressive boast, nor any delightful nostalgia. Such poetry has been passed from one book to another without reference to the Bedouins or validation from scholars.

This approach by Ibn Sallam provides a well-measured perspective on the issue, offering insight without sensationalism and establishing a clear basis for evaluating the authenticity of ancient Arabic poetry.

No one should accept any report if the scholars of authentic knowledge and reliable narration have agreed to refute it, nor should it be transmitted from those of uncertain sources. Scholars have indeed disagreed on some poetry just as they have on other matters; however, regarding what they agreed upon, no one should deviate from it. Poetry, like other sciences and crafts, has a skill and an artistry known to those with expertise in it. Just as various fields require specialized knowledge—for instance, some fields rely on vision, some on hearing, some on touch, and some on speech—so too does poetry.

Consider pearls and rubies: one cannot determine their quality by description or weight without firsthand inspection by an expert. Similarly, in the field of currency exchange, the genuineness of a dinar or dirham cannot be known merely by color, touch, design, stamp, or description, but is recognized by the moneychanger upon examination, who can discern its authenticity or counterfeit nature, its degree of refinement, or its emptiness.

In the same way, poetry is known to those with expertise in it. Muhammad recounts that Khalad ibn Yazid al-Bahili once asked Khalaf ibn Hayyan Abu Muhraz—who was well-versed in poetry and its transmission—‘How do you reject these poems that are recited?’ Khalaf responded, ‘Are there any that you know to be fabricated, lacking any value?’ Khalad replied, ‘Yes.’ Khalaf then asked, ‘Do you think there are people more knowledgeable about poetry than you?’ Khalad affirmed, ‘Yes.’ Khalaf continued, ‘Then do not deny that they may know more about these matters than you do.’

Another person once said to Khalaf, ‘When I hear a poem that I like, I don’t care what you and your colleagues say about it.’ Khalaf replied, ‘If you take a coin and find it pleasing, and the moneychanger tells you it is counterfeit, does your liking for it still benefit you?’”

“Among those who corrupted and debased poetry by mixing it with all manner of trivial material was Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Yasar, a client of the Makhzum family of Al-Mutallib ibn Abd Manaf. He was a recognized scholar of historical biographies, about whom Al-Zuhri said, ‘Knowledge will remain among the people as long as the client of the Makhzum family is present.’ His primary expertise was in battles and biographies, and yet people also accepted poetry from him. However, he excused himself, saying, ‘I have no knowledge of poetry; it was brought to me, and I transmitted it.’ This, however, was no valid excuse. He recorded in his biographies the poetry of men who had never composed a single verse, and he included poems attributed to women as well as men. Moreover, he extended this practice to the tribes of ‘Ad and Thamud, attributing to them a wealth of poetry, although it was not truly poetry but rather speech structured with rhyme.

“Should he not reflect upon this and ask himself, ‘Who transmitted this poetry, and who conveyed it through thousands of years?’ Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, says: ‘So the people who did wrong were eliminated, and all praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all worlds’ [Al-An‘am: 45], meaning they left no remnant. He also says: ‘And that He destroyed the first ‘Ad and Thamud, sparing none of them’ [An-Najm: 50-51]; regarding ‘Ad, He says, ‘Do you see any remnant of them?’ [Al-Haqqah: 8]. He also says, ‘And many generations in between’ [Al-Furqan: 38], and ‘Has not the news come to you of those before you—the people of Noah, ‘Ad, and Thamud?’ [Ibrahim: 9]. If poetry were indeed as Ibn

Ishaq and other storytellers have portrayed it, it would serve no purpose nor provide any indication of knowledge." ² This entire passage is from Ibn Sallam, may Allah have mercy on him, and I have quoted it at length intentionally, as his insights on the matter are both profound and accurate. He is an authoritative scholar in poetry, well-versed in its nuances and issues.

In affirming the phenomenon of plagiarism, Ibn Faris quotes the eminent linguist Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi, who said: 'The cunning may introduce into the language of the Arabs that which is not truly Arabic, intending to create confusion and difficulty. ³

In discussing examples of this type of plagiarism in poetry, regarding the individuals known for it or the fabricated poetry they produced, prominent Arabic scholars and major critics took on the task of exposing these forgeries. Ibn Sallam remarked: 'The first to compile the poetry of the Arabs and recount their narratives was Hammad al-Rawiya, who was unreliable. He would attribute one man's poetry to another and add verses to the poems. ⁴

Abu Hatim said: 'Khalaf al-Ahmar was a poet who fabricated poetry attributed to the tribe of Abd al-Qays, merely as a form of amusement. Later, he became devout, repented from this practice, and clarified his actions.' Abu Hatim also reported hearing Al-Asma'i say: 'I heard Khalaf al-Ahmar admit: "I fabricated this poem attributed to Al-Nabigha, which includes the lines: 'Horses that fast and horses that do not fast... under the dust, while others chew the reins.

Abu al-Tayyib, in Ranks of Grammarians, noted: 'Khalaf al-Ahmar was exemplary in crafting poetry, and he would compose verses as if they were the words of others, closely imitating each poet's style. However, after he became devout, he would complete the recitation of the Quran each day and night. Upon adopting this piety, he went to the people of Kufa and revealed to them the poems he had interwoven into the works of others. They responded by saying, "You were more trustworthy to us back then than you are now." As a result, these poems have remained in their anthologies to this day.⁵

Ibn Sallam presents us with two groups of narrators who transmitted a significant amount of fabricated poetry, attributing it to the pre-Islamic poets. The first group consisted of those skilled in

² Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, *Al-Mizhar in Language Sciences and Types*, Critical ed. Fuad Ali Mansour (Beirut: Scientific Books House, 1418/1998), 1 /135 .

³ Ibn Sallām al-Jumāhī. *Muhammed, Ṭabaqāt Fuḥūl al-Shu'arā'*, Critical ed. Mahmoud Muhammad Shākir (Jeddah: Dār al-Madanī, Saudi Arabia, 1974), 1/5-8

⁴ Al-Suyuti , *Al-Mizhar in Language Sciences and Types*, 1/ 138-140.

