

INTEGRATED KNOWLEDGE IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC ERA:"ANWA" METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS AND RAIN'S PREDICTION AS A MODEL

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Abstract

Some scholars are still thinking that Arabs in Pre-Islamic era were immersed in ignorance, and they had no knowledge and sciences to help them wade through their tough life. Those scholars even believe that Pre-Islamic Arabs confined themselves with a life of passiveness, negativity and nihilism. This paper aims to demonstrate a scientific refutation of the above allegation by proving that Arabs were dealing at high level with every facet of their environment. The researcher will specify his defense of this case, by taking one issue as a model which is The Rain and its predictions. Abundant poems have mentioned rain and rainfalls in their odes. Moreover, in the documentation era, a lot of books have been authored and appeared, which are called "Anwa"; i.e. meteorological observations. Some of such books are published nowadays, while many are still kept as manuscripts or have been lost. I concluded that Arabs have dealt with the predictions of rains and established rubrics in exploring the rainy clouds. They knew the times of rainfalls by the clouds' colors and lightening. In addition, there were persons and tribes who were the most knowing in this regard. Another conclusion in this paper, worth mentioning is that Arabs have achieved integrated Knowledge, and this paper represents a response to those who defame the Pre-Islamic Era and its people as being satisfied with eloquence, orations and poets. Furthermore, I found out that Arabs have linked up with other countries and benefited from their knowledge and was not isolated in the Arabic Peninsula.

Key Words: Pre-Islamic era, Integrated Knowledge, Anwa, Meteorological Observations.

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Introduction

This paper will discuss an issue which reflects how Arabs were so immersed in their environment and its manifestations. It clarifies that Arabs in the Pre-Islamic Era have accomplished an integrated knowledge. The major issue of this paper is meteorological observations. Arabs in that time knew how to predict rain by looking at the clouds and recognizing the nimbuses and other ones.

Methodology

The methodology of this paper is to present an introduction to explain and differentiate between two concepts: Physiognomy and exploring the unseen "metaphysics" then introduce some examples of how Arabs could predict rains. I discuss every aspect of this paper in its place.

A short introduction, within the limits of concept: Physiognomy and exploring the unseen "Metaphysics".

Arabs were so busy –as all other human beings- with the unseen, the uncanny and the mysterious. At the same time, they have always been obsessed and intrigued with the inquiry about the future and its tidings. AlMuthaqqeb who is considered as one of the famed poets in that era states:

وَمَا أَدْرِي إِذَا يَمَمْتُ أَمْرًا أَرُدُّ الْخَيْرَ: أَيُّهُمَا يَلِينِي
الْخَيْرُ الَّذِي أَنَا أَبْتَغِيهِ أَمْ الشَّرُّ الَّذِي هُوَ يَبْتَغِينِي⁽²⁾

So, Metaphysics represented inconstant inquiry in Arabs' mentality and needed answers for their existential questions. This leads us to state that Arabs were thinking of and beyond every hidden thing which defied their understanding, such as death and fate. Hence, the Physiognomy appeared, and I attempt hereby to discuss the concept and its relevance to this paper.

Exploring metaphysics is "to demonstrate whatever you cannot understand by senses and mind and out of reach of the human hands, because only "Allah Almighty" knows the unseen and remains responsible for the secrets of this universe"⁽³⁾.

²Addeewan: 212-213

³Alhay'aWallIslam: 44.

On the other hand, Physiognomy is" to demonstrate a hidden thing according to some precise signs. And, if this thing concerns self attributes, it is called "Qiyafa" which means "Following", like scrutinizing stupidity in the wide-napped person, or cleverness in the short person. Furthermore, if it concerns public or private thing, it is called "Prediction", like when politicians scrutinize and hypothesize the future of nations and related phenomena"⁽⁴⁾.

The researcher thinks that the difference between the two concepts "Exploring metaphysics and scrutinizing (Prediction) is too explicit. I mean that scrutinizing (Prediction) needs evidences, signals and relations, and then builds rules and facts according to the harmony among all cases. While exploring metaphysics is a hopeless attempt to acknowledge an invisible thing, such as what will happen next year, or the destiny and result of a battle before it starts.

It is worth mentioning that Arabs in the Pre-Islamic Era were thinking and dealing the both styles, but my aim in this paper is to investigate scrutinizing (Prediction), specifically with rain and the conditions of the sky.

In this regard, Ibn Manthour states:"...Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said: Fear the believer's physiognomy. Ibn AlAtheer explains: it takes two meanings: First- which is concluded from the superficial of the saying-is what Allah Almighty reveals in the hearts of his pious worshippers, so, they are authorized by their righteous beliefs to conjecture the circumstances of some people. Second is an aspect which is learned by evidences, trial, innovation and ethics, then the circumstances of some people"⁽⁵⁾.

