Participations of Iraqi Historians in Studying Bases and Nature of Arab–African Relations

Prof. Dr. Ibrahim Khalil Al-Alaff *

Introduction

Since the beginning of Post – graduates studies in history of Iraqi Universities early in 1970's , efforts are being made for studies related to bases and nature of Arab – African relations whether during Islamic ages or the modern ones to have its own chance especially after the predecessors supervising post – graduate studies have recognized that there was a sort of ignorance in that types of studies .

The most important thing being achieved in this respect was teaching deep curricula about ancient , middle and modern history of Africa , concentrating upon efforts of the Arab in spreading Islamic religion and Arabic culture throughout Africa especially what is called [Africa –South of Desert][(1)].

The most important thing in these first deeds in Africa was sending scholarships outside Iraq to get specialization in history of Africa and

(*) Head of Regional Studies Centre, University of Mosul, Mosul, Iraq.

The author would like to thank Mr. Anwar Najim Mohmood (B.A., Chief of translators at Regional studies Centre, University of Mosul) for his great efforts in translating this paper entitled from Arabic to English.

history of Arab –African relations. Some professors in Iraqi history began directing their students to study the history of that part of African contains and writing master dissertations and Ph.D these in topics (Concerning History of Africa) and (The Role played by Arabs in the field of spreading Islam and establishing there independent political entities). Our research is an attempt to show the most significant things made by the Iraqi history school towards studying bases and nature of Arab – African relations, also to explain what should be done in the field of promoting these studies in order to be with the level of scientific, national and patriotic ambition.

Reasons For Taking Care with The African Studies

In addition to well -known scientific and academic reasons which call to study all kinds of history in the world, thus, Iraqis like their own Arab brothers in all countries of the Arab Home land feel the value of historical religious, cultural and economic ties between the Arabs and others live in African continent.

The also recognize that there are mutual values between both parties against European colonists whom they had landed the African land previously in the aftermath of the movement of geographic explorations in the mid fifteenth century and later[(2)].

Prof. Dr. Duryid Abdulkadir Nuri[(3)] one of the Iraqi specialists in Islamic history of Africa and south of the desert says that Arab relation with the areas located to south of great African Desert, as well as the land of Habasha and the east cost have started strong and solid with the inhabitants before the first century A.D East of Africa for example, approaches Arabia and nothing can separate between them except the Red Sea specially the southern part where the sea begins to narrow in its southern edge which is known today Bab- AL- Mandib.

People of Yamen have got strong relations with Al- Habasha. It is fixed that people hemyar have occupied the land of Habasha in the first century B.C. Also, we can't forget the relations of ancient Egypt with south of Sudan and the role of the Nile in enhancing such relations which took economic, social and culture dimensions. As far as the Arabs in Far Maghrib went through the desert towards the south.

After the emergency of Islam, Arab traders started holding in addition to their various goods ,the principles of their religion and their noble values through which they were able to gain African tribes to enter Islam after they had found in these traders so much of styles, truthfulness and loyalty. People of Africa did not enter Islam peacefully but they also had done their best to take part in the process of spreading it. The appearance of political, Arabic and African entities like states of Gana, Malee, Kanim Al-Fonj, Makadishu and Sunghi have helped in these respect. These entities have joined with Arab Countries and huge commercial ties appeared among them.

Additionally, we began to feel the care in Arab language its arts and literature and some might refer that the Africans had become competing in order to open schools, Zawaya, Libraries and tried to study books of history, jurisprudence, Grammar and different Islamic Sciences The Arab traveler, Ibn Batuta, who went east coast of Africa in 1331, transferred news which says that he had found in these areas peace and wealth in every place of the east coast from the north till the south whether in Makadishu or Malindi or Mimbusa.

He had been welcomed by the rulers of these cities and its traders generously(4). Researchers have mentioned that these cities were centers of civilization between the period of 10th century till the 5th century A.D. Its civilization was African. Trades of these ports had expanded in ivory and gold and their goods reached China. It remained like this till it was destroyed by Portuguese in the 15th century, then and dark period from the history of Africa had started(5).

Dr. Kawari Nickroma(6) stated that [European connection with Africa should be considered from the point of view of basic principle of African Society and this picture of history of Africa is being a differential map for the tragic growth of the African Society and eventually its final victory upon its colonists].

The African continent is being exposed to colonist phenomenon and the attempts of modern European states to interfere with its affairs like the penetration of European Capital is some regions as well as the inflow of European goods in to its markets. It is certain that the weakness of African Countries and its Economic, Social and cultural related has its effect in emerging two new phenomena in the life of the Africans.

They are the attempts of modern European imperialism to go through African Countries and then control from one side and the African resistance movements against them from another.

The most important of this is the value of struggle against Portuguese, Spanish, French, English, German and Dutch imperialists have connected between both the Arabs and their African brothers(7).