⁵ Al-Suyuti, *Al-Mizhar in Language Sciences and Types*, 1/145 .

composing and crafting poetry, who would create verses and attribute them to the poets of the pre-Islamic era. He exemplifies this with figures like Hammad, and, as we have seen earlier, individuals similar to him, such as Jannad and Khalaf al-Ahmar.

The second group consisted of those who lacked the skill to compose or imitate the style of pre-Islamic poetry, yet they circulated all manner of trivial and spurious material. These were narrators of stories, biographies, and legends, such as Ibn Ishaq, the biographer of the Prophet. Poetry was crafted for him and included in his works without scrutiny or caution, attributing Arabic poetry to figures like the tribes of 'Ad and Thamud, who had no connection to such expressions.

Among his many examples in Arabic literature, Abū al-Salat ibn Abī Rabī'ah al-Thaqafisaid: -

تلك المكارم لا قعبان من لبن ... شيبا بماءٍ فعادا بعدُ أبوالا

The term "المكارم" (**al-makarim**) refers to virtues and elevated morals that reflect the character of the poet. These represent the noble values that an individual should embody.

The phrase "القعبان من لبن" (**al-qabān min labn**) symbolizes purity and goodness. The mention of the vessel for milk suggests that these virtues require care and attention to remain untainted. This indicates that virtues are not merely innate but require effort to maintain.

The comparison "شيبا بماءٍ فعادا بعدُ أبوالا" (**shība bimā'in fa'ādā ba'du abwālā**) illustrates a decline in value. It demonstrates how milk (representing virtues) can be transformed into water and then into urine, signifying that true values cannot be easily degraded; rather, they necessitate a significant process of deterioration.

This verse underscores the necessity of preserving virtues and advocates for their diligent maintenance to ensure they remain enduring and do not degenerate into something devoid of worth.

Al-Nabiqa Al-Jaadi said in a speech in which he was proud: - It is simple –

فإن يكن حاجب ممن فخرت به ... فلم يكن حاجب عمًا ولا خالا

هلا فخرت بيومي رخرحان وقد ... ظننت هوازن أن العرّ قد زالا

تلك المكارم لا قعبان من لبن ... شيبا بماءٍ فعادا بعدُ أبوالا

It is narrated by the sons of 'Amir about Al-Nabigha. The narrators are unanimous that Abu al-Salat said it.⁶

There is no doubt that some of the pre-Islamic poetry is fabricated and unacceptable, while other parts are trustworthy. It varies in reliability: some poems have unanimous agreement among narrators, while others are transmitted by trusted and unquestionably reliable sources, such as Al-Mufaddal al-Dabbi, Al-Asma'ī, and Abu Amr ibn al-Ala. Although fabricated works may sometimes overshadow the authentic, this does not lead us to reject pre-Islamic poetry entirely. Rather, it encourages us to examine and scrutinize it, guided by the insights provided by trustworthy narrators who illuminate the path forward.⁷

There is no doubt that the existence of pre-Islamic poetry falsely attributed to its authors is a reality supported by evidence, both logical and narrative. All texts preserved and transmitted across generations through narration are vulnerable to the possibility of fabrication and forgery, particularly due to three significant factors: the importance and centrality of these texts in various areas of human life—as seen with the Qur'anic text, the Hadith, or certain historical accounts in sensitive historical periods; the targeting of these texts by those seeking to distort them, motivated by varying reasons for this reprehensible act; and, lastly, the lack of tools to prevent forgers from achieving their aims.

If we were to ask ourselves, "Were there not fabricated Hadiths and unfounded reports in the Prophet's biography?" Indeed, there were. However, the presence of the science of Hadith criticism, even applied partially in the field of biography, played a decisive role in protecting these texts and preventing forgers from realizing their objectives. The same can be said for pre-Islamic poetry: it is logical to find some of this poetry falsely attributed or to encounter doubts about the authorship of particular verses. But as researchers, the pertinent question is this: does the validity of this assumption and its occurrence necessarily lead to the complete rejection or questioning of the origins of pre-Islamic poetry?

Certainly, we see that the possibility and occurrence of forgery are not grounds to reject pre-Islamic poetry in its entirety or to cast doubt on its authenticity. Significant efforts have been made by renowned scholars to preserve poetic texts and attribute them to their rightful authors based on scientific foundations, relying on verified narrations from trustworthy narrators. Collections have

⁶ Al-Suyuti, *Al-Mizhar in Language Sciences and Types*, 1/145 .

⁷ Dayf, *Shawqī, Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī -The History of Arabic Literatur-* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1995), 166.

even been based on manuscripts written by the highest authority in the chain of transmission, as in the case of *The Diwan of Al-Akhtal al-Kabir*, compiled by Al-Sukari and transmitted by Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Habib, meticulously studied by Dr. Fakhruddin Qabawa, who based his work on a copy written in the author's own hand. The same applies to *The Diwan of Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma*, compiled by Abu al-Abbas Thalab, among numerous collections of major pre-Islamic poets. Scholars, both ancient and contemporary, have exerted tremendous efforts to safeguard these collections and protect them from skepticism, not to mention the contributions of Al-Mufaddal al-Dabbi, Al-Asma'i, and Amr ibn al-Ala.

As Dr. Samir Omar Kamil states in his book *The History of Arabic Literature*: "It is evident that pre-Islamic poetry contains much fabrication, as the early scholars frequently noted, striving to purge it of falsifications introduced by forgers. To achieve this, they employed numerous standards and were so diligent in this regard that their most trusted scholars disregarded all narrations from questionable sources like Hammad and Khalaf." Among the foremost critics who confronted forgers in poetry was Ibn Sallam, who recorded numerous observations from knowledgeable scholars on the narration of ancient poetry in his book *Tabaqat Fuhul al-Shu'ara'*, alongside his own insights.⁸

Al-Asma'i, in particular, was vigilant in confronting them, as was Al-Mufaddal al-Dabbi before him. Reliable narrators followed in their footsteps, meticulously verifying and scrutinizing the literary heritage.⁹

2. The Development of the Issue in Modern Times

The issue of plagiarism in pre-Islamic poetry caught the attention of modern researchers, including Western Orientalists and Arab scholars. To discuss the development of this issue in the modern era, I will present the major milestones, beginning with Western Orientalists and then moving to the Arabs who followed their approach, notably Taha Hussein.