AlAlousi defines physiognomy as: "to judge the ethics, chastity and depravity of the person according to his appearance, shape, color, and sayings. And this takes two lines: First which is gained by ideas, coming as a kind of inspiration or revelation..., The second one is comes through learning, which needs to acknowledge shapes, colors, ethics and morals..., physiognomy is a type of belief and follows the mentality. Hence, if the

⁴Alhay'aWallIslam: 44.

⁵LisanAlArab V 6: P 160.

mentality is perfect, physiognomy is perfect and strong, so Arabs got a great deal more than others in this realm"⁽⁶⁾.

How Arabs need physiognomy and prediction?

Arabs of the Arab Peninsula in Pre-Islamic Era were so familiar with their environment and its manifestations: mountains, dunes, deserts and plains. They lived and experienced bounties, and the opposite, suffering from barrenness. So, they were obliged to be aware of the sky's conditions when the rain falls to know how to deal with it. AlJahez stipulates: "...from this topic, they knew the sands and ground, Anwa'a (meteorological observations) and the stars..., needs for the rains, fleeing from barrenness, so, it seemed compulsory for them to understand everything about rains"⁽⁷⁾.

AlMarzouqi emphasized AlJahez's statement and stated: "...Despite the differences of their towns and perseverance, they took special care for the winds, stars' display and time's change more than the inhabitants of cities and Bedouins. This is not new, but as tradition bequeathed from forefathers, and their measurement is practice"⁽⁸⁾.

Here, I have to refer to the debate between Ibn Qutayba and Aby Rayhan AlBeerouni –in spite of then on-contemporaneous-in this issue. Ibn Qutayba stated: "One of the aspects that Arabs have individualized in many sciences is their knowledge of stars, their names, kinds, rises, sets and use as guidance at night"⁽⁹⁾.

Albeerouni differed and wrote: "If Abu Mohammad Abdullah Bin Muslem Bin Qutayba AlJabali exaggerated in his all books, especially, his book about the preference of Arabs over Persians. He pretended that Arabs are the most scientific nations in stars, its rises and sets. I do not know that he ignored or pretended to be ignorant of the fact that farmers are working everywhere, If you (He means the receiver and the reader) check AlAnwa's books, especially Ibn Qutayba's book about the science of stars (Astronomy),...,you will discover that Arabs are not exclusively alone in

⁶BolougAlArab V3: P263-264.

⁷AlHayawan V6: P 30.

⁸AlAzminaWalAmkina V2: P179.

⁹FadlAlArabWattanbeeh Ala Ulumiha: P 129.

this knowledge . Ibn Qutayba has exaggerated, as a close-minded man, full of vulgar ethics. His discourse in his book is an evidence of malice and hatred to the Persians"⁽¹⁰⁾.

My opinion in this debate is like Waleed Khalis's opinion who edited Ibn Qutayba's book. AlBeerouni:"is right in some statements, when he said about Arab's knowledge of the stars..., but he exaggerated by humiliating Ibn Qutaybah's opinion..., and for the malice and hatred, it is demonstrated from Albeerouni's side"⁽¹¹⁾.

Furthermore, it is unobjectionable to state that Arabs have taken this science from another nation like Chaldeans and Babylonians, because, there were relations between Arab Tribes and their neighbors, specifically, in Iraq. This statement does not reflect negatively on Arabs' situation, but it is an advantage. It means that they were open to take benefits from other cultures, and exchanged sciences from many nations, which gives us a signal and solid evidence that they were not isolated.

The orientalist Nallino clarified this issue and wrote: "For the ancient Arabs, they acknowledged to be aware of the air situations, and seasons, because they justified all these cases according to the rises and sets of the stars, from the sunrise till the sunset"⁽¹²⁾.

Arabs' styles to predict rains

Arabs knew time to inhabit in the desert "striving for their food and water"⁽¹³⁾, so I will compile all their styles in dealing with environment and surrounding factors, by concentrating on rains:

First: Canopus: Its display before the dawn in middle of August is a signal to travel to the Badiya. Ibn Qutayba stated:" the start of transfer to Badiya is the rise of Canopus in the dawn. It rises in AlHijaz in night fourteenth of August"⁽¹⁴⁾.

¹⁰AlAatharAlBaqiyaAnAlQurounAlKhaliya: P 238-239.

¹¹FadlAlArabWattanbeeh Ala Ulumiha: P: 129, footnote: 2.

¹²IlmAlFalak: TareekhuhuIndAlArab Fi AlQurounAlWusta: P 122. See the whole chapter P: 118-126.

¹³AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P 96.

¹⁴AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P 96.

Second: Knowledge of the place of clouds' origins: If the origins of clouds are from the side of Kibla they knew that it will rain> Ibn Qutayba formulated:" If the clouds have been created from (Alain) at the side of Kibla, they trusted that it will rain"⁽¹⁵⁾.

Third: Clouds' color: Arabs knew the time of rain by the color of the clouds. Ibn Qutayba wrote:" If the clouds are black, it is an evidence of rain"⁽¹⁶⁾. And whiteness with shining means the same. Ibn Qutayba stated:" If the clouds are so white and shining, it is a sign of rain. It is said that: if the sky seems like an abdomen of white jenny, it will rain heavily"⁽¹⁷⁾.

