



DOI: 10.22363/2312-9220-2022-27-1-68-85

UDC 821.411.21

Research article / Научная статья

Historical and Cultural Processes and Periodization of Arabic Literature

Victoria N. Zarytovskaya 

*Peoples' Friendship University of Russia,
10 Miklukho-Maklaya St, Moscow, 117198, Russian Federation*

✉ widaad@yandex.ru

Abstract. The article aims to describe the theoretical problem of the periodization of the Arab national literature. The issue of dividing Arabic literature into periods has long been in the focus of both Arab and Western, as well as Russian literary researchers. Undoubtedly, such issues, which have recently acquired relevance in connection with the growing interest in modern Arabic literature, require analysis from such points of view as the multiplicity and variability of existing periodizations, the reasons for the discrepancy between the periodizations of European and Arab national pieces of literature and various approaches to the compilation of periodization by Arab and European specialists. The purpose of this work was designated as an attempt to demonstrate, using analysis and comparison, as well as the method of historicity, the redundancy or, conversely, the insufficiency of some periodizations and the terms used in them, to find different names for the same periods with the same artistic principles and time frames, as well as to establish the factors that had the strongest influence on the development of Arabic literature. In the course of the study, conclusions are drawn about the inexpediency of correlating the periodization of Arabic literature with general European, as well as about the key role of a number of factors in the history of Arabic literature. First, linguistic (minimal changes in the literary language since the codification of the Qur'an in the 7th century) that ensured the continuity and tradition of Arabic literature, which for centuries preserved and cultivated figurative systems and stylistic devices of pre-Islamic times. Secondly, the factor of national domination — a purely Arab or general Muslim character of the society. Under the latter's conditions, there was a mutual enrichment of the pieces of literature of the peoples included in the Caliphate, which entailed fundamental changes in the genre system and themes of Arabic literature. The author thus holds the idea that the originality of Arab literature is due to the characters of Arab pre-Islamic culture in general and verbal culture in particular, and the historical processes of the Middle Ages in the Middle East. First of all, we mean the rapid formation of the Caliphate as an imperial state and including most Arab countries a part of the Ottoman Empire, where Arabic was not the



state language, from the 14th century and before the territorial redistribution of the results of World War I.

Keywords: Arabic literature, periodization of world literature, pre-Islamic poetry, Arabic language

Conflicts of interest. The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Article history: submitted: October 15, 2021; revised: November 3, 2021; accepted: November 18, 2021.

For citation: Zarytovskaya, V.N. (2022). Historical and cultural processes and periodization of Arabic Literature. *RUDN Journal of Studies in Literature and Journalism*, 27(1), 68–85. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-9220-2022-27-1-68-85>

Историко-культурные процессы и периодизация арабской литературы

В.Н. Зарытовская 

*Российский университет дружбы народов,
Российская Федерация, 117198, Москва, ул. Миклухо-Маклая, 10*

✉ widaad@yandex.ru

Аннотация. Статья посвящена теоретической проблеме периодизации арабской национальной литературы. Вопрос деления арабской литературы на периоды уже давно находится в фокусе как арабских, так и западных, а также российских исследователей-литературоведов. Несомненно, анализа требуют такие приобретенные за последнее время в связи с ростом интереса к современной арабской литературе актуальность вопросы, как множественность и вариативность имеющихся периодизаций, причины несовпадения периодизаций европейских и арабской национальных литератур, различные подходы к составлению периодизации арабскими и европейскими специалистами. Цель данной работы была обозначена как попытка продемонстрировать, прибегнув к анализу и сопоставлению, а также методу историчности, избыточность либо, наоборот, недостаточность некоторых периодизаций и использованных в них терминов, найти различные именованья одних и тех же периодов с теми же художественными принципами и временными рамками, а также установить факторы, которые оказали самое сильное влияние на траекторию развития арабской литературы. В ходе исследования делаются выводы о нецелесообразности соотнесения периодизации арабской литературы с общеевропейской, а также ключевой роли в истории арабской литературы ряда факторов. Во-первых, языкового (минимальные изменения в литературном языке с момента кодификации Корана в VII в.), который обеспечил преемственность и традиционность арабской литературы, веками сохранявшей и культивировавшей образные системы и стилистические приемы еще доисламского времени. Во-вторых, фактор национального доминирования — чисто арабского или общемусульманского характера общества. В условиях последнего произошло взаимообогащение литератур народов, включенных в средневековый халифат, что повлекло коренные изменения в жанровой системе и тематике арабской литературы. Автор таким образом проводит мысль о том, что самобытность арабской литературы обусловлена особенностями арабской доисламской культу-