Also, attempts of those imperialists to cut the connection of the Arabs with the Africans did not succeed and the evidence of this was the strong hold in Islam and the Arabic language which we could see till nowadays clear in so many historical texts(8).

The Early Attention of Iraqi Historians With African Studies

First of all, we should confirm an important fact which says that the Iraqi historians especially the academicians are considered too late in tackling Africans history in general and the history of Arab-African relations in particular. Regardless of some books and studies which talked history of Africa and they were few ,composed by a number of writers and historians and the most significant were books of trips and seeings of North Africa . Academic historical studies concerning Africa South of Desert started lately in 1970's(9).

In 1980, Khawla Mohammed Al-Dujili discussed her Ph.D thesis in history Department College of Arts, University of Baghdad about [Arabic and Islamic relation with the Eastern coast of Africa Till the 9th Century A.H, 15th Century A.D](10).

In 1981, Durayid Abdulkadir Nuri, discussed his Ph.D. thesis in history Department, College of Arts, University of Baghdad and it was under the title, [spread of Islam in west Sudan from 15th century till 11th century A.H., 11th century to 16th century A.D](11). In college of Arts, University of Mosul, two researches presented two important topics to get master Degree in history of Arab –Africa relations.

They were Abdulrazak Thanoon Jassim and the title of his thesis was [Political and Economic relations between Mamulukees and Bilad Al-Nuba 648-923H.](12). Also, Khalil Ibrahim Jassim and the title of his thesis was [The Empire of Islamic Mali 632-793H](13).

In 1987, Mohammed Ali Yaseen presented his thesis to get master degree from College of Arts, University of Mosul under the title [Gold

of Africa South of Desert][14]. Then students began choosing their topics about history of Africa and South of Desert. It is worth mentioning that the early professors who supervised the early dissertations and thesis mentioned above, were not specialists in history of Islam in Africa or the general African history. They were involved and specialized with other types of Islamic history across different ages[15].

During the period 1980-1990, Important books in Iraq concerning history of Islam in Africa have been issued and the most important of them was the book by Dr. Duryid Abdul-kadir Nuri entitled [History of Islam in Africa –South of Desert] published in (1985)[16]. Also, the book by Dr.Sabah Ibrahim al-Shiykhli entitled [History of Islam in Africa and south east Asia] published in 1989[17]. What characterized the previous studies, is that they have concentrated on the roots of connections between Arabs and Africans and stopped on Islamic Arab cities in Eastern coast and west of Sudan across Islamic religion and Arab culture there. These studies handled the methods of spreading Islamic religion and Arab culture there. These studies did not mange its topic politically, but they also had expanded to include administrative, military, economic and social aspects. It is important to mention here that a number of Iraqi students have got their post – graduate degrees in topic regarding African history and relations with the Arabs. Here, we can mention what Dr. Natik Salih Matlub, currently a professor in Department of history, college of Arts, University of Mosul, has studied and analyzed a manuscripts writing by Ahmed Baba Al-Takrori entitle [Nil Al-albtihaj Bitutriz Al-Dibai] which dealt with west of Sudan during the age of Al- Sunghi state and got a master degree from college of Arts at Ain-Shamis University in

1973. That dissertation had been considered the first academic study made by an Iraqi student about Africa and south of Desert(18).

On the level of Arab–African relations during the contemporary era, we can mention that some books , studies and many Iraqi theses concerning history have been issued during the few last years and most of them are about the development of national movement in North Africa. The nature of Iraqi–African relations, Arab– African Summits, and Israeli penetration in Africa. But, the dissertation presented by Essma Muhsin Al-Jaburi entitled [Arab –African Relations 1961-1977] to the college of political Science, university of Baghdad in 1980 is considered one of the most important comprehensive dissertations which tackles the roots and bases of historical relations, its reality and future. It also presented so many recommendations about such studies(19).

Also, an important book issued by University of Mosul entitled [The history of Modern Third World] published in 1989 and written by the writer of this research with the help of one of his colleague and the second chapter of it has been dedicated to study [Continent of Africa from the Foreign Occupation till Independence](20).

Suggestions to Develop Studies Related with Arab–African Cooperation

Studies related with Arab–African cooperation and the wish to develop it was one of the cases by which the representatives of Iraqi historical school had interested in. For example, Dr.Durayid Abdulkadir Nuri had written an important critical study under the title, [History of Islam In Africa , South of Desert as it has come in publications of Iraqi Scholars] presented to the symposium of historical studies: Reality and future organized at Department of History , College of Education , University of Mosul for the period 24-25 March, 1990 in which he remarked the participations of Iraqis this type of history studies which are still limited .

Therefore, he called for taking care into these studies and confirm the necessity to establish cultural relations among Iraqi Universities and African universities to promote such studies. He also asked to open the centre for African studies and Arab–African Cooperation in one of Iraqi Universities and to continue urging students to have specializations in Africa and south of Desert inside or outside Iraq(21) .