The exploration of plagiarism in pre-Islamic poetry began with Theodor Nöldeke in 1864, who posited that most pre-Islamic literature was fabricated. He was followed by William Ahlwardt in 1909, who published the collections of six renowned pre-Islamic poets: Imru' al-Qays, Al-Nabigha, Zuhayr, Tarafa, Alqama, and Antarah. Ahlwardt cast doubt on the authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry as a whole, concluding that only a few poems by these poets could be considered genuine. He also

⁸ Samir Omar Sayed, *A vision on the issues of criticism in ancient Arabic literature: an analytical study* (Ankara: İlahiyat yayın evi, Turkey), 164.

⁹ Sayed, *A vision on the issues of criticism in ancient Arabic literature: an analytical study*, 163.

noted that even these authentic poems carried uncertainty regarding the arrangement of their verses and the specific wording within each.¹⁰

Many Orientalists followed Ahlwardt's cautious stance toward accepting all that is attributed to the pre-Islamic poets, including scholars such as Muir, Basset, and Brockelmann. Another significant contributor to this discourse was Régis Blachère, who addressed these issues extensively in the first volume of his *History of Arabic Literature*. He elaborated on the doubts surrounding pre-Islamic poetry, and although he occasionally attempted a balanced approach, he would often launch into harsh criticism. One example of his critique is his statement:

"We find in the texts mentioned that the poets, regardless of their era or tribe, use a unified language generally free from any dialectal influence, adhering to syntactic rules, which, in general, align with the grammatical rules of the Basran school. There is no doubt that the major narrators removed many dialectal features from pre-Islamic poems, and that the process of written preservation further unified the language, even the style."¹¹

He also remarks:

"Everything leads us to believe that the great narrators, along with the Iraqi scholars, introduced aesthetic reforms into ancient poetry."

He further adds:

"What is astonishing is the multiplicity and breadth of variations within each verse. There is no doubt that this is due to weakened memory during oral transmission, with some variations arising from incomplete writing methods or the substitution of synonyms."¹²

However, when examining the development of this critical issue, one notes that skepticism regarding pre-Islamic poetry took a new turn with the Orientalist David Margoliouth.¹³ He stands as one of

¹⁰ Sayed, *A vision on the issues of criticism in ancient Arabic literature: an analytical study*, 163 .

¹¹ The study of dialects is of particular importance in revealing phonological, morphological, synthetic and semantic phenomena in the linguistic lesson, and its importance may have increased in our time with the development of research in sociolinguistics, in which research in dialects is a major topic. It explains many issues related to the vocabulary of Arabic and its connotations, such as participation, contradiction, tandem, substitution, semantic development and others, as well as many Quranic readings, so its meanings come out on these dialects. It is also known as the origins of the dialect phonically, morphologically, grammatically and linguistically, and how its words and pronunciation occur, and perhaps compare them to modern Arabic dialects. Yousuf Mahmoud Fajjal, *Dialectal Phenomena in the Language of the Rabi'ah Tribe* (Amman: The Jordanian Journal of Arabic Language and Literature, 2014), 10/11, 10/42-55.

¹² Régis, Blachère, *The History of Arabic Literature in the Pre-Islamic Era* (Damascus: Dar Al-Fikr, n.d.), 178.

¹³ David Samuel Margoliouth (1858–1940) was an English Orientalist whose interest in Arabic and Semitic studies emerged after his appointment as a professor at Oxford University in 1889. In 1893, he wrote a study on Arabic

the foremost figures to raise doubts about pre-Islamic poetry in modern times, especially through his research published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* under the title *The Origins of Arabic Poetry*, translated into Arabic in the book *Asul al-Shi'r al-Jahili (The Origins of Pre-Islamic Poetry)*. In this work, Margoliouth argues that the findings and evidence he presented are sufficient to cast doubt on everything claimed to be pre-Islamic poetry, including all poetry from before the Umayyad period. For Margoliouth, pre-Islamic poetry is not a product of the pre-Islamic era but rather the result of a period following the emergence of Islam.

Margoliouth further argued that even what is considered "Islamic poetry" does not actually date back to the Islamic era. He expressed doubts about how pre-Islamic poetry was transmitted, questioning whether it relied solely on writing or oral narration, casting suspicion on the method of oral transmission. In summary, according to Margoliouth, poetry claimed to be pre-Islamic belongs to a period following the Qur'an rather than preceding it. It is well-known that such a stance on pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry, which oscillates between rejection and skepticism, attempts to cast serious doubts.

Margoliouth leveraged the work of narrators accused of forgery and fabrication, such as Hammad, Jannad, and Khalaf al-Ahmar, as well as instances where narrators criticized one another, to argue that forgery in this poetry was a continuous practice. He asserted that this poetry does not reflect the beliefs of the pre-Islamic polytheists or even those who converted to Christianity, as its authors were Muslims unfamiliar with Christian concepts like the Trinity or polytheistic gods. Instead, they were familiar with monotheism, Qur'anic stories, and Islamic concepts like judgment, the Day of Resurrection, and certain attributes of God.¹⁴

Margoliouth then shifts his focus to the language, observing that it possesses a distinct unity and is the same as the language of the Qur'an, which spread among the Arabs. He argues that if this poetry were authentic, it would reflect the diverse dialects of the various tribes in the pre-Islamic period, illustrating differences between the language of the northern Adnanite tribes and the Himyaritic language of the south.

papyri housed at the Bodleian Library at Oxford. He translated a significant portion of Al-Baydawi's Tafsir into English in 1894 and published the Epistles of Abu al-Ala al-Ma'arri in 1898. In 1905, he began publishing his studies on Islam, starting with Muhammad and the Rise of Islam, followed by Islam in 1911. He also published lectures on the early development of Islam in 1914 and a work on Arab-Jewish relations in 1924. Margoliouth published a variety of heritage texts and was elected as a corresponding member of the Arab Academy in Damascus when it was established in 1920.

¹⁴ Dayf, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī -The History of Arabic Literatur-*, 167.