In this regard, Ibn Qutaybah formulated that" If the clouds' color is between reddish and white, it is a signal that they are empty of water and barrenness will ensue"⁽¹⁸⁾.

Redness is an evidence of barrenness, Ibn Qutaybah stated:" Perhaps, redness appears in the morning and evening without clouds in winter, which is a signal of barrenness"⁽¹⁹⁾.

Ibn Qutaybah differentiated between two kinds of redness, he wrote:" If the redness is so dark, and it appears from the sunrise till the sunset, perhaps it is evidence that it will rain. The redness which means barrenness is without clouds, but the other one is with simple clouds"⁽²⁰⁾.

Fourth: Arabs, perhaps, looked to the clouds and imagine it as what he saw, so sometimes he compared it to camels. Ibn Qutaybah stated:" If the clouds seem like forehead water of female camel, it means that it will rain"⁽²¹⁾. He added:" If the cloud is like a leopardess, then rain will take a place"⁽²²⁾. Sometimes, Arabs likened clouds to wires (the borders of a piece of cloth) because they are so close to the ground, as Ibn Qutaybah stated, that means that it rains ⁽²³⁾.

¹⁵AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 169

¹⁶AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 170.

¹⁷AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 172.

¹⁸AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 175.

¹⁹AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 176.

²⁰AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 179-180.

²¹AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 172-173.

²²AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 173.

²³AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 174.

Fifth: Arabs have a vision about the fastness and slowdown of clouds, Ibn Qutaybah said:" If the clouds are passing slowly, it means that they are full of water"⁽²⁴⁾.

Sixth: Arabs used to predict rains by shine, Ibn Qutaybah stated:" If the sky shines seventy times, they travel to another secured place, because of their trust that it rains. And, if the sky shines two times with repetition... and continuously, it rains"⁽²⁵⁾.

Seventh: Arabs knew fixed periods of the heavy rain, IbnQutaybah stated:" If the rain takes place at the last night and the start of the month, the rain will be heavy and fruitful"⁽²⁶⁾.

Forecasters in Pre-Islamic Era:

When we check resources of this era, we find out that Arabs were at high level of predictions and physiognomy of rains. Ibn AlA'arabistated:" AlUqayli stated: if the sky's color varieties between blackness and yellowness, like an abdomen of white jenny, and the clouds are so close of the ground, like a flabby meat, it rains"⁽²⁷⁾.

Also, Ibn AlA'arabi stated:"Abu Saleh AlFazari state: when we see the shine above and beside the clouds, it means that –If Allah wills- it rains, and if it is beneath, there is no rain ⁽²⁸⁾.

In this regard, the story of Mu'aqquer Bin Himar AlBariqi is solid evidence on how they were aware of rain predictions ⁽²⁹⁾. Ibn Qutaybah stated:" The most important tribe among Arabs who are having more knowledge in stars are Kalb and Shayban Tribes. And, this science is in Mawiya, a branch of Kalb Tribe, and in Murrah, a branch of Shayban Tribe"⁽³⁰⁾.

Among Arabs who were known as forecasters is AlAbbas, the uncle of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Azzabeedi stated:"Omar Bin AlKhattab prayed to Allah Almighty for rain, then asked AlAbbas: how far from

²⁴AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 173.

²⁵AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 177.

²⁶AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 180-181.

²⁷SharhDiwanUmrulqays: P: 307.

²⁸.SharhDiwanUmrulqays : P : 307

²⁹AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 173, and see: AlMatarWassahab: P: 117-119.

³⁰AlAnwa' Fi MawasemAlArab: P: 2.

Pleiades star? AlAbbas replied: scholars state that after its fall, it stays in the horizon seven days. The narrator swears by Allah Almighty that after seven days, it rained"⁽³¹⁾.

AlHareth Bin Zeyad Bin Arrabee' was one who knows the stars and" No one among Arabs is equivalent him the stars"⁽³²⁾.

It is worth to mention that Jawad Ali stated that Christians and Jews have had a good knowledge of AlAnwa' "They understood the eastern sciences and befitted from Greek and Latin books in star sciences"⁽³³⁾.

Conclusions

Arabs were not isolated or far from other nations. They established relations with each other and exchanged benefits. They were dealing actively with the surrounded environment and its aspects and overcame all difficulties. They knew by physiognomy how to predict and forecast the rains and its sites for the sake of agriculture and gathering. They have performed integrated knowledge by understanding the sciences of that era. They were not only eloquent, but also use language and eloquence in expressing ideas about their issues. Among these issues is the issue of this paper. I found out texts about clouds, rains and stars which are formulated in a high-level rhetoric. I cannot generalize that all Arabs were satisfied with dealing with stars, but I did my best to compile evidences and names of some persons who were known as experts in this topic.

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³¹Taj AlArous V 1: P 474.

³²AlIshtiqaq: P 400.

³³AlMufassal Fi TareekhAlArabQablAlIslam: V 8: P 426.

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