ры вообще и словесной культуры в частности и историческими процессами Средневековья на Ближнем Востоке, в первую очередь — стремительным становлением халифата в качестве государства имперского характера и последующим пребыванием большинства арабских стран в составе Османской империи, где арабский язык не был государственным, с XIV в. и до территориального передела и образования национальных государств по результатам Первой мировой войны.

Ключевые слова: арабская литература, периодизация мировой литературы, доисламская поэзия, арабский язык

Заявление о конфликте интересов. Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

История статьи: поступила в редакцию — 15 октября 2021 г., откорректирована — 3 ноября 2021 г.; принята к публикации — 18 ноября 2021 г.

Для цитирования: *Зарытовская В.Н.* Историко-культурные процессы и периодизация арабской литературы // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Литературоведение. Журналистика. 2022. Т. 27. № 1. С. 68–85. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-9220-2022-27-1-68-85>

Introduction

Arabic literature has its roots in the early Middle Ages. The most ancient monuments of Arabic literature that have come down to us were created in the pre-Islamic era, the so-called Al-Jahiliyyah (from the word *jahl* — ignorance, i.e., “paganism, the time of ignorance of the true faith”), and dated to the 6th century, when the Muslim chronology had not yet begun. At the same time, pre-Islamic poetic texts, primarily the so-called Muallaqat (lit. *suspended, strung* (like pearls)) — selected best works of Imru al-Qais, Tarafa, Labid, Zuheir, Antara, Ambra ibn Kulthum and Harisa ibn Hillida, hung according to legend at one time on the sacred Kaaba in Mecca, that was worshiped even in pagan times — they are samples of already mature poetry and today are recognized as masterpieces of world literature. Russian academician Ignatiy Krachkovsky wrote: “This poetry, which has turned out to be so powerful and vital, appears before us... in its completeness and perfection equally from the side of language, metric form, the volume of themes and compositional techniques ... Some linguists, not without reason, see it as the apogee of Semitic linguistic creativity. At the very first glance, the colossal vocabulary, elaboration of forms, flexibility of syntactic are obvious” (Krachkovskiy, 1956, p. 247). The artistic merit of these works testifies in favor of an earlier beginning of the Arabic literature than the period, the legacy of which we can documentarily present. The pre-Islamic poetry existed in oral form and was recited by the poet, the mouthpiece of a kind-tribe, in front of the general public to influence it (through such common in that era genres as lamentations, boasting, ridicule verses etc.). So, we can suggest that an impressive part of it was not subsequently recorded in writing, and earlier works were lost entirely, remaining unaccounted by the world literary criticism.

The features of this earliest pre-Islamic literature — rhythms, images, aesthetic principles, linguistic idioms — have served as a standard for Arab authors for more than a millennium. And the very orientation towards these samples was possible thanks to the preservation of the traditional conservative society by the Arabs, which firmly adhered to their roots and ideals, as well as the fact that the Arabic literary language was codified in the Qur'an in 653 AD practically no noticeable changes in the lexical composition or grammatical structure were fixed from that time. Moreover, this already created a precedent for a kind of continuous literary tradition stretching over many centuries, the similarity of which we cannot find in European national pieces of literature.

At the same time, Arabic literature for a long time “dropped out” from the world literary process in the sense that due to objective, primarily historical reasons, it was out of sync with the stages of development of European national pieces of literature, which, as its known, are usually divided into periods — Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Romanticism, Classicism, Modernism and Postmodernism.

The legacy of Antiquity, of course, had a massive impact on the Arab world and, first of all, in the scientific field. Translations of the works of Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Galen, Dioscorides and others, carried out mainly in “House of Wisdom” (Bayt al-Hikmah in Baghdad), founded at the beginning of the 9th century by Caliph al-Mamun, gave such an impetus to Arab philosophical, medical and mathematical thought that the Arab world in the Middle Ages was ahead of Europe, revealing to the world such scientists as physician Avicenna and the founder of sociology Ibn Khaldun. Arab thinkers were able to transfer the fundamental scientific ideas of Antiquity to new soil and develop them.