When moving from Western Orientalists to modern Arab scholars, we find Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafi'i presenting a detailed discussion on the issue of plagiarism in pre-Islamic poetry in his book *Tarikh Adab al-Arab* (The History of Arabic Literature). However, in his analysis, he does not go beyond recounting the observations made by early scholars, thoroughly examining their notes and supporting his points with examples from poetry that align with grammatical and theological schools. He observed some instances of fabrication within this poetry, which were noted by the early scholars themselves, who did not overlook highlighting these issues.¹⁵

Among the modern Arab scholars who studied the phenomenon of plagiarism, Taha Hussein must be mentioned for his examination in his book *Al-Shi'r al-Jahili* (Pre-Islamic Poetry), which caused a significant uproar and drew reactions from many conservative and scholarly circles. He conducted an extensive study on the issue, which he later expanded in his work *Fi al-Adab al-Jahili* (On Pre-Islamic Literature), published in 1927. In this book, he delved into the subject even further, providing new arguments and dedicating most of the work to analyzing the reasons and evidence that lead to skepticism regarding pre-Islamic poetry.

He presents his findings with the following conclusion:

“The vast majority of what we call pre-Islamic literature has nothing to do with the pre-Islamic era. Rather, it is fabricated after the advent of Islam; it is Islamic in nature, reflecting the lives, inclinations, and desires of Muslims more than it represents the lives of pre-Islamic people. I am almost certain that what remains of authentic pre-Islamic literature is very minimal, holding no significance or meaning, and should not be relied upon for deriving an accurate literary image of the pre-Islamic era.”¹⁶

3. Causes of Plagiarism, Past and Present

After examining various sources, both old and new, that have addressed the origins of the issue of plagiarism, the causes can be attributed to the following:

Tribal Prestige: Certain tribes sought to enhance their reputation by attributing more poetry to themselves, especially after the spread of narration. This was especially true for tribes whose historical deeds and poetry were sparse, such as the Quraysh tribe, which attributed numerous

¹⁵ Mustafa Sadiq Al-Rafi'i, *Tarikh Adab al-Arab* -The History of Arabic Literature- (Beirut :Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, n.d.), 1/224.

¹⁶ Al-Assad, *Sources of Pre-Islamic Poetry*, 381; Dayf, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-‘Arabī* -The History of Arabic Literatur-,170.

poems to Hassan, as Ibn Sallam mentioned in his *Tabaqat*. Additionally, some poets' descendants would add to their ancestors' poetry. For instance, when Abu 'Ubaydah requested the poetry of Mutammim from his son, Dawud ibn Mutammim ibn Nuwayrah, he noticed that, after exhausting his father's poems, Dawud began adding verses, emulating his father's themes and events. However, upon comparison, Abu 'Ubaydah and his companions discerned that these new verses were fabrications.

Grammatical and Lexical Witness Poetry: Much fabricated poetry falls under the category of "witness poetry," created to support scholars in explaining obscure terms and grammatical issues. Witness poetry is classified by narrators into two types: Qur'anic witnesses and grammatical witnesses. The Kufans were the primary contributors of fabricated witness poetry due to the weaknesses in their grammatical positions and their reliance on irregular forms, which they treated as foundational rules. As Andalusi stated in his *Sharh al-Mufassal*: "If the Kufans heard a single line permitting something contrary to the standard rules, they would make it a foundation and categorize it, unlike the Basrans. Thus, the Kufans had to resort to fabrication when they found no support for their opinions, as the established norms opposed them."

The witness verses that some Mu'tazilites and theologians fabricated were meant to support their doctrinal stances. Ibn Qutaybah mentioned in *Al-Ta'wil* that they interpreted the word *kursi* in the verse "*His kursi extends over the heavens and the earth*" [Al-Baqarah: 255] to mean "knowledge." They supported this interpretation with a verse that states:

ولا يُكْرِسِيْ عِلْمَ اللّٰهِ مَخْلُوْقٌ كَأَنَّهُ عِنْدَهُمْ: وَلَا يَعْلَمُ عِلْمَ اللّٰهِ مَخْلُوْقٌ.

In their view, this means, "*No creation knows the knowledge of God.*" Here, *kursi* is without the hamza, while *yukarsi'u* has the hamza. They found it unseemly to attribute a chair or throne to God, considering the *'arsh* (throne) as something entirely separate.¹⁷

Fabricated Poetry for Historical Narratives: With the proliferation of storytellers and chroniclers, some fabricated poetry to align with myths they crafted, tailoring it to make such tales more appealing to common audiences. This led to the creation of poetry attributed to Adam, various prophets, their descendants, and their tribes. The first to exaggerate in this area was Muhammad ibn Ishaq, the author of the famous biography *Al-Maghazi*.

¹⁷ Al-Mughrabi, Muhammad ibn Abdul Rahman, *Mawqif Al-Salaf fi Al-Aqidah wa Al-Manhaj wa Al-Tarbiyah* -The Stance of the Ancestors on Creed, Methodology, and Education- (Cairo: Al-Maktabah Al-Islamiyyah and Marrakech, n.d.), 351.

Expanding Narration: Some narrators fabricated poetry to broaden their own narratives, claiming mastery in areas others could not rival. They would attribute new poems to established poets, add to known verses, or insert verses of one poet into another's work. Examples of such figures include Hammad al-Rawiya and Khalaf al-Ahmar.¹⁸

4. Discussion of the Evidence Presented by Proponents of Plagiarism

There is no doubt that proponents of the idea of plagiarism, both ancient and modern, base their claims on evidence they view as truthful and accurate. Here, I will analyze this evidence using logic, scholarly language, and reasoned arguments, dedicating this chapter to examining each of their claims individually and offering counterarguments for each point.

To begin, Orientalist David Margoliouth and, similarly, Taha Hussein are among those who extensively presented evidence for what they perceive as the widespread plagiarism affecting pre-Islamic poetry. They believe that the vast majority of pre-Islamic heritage is of dubious origin and anonymous authorship, asserting that every researcher in pre-Islamic poetry must approach it with skepticism. In contrast, the writings of Dr. Shawqi Daif and Imam Muhammad al-Khidr Hussein provide some of the best discussions and refutations, employing calm scholarly reasoning and rigorous logic.