As far as, Dr.Sabah Ibrahim Al-Shiykhli , she had written an important study in Al-Murikh Al-magazine in 1996 under the title [African Studies in Iraq: Evaluation and Perspective](22). She called for the necessity to creat a clear recognition with the importance of studying history of Africa and its position in human history insisting on building great and deep connections with institutes and centers of collecting documents and manuscripts in east and west of Africa. For example, The Centre

of Researches and Gathering Manuscripts at the University of Bayru in Nigeria, the Centre of East Africa to study heritage and national languages in Dar Al-Salam in Tanzanya, as well as the importance of checking periodicals issued by international institute which take care in African History and collecting special documents regarding modern history of Africa from centers of European achieves especially those state which had colonized African continent for long years. Without this, Iraqi studies in the field of history of Africa and the African–Arab Cooperation will not witness progress and prosperity.

References and Notes

1–From material decided in curricula of history department at Iraqi universities is [Historical of Islam in Africa South of Desert] and [history of liberation Movement In Africa] and [The history of the modern third world]. See for Example, university of Mosul, the Guide of college of Education, 1979, pp.44-51.

2–See: Sabah, Ibrahim Al-Shiykhli, [African studies in Iraq: Evaluation and Perspectives] Al-mo'arikh Al-Arabi Magazine No. 43, 1996. p191.

3–See his paper entitled [History of Islam in Africa South of Desert as it has come in compilations of Iraqi academicians] present to Symposium of Historical studies In Iraq, Organized by Department of History, College of Education, University of Mosul for the period 24-25 March , 1990 , p.1.

4–See: Abdu Abdullah AlTanji Known Ibn Batuta died 779 H.,1331 A.D. Tahft Al-Nath'ir Fee Gharib AlAmsar (Beirut, 1964) p.690.

5–Ibrahim Khalil, Al-Alaff, Awni Abdul Rahman Al Sabawi, History of the Modern Third World (Mosul, 1989). p. 35.

6–See his Article (I and The Philosophy) Al-Hilal Magazine, Cairo, 171, No.6. 1st June 1974 .

7–Al – Alaff & Sabawi Ibid . p . 40 .

8–Durayid Abdulkadir Nuri, History of Islam in Africa South of Desert as it has come in compilations of Iraqi Academicians. pp. 6-8.

9–We can remark for example to [A trip to far Maghrib]. Shaykh Mohammed Raza Al-shabibi, an Article from the magazine of Iraqi Scientific Council Vol.12,1965, pp.1-41 , (A trip to Egypt and Sudan), Mohammed Mahdi Karkukli, Cairo, Al-Hilal press, 1941, (History of Sudan) to Younis Bahri (Cairo, 1931).

10–The thesis is supervised by prof. Faysal Al-Samer.

11– The Thesis is supervised by prof. Dr. Awad Majid.

12–The Dissertation is supervised by prof. Dr.Hashim Al-Mala.

13–The Dissertation is supervised by prof.Dr.Khdier Jassim Al- Duri.

14–The Dissertation is Supervised by prof. Abdul Mun'im Rashad.

15–Professors who specialized in history of Africa south of Desert began to supervise dissertation and these which deal with this type of study till we have a huge compile in Department of History at Iraqi Universities Especially in Universities Arab History, related to Union of Arab Historians, See for example Muffed Al-zadi, University Theses Guide, achieved In Department of History, College of Arts, University of Baghdad, April, 2000 (limited Copy).

16–It comes in 340 pages, the first Chapter deals with Africa South of Desert before Islam, the second is about the importance of studying Africa and its ancient connection with the Arab Homeland. The third concentrates on the spread of Islam in the religion while the fourth includes the study of political entities like Ghana, Sunghi, Brunu, Al-fongj, Habasha, Lamu and Kilwa .

17–It is complied by Dr.Adil Al –Alusi and it lies about 120 pages. It consists of two parts. The first is about studying the importance of Africa and its relation with the Arab.

The second includes the study of Islam's spread and Sudanese Mamluk in sighal and Negeria . The book is of two sections: The first is written by Dr. Al-Shaikhly; while the second Al-Alusi.

18–Dr. Durayid Abdulkadir Nuri says in his criticism to this thesis supervised by prof. Dr. Ahmed Abdul-Raheem Mustafa that it was not purposed itself to study the manuscript which got nice information about Belad Al- Gharb, state of Sunghi and the control of Maghribs for Sudan and the fall of Sunghi and the city of Timbikto. See his study: History of Islam in Africa South of Desert pp. 21- 32.

19–The thesis is typed in book which carries the same title and issued by Al-Rasheed House for publications [Baghdad 1981]. The thesis is supervised by prof. Rayth Aziz Hadi .

20–History Departments Since 1889 have decided to teach this book and Considered it Text book .

21–The study has not published yet .

22–See Al-Marikh Al-Arabi Magazine No. (53).