However, the nature of the literary work of the Arabs was affected to a less extent by the ancient influence, which is understandable: literature, in contrast to science, relies not so much on universal concepts as quite specific ones related to place, time, nation, culture, religion and language, which determined by the picture of the world and the way of thinking, on which the hypothesis of linguistic relativity by Sapir-Whorf is based¹. Nevertheless, acquaintance with Hellenistic philosophy became one of the reasons for the “turn” of Arab literature from the emotional to the logical, from the individual to the universal.

The complex history of the Arab world with its period of imperial power and cultural flourishing played an essential role in the “deviation” of the trajectory of the development of Arabic literature. This period fell on the European “dark” Middle Ages (VIII–XII centuries of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates). Then long centuries of stagnation and decline, when the very basis of a national literature — the Arabic literary language ceased to be the state language, the language supported by the state, for the absolute majority of the countries of the Arab world. This period fell on the beginning of the 16th — beginning of the 20th

¹ *Great Russian Encyclopedia* (2004) (pp. 2004–2017). (In Russ.) Retrieved November 22, 2021, from: <https://bigenc.ru/psychology/text/2145242>

centuries when the Maghreb and the Levant (Syria, Palestine, Lebanon) and Iraq were part of the Ottoman Empire until the latter was defeated in World War I.

All of the above circumstances — from the early heyday of poetry, the unique linguistic situation, the rapid Arab conquests that led to an unprecedented cultural rise, and then the prolonged stagnation and colonization of Arab countries to the relatively low popularity of Arab literature in the world today, which, in our opinion, is undeserved — formed the specific Arab literary process and determined the periodization of Arabic literature (or, more precisely, the variants of its periodization), which is largely different from the European one.

Arab and Western European as well as Russian researchers have proposed various schemes for dividing Arabic literature into periods. Some of them turn out to be more general, others — fractional, some divisions seem justified, others, on the contrary, unreasonable, based only on formal indicators, such as the numbering of centuries or the replacement of some conquerors by others on the territory of the Caliphate. Therefore, the task of our study was to analyze the existing schemes for dividing the Arabic literature into periods. Furthermore, the goal was to compare factors of various orientations that determined the fate and specificity of Arab verbal culture according to their degree of importance. Among them — language, place, historical time, a set of artistic techniques, the predominance of specific genres, the ethnic composition of the Arabic state, a noticeable influence of the cultures of other peoples or the absence of such, the dynamics of the history of the state (flourishing or decline), the state formation (Caliphate, in fact, an empire or several national states with their literary processes — Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Syria, Saudi Arabia, etc.).

The relevance of such an analysis, as it seems to us, is due to the growing interest in translated modern Arabic literature around the world, as evidenced by the increasing number of translated books and “discovered” names, in particular Ahmed Saadawi, Jokha al-Harhi, Yusuf Zidane, Ala al-Aswani and others. We are deeply convinced that a genuine understanding and assessment of their works is possible only if we know exactly what path Arabic literature has travelled over many centuries, why Arabs are so proud of it, what trajectory does Arabic literature follow and why it is not similar to European national pieces of literature.

Popular Periodizations of Arabic Literature

In academic Arabic philology, the following division of national literature into periods is accepted:

- 1) Jahili (pre-Islamic) (until the middle of the 5th century);
 - 2) Islamic (the time of the righteous caliphs and the Umayyad caliphate, which existed until the middle of the 8th century);
 - 3) Abbasid (until the middle of the 13th century);
 - 4) The period of modern states (from the 14th century to the present day)
- (ص، 1996، درویش، 5–6).

Obviously, in the Arab tradition, the periodization of national literature is built on the principle of historicism, since the “turns” in its line coincide with the key moments in the history of the Arabs — the adoption of Islam, the formation of Arab statehood, the change of dynasties and the geography of cultural centers. In this regard, questions of a general nature arise: how exactly can historical periods coincide with the stages of development of national literature and is the periodization of literature directly dependent on historical events? Is it enough to consider only the historical principle when compiling the periodization of Arabic literature? Is this Arabic literature specificity, since the Arab researchers themselves have built the periodization of their own verbal culture according to the historical paradigm?