Margoliouth, in support of his claims, cast doubt on oral transmission as a means of preserving and documenting pre-Islamic poetry, even denying the existence of any written records of pre-Islamic poetry. He also argued that pre-Islamic poetry lacked the dialectal diversity characteristic of Arabic, given the various regions and tribes. Meanwhile, Taha Hussein's evidence focuses on the content of pre-Islamic poetry and the extent to which this literary heritage aligns with the religious, intellectual, political, and economic state of the pre-Islamic era.

Their main arguments can be summarized as follows:

They claim that pre-Islamic poetry was never documented in writing during the pre-Islamic period; rather, it was recorded later, after the Qur'an was revealed. This raises the possibility, in their view, that Muslims may have altered the content of pre-Islamic poetry to remove elements conflicting with Islam and its teachings. They further deny that pre-Islamic poetry was preserved through oral

¹⁸ Badawi, Abdul Rahman, *Studies of Orientalists on the Authenticity of Pre-Islamic Poetry* (Beirut: Dar Al-Ilm Lil-Malayin, 1979), 8-11; Ibn Sallām, *Tabaqat Fuhul al-Shu'ara'*, 39; Suyuti, *Al-Mizhar in Language Sciences and Types*, 1/137; Dayf, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī -The History of Arabic Literatur-*, 228; Al-Assad, *Sources of Pre-Islamic Poetry*, 378-379.

transmission. Margoliouth, for instance, adopts this position, suggesting that only written documentation could preserve it, thereby dismissing oral transmission as a viable method in that era. He also claims that pre-Islamic poetry was not written down until after the Qur'an's revelation, implying that it was composed during a time subsequent to the Qur'an.

The rejection of or skepticism toward pre-Islamic and Islamic poetry by Margoliouth and others also casts doubt on the eloquence of the Arabs. Yet, there is no doubt that the Qur'an was revealed in clear Arabic to a nation known for its eloquence, poetry, and rhetorical mastery. This eloquence is a facet of the Qur'an's miraculous nature, for the unparalleled eloquence, structure, and style of the Qur'an left even the greatest poets in awe:

“Or do they say, ‘He fabricated it’? But they do not believe. Let them produce a statement like it, if they should be truthful.” [Al-Tur: 33-34].

This challenge was addressed to a people renowned for their eloquence and rhetorical prowess, contrary to Margoliouth's assertions.¹⁹

They also claim that pre-Islamic poetry neither reflects nor portrays the lives of the pre-Islamic poets, encompassing all aspects of their existence—religious, intellectual, political, and economic. Furthermore, they argue that it fails to represent the language of pre-Islamic Arabs, including the diversity of dialects and their variations.²⁰

In response to Margoliouth's argument on the subject of oral transmission and written documentation, it is essential to note what Dr. Shawqi Daif mentioned in his book *The History of Arabic Literature*, where he summarized the issue succinctly and insightfully:

“The truth is that there is indeed a considerable amount of fabricated poetry within the pre-Islamic corpus. However, this fact was not unknown to the early scholars, who subjected it to intense scrutiny, analyzing both its narrators on one hand and its forms and expressions on the other. In other words, they applied both internal and external criticism. This means they surrounded it with a rigorous framework of verification and scrutiny, which should discourage modern critics like Margoliouth and Taha Hussein from overly doubting its authenticity to the extent of rejecting it entirely. Rather, we should truly doubt what the early scholars doubted and rejected. As for what

¹⁹ Al-Assad, *Sources of Pre-Islamic Poetry*, 352.

²⁰ Dayf, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-‘Arabī -The History of Arabic Literatur-*, 171.

they verified and transmitted through reliable sources like Abu Amr ibn al-Ala, Al-Mufaddal al-Dabbi, Al-Asma'i, and Abu Zayd, we are justified in accepting it, given their consensus on its authenticity.

Nonetheless, we must subject even this verified material to further examination and reject some of what they transmitted, based on scientific and methodological foundations—not mere conjecture. For instance, if a poet is attributed with verses that do not align with his historical context, or if the names of places mentioned in his poetry are far from the territory of his tribe, or if Islamic themes appear in his pre-Islamic poetry—such instances allow us to detect fabrication with certainty.”²¹

Among the eloquent responses to those who question the authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry is a statement by Imam Muhammad al-Khidr Hussein. He describes the rigorous methodology of early scholars in their critique and use of pre-Islamic poetry, as well as the stages of this careful process and the areas of focus for each group of Arabic scholars and poetry narrators. He writes:

“Fabrication has occurred in Arabic poetry, but the early scholars have largely shielded us from its harm. Let me share some insights into what they achieved in their critique of narration and narrators. Examining poetic narration involves two perspectives:

The first perspective concerns its role in establishing language or affirming a rule. Scholars in this area aim to trust the narration as long as it originates from an eloquent Arab speaker. It does not concern them whether the verse is attributed to Imru' al-Qays, Ibn Mi'ada, or any poet between the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras. Nor does it harm their purpose if the verse is fabricated, as long as it was received from a genuine Arab source. Thus, you will find that they often use verses for reference, even when narrators disagree about the author.

The second perspective pertains to the connection of the grammatic to its supposed author and the accuracy of its attribution. The first perspective safeguards language, grammar, and rhetoric from distortion or corruption. When early scholars began to document language and establish its rules, they encountered Arabs whose tongues still held to the original dialect, rooted in the classical Arabic language. They would receive poetry and prose from those who spoke pure Arabic natively, whether they composed it themselves or recited works from others. The basis for establishing a term or affirming a linguistic rule, then, was hearing it from a reliable source who was an eloquent Arab. Thus, Arabic scholars were meticulous in evaluating narrators' reliability and clarifying who could be

²¹ Dayf, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī -The History of Arabic Literatur-*, 175; Sayed, *A vision on the issues of criticism in ancient Arabic literature: an analytical study*, 53.

trusted or discredited. They classified linguists into two groups: those who were trustworthy and whose narrations could be relied upon—such as Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad, Abu Amr ibn al-Ala, Al-Mufaddal al-Dabbi, Al-Asma'i, Sibawayh, Al-Kisai, Al-Nadr ibn Shumayl, Abu Amr al-Shaybani, Abu Sa'id al-Baghdadi, Abu al-Khattab al-Akhfash, Al-Farra', Abu Zayd al-Ansari, Abu Ubayd al-Qasim ibn Salam, and Ibn al-A'rabi; and those whose character was inconsistent and whose narrations were not trusted, such as Al-Jahiz, Abu Bakr ibn Duraid, and Abu Amr known as Ghulam Thalab. There were also those whose narrations were trusted, yet they were considered lacking in discernment, as described by Abu Mansur al-Azhari in the introduction to his *Tahdhib*, referring to Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Dinawari.

As for the second perspective—the connection of the poetry to its author—reliable narrators examined it with a diligence that attests to its rigor and quality. You may recall Ibn Sallam's statement about the poetry that some narrators add to existing works: 'It is no mystery to the knowledgeable when additions are made, nor when the latecomers fabricate verses. The confusion only arises when a man from the desert, either of poetic lineage or not, adds poetry, creating some ambiguity.'

I believe they devoted the utmost care to critiquing these ambiguous cases, which allowed them to recognize what was fabricated by the descendants of Mutammim ibn Nuwayrah and the descendants of Al-Aghlab al-'Ajli. Yahya ibn Sa'id al-Qattan said: 'When narrators recite fabricated poetry, they critique it immediately, saying, "This is contrived."' ²²

We might interpret the error made by some who have expanded the issue of plagiarism to the extent of doubting the existence of certain poets, like Imru' al-Qays, in two ways: as a result of ignorance and lack of understanding of the nature of the era and the mindset of its people, or as deliberate prejudice with the intent to harm the language and its speakers. The following view from one of these defenders of oral narration serves as strong evidence for the objectivity of some scholars. August Sprenger stated:

"The science of oral narration is a unique feature of Islam, yet very few Orientalists have truly appreciated it or understood it as they should." ²³

Returning to Margoliouth, he moves from discussing oral transmission to examining the language, observing that it appears to have a distinct unity—the same language as the Qur'an, which spread

²² Muhammad al-Khadhr Hussein, *Encyclopedia of Complete Works* (Damascus, Dar Al-Nawader, 1431/2010), 8/343.

²³ Badawi, *Studies of Orientalists on the Authenticity of Pre-Islamic Poetry*, 249.

among the Arabs. He argues that if this poetry were genuine, it would reflect the varied dialects of the pre-Islamic tribes, illustrating differences between the northern Adnanite language and the Himyaritic language of the south.

In response, it can be argued that Qur'anic Classical Arabic was indeed prevalent in the pre-Islamic era. From the beginning of that period, poets composed in this language, which was the dialect of the Quraysh. This dialect prevailed due to religious, economic, and political reasons. Thus, poets composed in this unified language, setting aside their local dialects, much like contemporary Arab poets today, who write in a standardized Arabic regardless of their regional dialects.²⁴

Moving to the evidence presented by Taha Hussein regarding the alleged fabrication of pre-Islamic poetry, his arguments center on the content of this poetic heritage and its compatibility with the religious, intellectual, political, and economic state of the pre-Islamic era. In discussing the religious life depicted in pre-Islamic poetry, Taha Hussein claims that it does not reflect the polytheistic beliefs of pre-Islamic Arabs, nor those who converted to Christianity. Instead, he argues that its authors were Muslims who were unfamiliar with Christian concepts like the Trinity or multiple gods, and only knew monotheism, Qur'anic stories, and Islamic beliefs such as judgment, the Day of Resurrection, and some attributes of God.

The response to this claim can be found in Ibn al-Kalbi's *Kitab al-Asnam (The Book of Idols)*, which includes examples of pre-Islamic poetry that completely refute this argument.²⁵

From Al-Kalbi's book, I quote some verses praising paganism, the religion of many in the pre-Islamic era. The poet said:

حَيَّاكَ وَدُّ فَإِنَّا لَا يَحِلُّ لَنَا ... لَهُوَ النَّسَاءِ وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ قَدْ عَزَمَا

"Wadd greets you, for it is not permissible for us to indulge in the pleasures of women, as faith has taken hold."

And another said:

وَسَارَ بِنَا يَغُوثُ إِلَى مُرَادٍ ... فَتَنَاجَرْنَا هُمْ قَبْلَ الصَّبَاحِ²⁶

"Yaghuth led us to Murad, and we confronted them before dawn."

²⁴ Dayf, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī -The History of Arabic Literatur-*,168.

²⁵ Dayf, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī -The History of Arabic Literatur-*,167.

²⁶ Abu al-Mundhir Hisham ibn Muhammad ibn al-Sa'ib ibn Bishr Al-Kalbi, *Kitab al-Asnam (The Book of Idols)*, Critical ed. Ahmad Zaki Pasha (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya, 2000), 10.

Certainly, any poetry that is distinctly Islamic in tone can be deemed fabricated, and such fabrication should be confined to these particular instances without invalidating the rest of the pre-Islamic poetry corpus.

Taha Hussein then moves on to the intellectual life of the pre-Islamic Arabs, noting that it is unclear in the poetry attributed to them, as if expecting a high or complex level of intellectual life. The response to this is that most pre-Islamic Arabs were Bedouins who had not yet reached an advanced stage of organized thought. Their natural, unrefined intellectual life is indeed present in their poetry.

He then critiques the political life of pre-Islamic Arabs, stating it is not well-reflected in their poetry, despite their interactions with surrounding nations, as highlighted in the Qur'an in Surat al-Rum, where the Arabs are shown as divided—some siding with the Romans and others with the Persians. However, this division does not apply to all Arabs, but specifically to the Quraysh and their trading caravans that frequented the lands of these empires. Furthermore, the poets of Najd and the Hijaz had connections with the Ghassanids, who were Roman allies, and the Lakhmids, allies of the Persians. These poets would praise or satirize them. Prior to Islam, during the wars between the Bakr tribe and the Persians, the poets of Bakr threatened and rebuked the Persians, as Al-A'sha famously did.