As for the periodization used by European experts, it was suggested by the French translator Regis Blachere (1900–1973), who took as the basis of this, in his own words, “cultural and ideological unity” (درويش، 1996، А. 8). We will allow the assumption that “under cultural and ideological unity” Blancher conceived sets of artistic features of works of a particular era, conditioned by way of life and thinking. Thus, pre-Islamic poetry, a brilliant description of the system of images of which was presented in the work of the Soviet orientalist Betsy Shidfar, stands out against the background of all subsequent Arabic literature with a set of the following principles: demonstrating “the close connection of man with nature, his spontaneous materialism” (Shidfar, 2016, p. 58), “incoherence, plot fragmentation” (Shidfar, 2016, p. 55), “aesthetics of the familiar” (Shidfar, 2016, p. 31), lack of individuality in epic heroes and others. Let us cite as an illustration the verses of Imru al-Qais:

*Weep for me, my eyes! Spill your tears
And mourn for me the vanished kings
Hujr ibn 'Amru's princely sons
Led away to slaughter at eventide;
If only they had died in combat
Not in the lands of Banu Marina!
No water was there to wash their fallen heads,
And their skulls lie spattered with blood
Pecked over by birds
Who tear out first the eyebrows, then the eyes.*

(Diwan of Imru' al-Qays..., p. 213)

Therefore, the pre-Islamic era is sometimes also called “Arab antiquity”, and the subsequent era, by analogy with European literature — the classics. However, the terms “antiquity” and “classics” are applicable to Arabic literature, in our opinion, in a slightly different meaning: the first in the meaning of “ancient”, i.e. demonstrating primitive thinking, and the second — in the meaning of “golden”.

The period that is usually called classical in Arabic literature, and for Blachere it is the 8th century, and for others it is wider — the 8th–12th centuries, does not coincide in time with the European classicism of the 17th–19th centuries, moreover, it significantly precedes it. At the same time, the Arab classics were mainly formed thanks to the translations, interpretations, adaptation and development of the Hellenistic ancient philosophy of reason, primarily the works of Aristotle and Plato. So, if in the artistic paradigm of the comic in the pre-Islamic era, the individual physical qualities of the representatives of a hostile clan were basically ridiculed, or rather, vilified (for example, excessive completeness, leprosy), in the Arab classics, the subject of not emotional, but logical satire became stupidity, greed, ignorance and other qualities that contradict reason. For example, the most famous collection of anecdotes by the founder of Arab literary criticism al-Jahiz (775–868) was named “The Book of misers”.

Thanks to this approach, in the work of Blusher of 1960 “Moments Tournants Dans La Literatre Arabe”, 5 periods of Arabic literature were designated (درويش، 1996، ص 8):

- 1) the pre-Islamic period (until the middle of the 7th century);
- 2) the golden age (until the middle of the 8th century);
- 3) the period of small states (more precisely, several cultural centers, it is also the Abbasid period in the Arabic classification);
- 4) the Ottoman period (from the beginning of the 16th century to the middle of the 19th century);
- 5) the modern period (from 1860 to the present day).

As we can see, the terminology used by R. Blachere is not uniform — one period stands out in relation to religion (paganism-monotheism), the other — the state structure, the third — according to a simple linear chronology and even evaluation — “golden”. It may seem contradictory that the pre-Islamic period, with its Muallaqat, which became a model for centuries to come, did not enter the golden age of Arabic literature. A similar question arises about the Abbasid period: should it then be viewed as a decline, if it was not included in the “golden age” as well? Although, in our deep conviction, this is not true, since it is precisely for the period of Abbasid rule that a variety of genres and an intensive enrichment of techniques and motives are characteristic due to the perception of the literary heritage of neighboring peoples included in the Caliphate. In the Abbasid era, such large-scale figures created as Abul Ala al-Maarri, Ibn al-Muqaffa, al-Buhturi, al-Mutanabbi, Abu Nuwas, and others. Cultural decline began much later — with the arrival of conquerors from the Eastern side and the collapse of the Abbasid state in the XIII century. Nevertheless, the periods identified by R. Blusher have a kind of specificity. The Ottoman and modern periods, undivided in the Arab tradition, are characterised by different dynamics (stagnation — rapid development). And the modern period begins half a century after Napoleon’s military and scientific campaign in Egypt, when the results of the close interaction of civilisations were already visible, which was reflected, among

other things, in the literature of both sides of the world. About the significance of the date of 1798, the American orientalist of Palestinian origin Edward Said wrote: “It was with the Napoleonic occupation of Egypt that the process of building relations between East and West was set in motion, which still determines our cultural and political prospects” (Said, 2006, p. 67).