Taha Hussein concludes by discussing the economic life of the pre-Islamic Arabs, claiming that their poetry provides little insight into this aspect, while the Qur'an depicts two classes among the Arabs: the wealthy, who monopolized resources, and the impoverished, who were destitute. According to him, poetry does not reflect this, instead portraying all Arabs as generous and noble, whereas the Qur'an often criticizes stinginess and miserliness. This comparison is flawed for a simple reason: the poetry of the sa'alik (brigands) vividly depicts the struggle between the rich and the poor. Moreover, while pre-Islamic poets often praised generosity and boasted of it, they also highlighted stinginess and miserly spirits in their satire. It is also worth noting that much of the Qur'anic criticism was directed at the merchant Quraysh, who had accumulated significant wealth and where usury was widely practiced.²⁷

²⁷ Dayf, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī -The History of Arabic Literatur-*,171–172.

5. The Impact of the Phenomenon of Plagiarism on Qur'anic Exegesis

It was narrated from Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him: "O people, hold fast to the collection of your poetry from the pre-Islamic period, for it contains the explanation of your Book."²⁸

Therefore, while addressing the people from the pulpit, Umar asked about the meaning of the word *takhawwuf* in the verse: "*Or He could seize them gradually [in takhawwuf]*" [Al-Nahl: 47]. A man from the Hudhayl tribe responded that in their dialect, *takhawwuf* means "to decrease gradually," and he recited a line of poetry as evidence:

تَخَوَّفَ الرَّحْلُ مِنْهَا تَامِكًا قَرْدًا ... كَمَا تَخَوَّفَ عَوْدُ النَّبْعَةِ السَّقْنُ

"The saddle diminished its worn straps gradually, just as the tool slowly shapes the stick of wood."

In truth, although Umar's statement may have issues with the authenticity of its chain of transmission, its meaning has been reported from several Companions. They highlighted the importance of pre-Islamic poetry and literature in understanding and interpreting Qur'anic verses. Ibn al-Anbari mentioned that it was common among the Companions and Successors to use poetry as evidence to explain and clarify the obscure and intricate words in the Qur'an.²⁹

Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, who was exceptionally knowledgeable in poetry, Arab history, the Qur'an, and its interpretation, provided explanations for the Qur'an and clarified the meanings of its words using pre-Islamic poetry. Ikrimah reported that Ibn Abbas said: "*If you ask me about an obscure term in the Qur'an, seek its meaning in poetry, for poetry is the record of the Arabs.*"³⁰

There is no doubt that, at this stage, the Qur'an served as the primary motivation for reviving the spirit of pre-Islamic poetry and literature, granting it a significant role in linguistic evidence and reference. This practice did not fully mature until the time of Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, particularly in his responses to the questions of Nafi' ibn al-Azraq, where he would cite a line of poetry as evidence for each term in a verse he was asked about.³¹

²⁸ Al-Shatibi, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Musa ibn Muhammad al-Lakhmi, *Al-Muwafaqat*, Critical ed. Mashhur Hasan Al-Salman (Cairo: Dar Ibn Affan, 1417/1997), 1/ 58.

²⁹ Muhammad ibn al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Bashar Abu Bakr Al-Anbari, *Idah al-Waqf wal-Ibtida'* (Damascus: Publications of the Arabic Language Academy, 1390/1971), 1/ 62.

³⁰ Al-Anbari, *Idah al-Waqf wa al-Ibtida'*, 1/99–100.

³¹ Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr Jalal al-Din Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqan fi Ulum al-Quran*, (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1394/1974), 2/ 67.

In the second stage, that of the Followers of the Followers, represented by linguists, this period was notably influenced by the approach established by Ibn Abbas in the first stage. This stage, spanning the second and early third centuries AH, included figures such as Abu Ubaydah Ma'mar ibn al-Muthanna, Al-Akhfash, and Al-Farra. These scholars contributed to a serious and organized exegetical movement, enriched with numerous poetic references.

The third stage, the era of language and exegesis documentation, began in the mid-third century AH and beyond. At this point, the use of poetic evidence was no longer confined to Qur'anic interpretation but expanded and developed to encompass other scholarly fields, including grammar, rhetoric, and more.³²

Therefore, the evidence used by the Companions and Followers in interpreting the Qur'an serves as compelling proof against those who completely deny the authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry. However, this still leaves room for discussion about specific verses and poems based on the scholarly methodology of transmission and narration established by prominent narrators and critics of poetry, such as Al-Mufaddal al-Dabbi, Al-Asma'i, and Amr ibn al-Ala, who undertook this task with unmatched skill. Adopting an approach of either total acceptance or complete rejection of plagiarism is contrary to genuine scholarly methodology.

One example of interpreters using pre-Islamic poetry, particularly the poetry of Imru' al-Qays (whose existence some modern scholars have denied), is found in Al-Raghib al-Isfahani's *Mufradat al-Qur'an*. He explains that la in the Qur'anic verse "No! I swear by the Day of Resurrection" [Al-Qiyamah: 1] implies an omitted phrase, as in the poet's line:

لا وأبيك ابنة العامري

"No, by your father, daughter of Al-Amiri"

The full line, attributed to Imru' al-Qays, is:

لا وأبيك ابنة العامري ... لا يدي القوم أني أفر

"No, by your father, daughter of Al-Amiri, the people will not claim that I flee," and it appears in his collection.³³

In the Tafsir of Imam al-Tabari, regarding the interpretation of the verse "Indeed, the Hour is coming—I almost conceal it—so that every soul may be recompensed according to what it strives

³² <https://quranpedia.net/book/588/1/250> (Accessed 10 July 2024).

³³ Al-Isfahani, Abu al-Qasim al-Husayn ibn Muhammad, known as Al-Raghib al-Isfahani. *Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an*, (Damascus, Beirut: Dar al-Qalam, al-Dar al-Shamiyah, 1412), 193.

for. So do not let one who does not believe in it and follows his desires avert you from it, lest you perish.” [Ta-Ha: 15-16], it is noted:

“In the speech of the Arabs, the common meaning of *ikhfa'* (concealment) is to cover or hide something. It is said, ‘I have concealed something’ when one has hidden it. Those who interpreted *ikhfa'* as revealing relied on a line by Imru' al-Qays ibn 'Abis al-Kindi. I was informed by Ma'mar ibn al-Muthanna that Abu al-Khattab recited it to me from his people in his hometown:”

فَإِنْ تُدْفِنُوا الدَّاءَ لَا نُخْفِيهِ ... وَإِنْ تَبَعْتُوا الْحَرْبَ لَا نَقْعُدُ

“If you bury the pain, we will not conceal it ... and if you initiate war, we will not sit idle.”³⁴

The accounts from the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, along with our study of their methodologies in interpreting Qur'anic texts—and the methodologies of the Followers, Followers of the Followers, and leading exegetes who came after them—demonstrate the vital role and great importance of pre-Islamic literature in understanding the Qur'an. The Qur'an, as described in its verses, is in a clear Arabic language, and authentic pre-Islamic literature represents the ideal and exemplary form of the Arabic language in terms of meaning, nuance, beauty, perfection of style, grammar, morphology, and rhetoric. Because of this, the Companions and leading interpreters frequently cited pre-Islamic poetry to explain Qur'anic vocabulary and interpret verses of the Holy Book, confident in the authenticity of these verses and their attribution to their authors. They adhered to a clear methodology that relied on accurate transmission and confirmed narration, applying the same principles and standards as they did to any phenomenon that depended on transmission, narration, and reception.

Thus, the notion of doubting the authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry as a whole, considering it entirely fabricated and unconnected to its historical period, indirectly questions the statements of the interpreters and clearly challenges the methodological framework established for reading and interpreting the Qur'anic text—from the time of the Companions to the era of the great exegetes who significantly contributed to the interpretative movement. This implies a fundamental questioning of the rulings and insights derived from these texts, both scientific and practical, which were based on the interpreters' words. The skepticism regarding pre-Islamic poetry and even the denial of the existence of a major pre-Islamic poet like Imru' al-Qays took a different turn when the Qur'anic text was used as evidence for their claims. These critics argue that the pre-Islamic poetry's

³⁴ Muhammad ibn Jarir Al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an* (Makkah: Dar al-Tarbiya wa al-Turath, n.d.), 18/285.

resonance with the Qur'an and Islam—reflected in meanings, style, and abundant Qur'anic references—proves that this poetry does not belong to the pre-Islamic era but was rather fabricated by tribes in early Islam. However, they overlook that the environment in which the Qur'an was revealed was no different from that which nurtured the great pre-Islamic poets, and that the semantic evolution of terms requires time, as seen in all languages undergoing a transformative shift within their societies.

For these reasons, the meticulous efforts of prominent linguists and critics like Al-Mufaddal al-Dabbi, Al-Asma'i, Amr ibn al-Ala, and others in authenticating pre-Islamic literature and distinguishing the genuine from the fabricated—using a unique scientific methodology—carry immense importance in addressing the issue of plagiarism and placing it in its proper context without excess or deficiency. These efforts are complemented by modern researchers who have critically studied pre-Islamic literature and constructed a reference framework to accept the authentic poetic text based on narration and attribution to its rightful author.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article has examined the issue of plagiarism in pre-Islamic poetry, attempting to thoroughly explore the contributions of early scholars, later Orientalists, and Arab researchers. Raising this issue has ultimately proven beneficial, as both classical and modern studies have established the authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry and dismissed exaggerated claims of widespread fabrication and plagiarism. From Margoliouth's argument until today, numerous studies and papers have been written on pre-Islamic poetry, its themes, and its poets. The poetry collections of many pre-Islamic poets have been verified, compiled, and published. Scholarly research has also been conducted on the history of pre-Islamic Arabia, the Arabic language, dialects, and the religions of the Arabs—addressing all topics that have sparked doubt.

Academic works have also been produced on prominent pre-Islamic poets and the major narrators of their poetry. As a result, it is no longer reasonable to dismiss pre-Islamic poetry entirely as fabricated, based solely on assumptions, suspicions, and hypothetical claims.³⁵

It may be possible to summarize the findings of this article on the essential issue of plagiarism in pre-Islamic poetry, which represents the author's perspective and recommendations in this context. After reviewing classical and contemporary works on this topic, it becomes clear that plagiarism in

³⁵ <https://quranpedia.net/book/588/1/250> (Accessed 10 July 2024).

pre-Islamic poetry is a significant issue, both personally and objectively significant. From a personal perspective, the reflection of ideas, emotions, individual experiences, personal viewpoints, and unique sentiments suggests that wholesale plagiarism should be dismissed, viewing this issue as a purely Orientalist conspiracy aimed at undermining one of the most critical sources of Arabic language authority, thus sowing doubt about pivotal Arabic texts in the life of the Islamic nation, such as the Qur'an and Hadith. This skepticism extends to the authenticity of poetry that shapes our view of the poet's society, as poets of that time served as mirrors of society and its most loyal advocates.

However, an objective view based on available data, facts, and information acknowledges the presence of plagiarism within pre-Islamic poetic texts, as is common with many texts. The question is not about denying its existence entirely but rather about accurately identifying its instances—a task to which both early and later scholars and literary critics devoted considerable effort. In light of this study, the author recommends further investigation into how these instances affect Arabic dictionaries, classical and contemporary, as well as books of Qur'anic interpretation, Hadith commentaries, grammar, morphology, and rhetoric, which base many of their principles on these texts. In addition, it is recommended to document these fabricated verses and texts within the field of modern and emerging linguistic studies in Arabic, especially semantics, since semantic development is closely linked to pre-Islamic poetry and its texts. Any skepticism about its authenticity poses a risk to these fields, which continue to evolve daily in the Arab world.

This article, though modest, represents a serious attempt to outline the issue of plagiarism in pre-Islamic poetry and its historical trajectory from the past to the present, as well as the broader implications extending beyond pre-Islamic poetry to Arabic language, the Qur'an, and the general methodology for interpreting Arabic texts, grammar, foundational principles, and linguistic evidence. Thus, it was necessary to preface this research with a framework spanning both classical and contemporary perspectives, covering figures such as Muhammad ibn Sallam al-Jumahi, followed by the modern theory of plagiarism, most notably by Margoliouth, and then the views of Al-Rafi'i, Taha Hussein, and other contemporary scholars, through a discussion of their arguments, views, causes, and outcomes.

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