Also, in research materials (Arabic literature), we can find such divisions as:

- 1) purely Arabian period;
- 2) the common Muslim classical period;
- 3) the post-classical period;
- 4) decline;
- 5) revival under the influence of Europeanism.

In this attempt at periodization, built on the national-religious principle, the idea is expressed that the Arabic-language literature of the period when the Arabs existed within the Arabian Peninsula, and this is the era before the Arab conquests and before the spread of Islam, significantly differs from the Arabic-language literature within the framework of the geography of the Arab world that subsequently expanded in the context of close cultural contacts of Arabs with other peoples — Persians, Berbers, etc. At the same time, the classical period of Arab literature is precisely the common Muslim period, and not the purely Arab one, which classicality is denied here.

Here is another of the classifications we met (Stoyanova, 2012, pp. 8–9), based on the combination of the chronological principle and the form of text (oral or written):

- 1) ancient Arabic oral literature;
- 2) medieval Arabic literature (8-18 centuries);
- 3) New Arab literature (19 — early 20th centuries).

Thus, we are faced with the coexistence in the scientific use of variants of the periodization of Arabic literature, based on various principles, taking into account one or another set of factors that form the unity of a particular literary period, and sometimes based on a single factor, for example, chronological or national. On the one hand, the plurality of periodization of Arabic literature is due to the complexity of periodization in world literature. On the other hand, the reason for it is objectively different views on Arab literature from the inside (from the East) and the outside (from the West) and the apparent discrepancy between the periodization of Arabic literature and periodization of European literature. Any periodization's apparent incompleteness or one-sidedness is associated with a complex correlation of factors that influenced Arabic literature. As we can see, often, researchers for one period can rightfully consider the factor of linguistic form (oral existence) to be the key factor, for another — the negative dynamics of the development of literature, its stagnation and all the ensuing consequences. Also, the same period with a certain set of characteristics can be designated both by the dynamics of the development of literature — a period of decline, and by state — the Ottoman period. Of course, the factors of the development of Arab national literature, taken into account in its various periodizations, deserve separate consideration.

Analysis of Factors Taken Into Different Periodizations

1. Language Factor. First of all, when compiling the periodization of Arabic literature, one should exclude such an essential factor for understanding the history of the development of European national pieces of literature as language. As for European languages, including Russian, in a historical introspective, we observe continuous grammatical (morphological at the word level and syntactic at the level of sentence construction) changes, as well as shifts in the semantics of words and phonetic transformations that change the “appearance” of lexical units. The most striking example of phonetic historical transformations in the Russian language, for example, was called “the process of the fall of reduced vowels”, which ended in the 12th century, as a result of which a different phonetic structure was formed (Trubeckoy, 1987). Such changes are transmitted from one generation to the next and accumulated and, according to experts, every 500 years, they show us a different version of the language, the speakers of which no longer perceive 5-century-old texts to understand the meaningfulness, they miss connotations, allusions and etc. In other words, we can hardly understand the text of the 16th century. Furthermore, for the Russian people of the 16th century, the text of the 11th century, one must think, presented specific difficulties and could not become a literary work that is easy-read, comprehended, studied and ultimately turned out to be a living part of the modern culture. However, this reasoning does not apply to the situation with the Arabic language.

The Arabic language is unique in many ways. The dialect of the Quraysh tribe, one of the most influential clan formations of the Arabian Peninsula, from which the Prophet Muhammad came, was fixed in the Quran in the 7th century and from that time retained its phonetic norms, grammatical structure and lexical composition as much as possible for all subsequent centuries. Minor changes in its vocabulary are due to the mobility initially inherent in the language: on the one hand, the natural decline of a part of the vocabulary into the class of archaisms that call things already out of use, on the other, the growth of neologisms that denote new things and phenomena — recently invented or borrowed by Arabs. Although Arabic mainly does not use borrowings but adds meanings to existing words, the semantics intersect with the semantics of neologism. So, for example, the lexical unit قطار [qytaar] — in modern usage *a train* has been known to the Arabs for more than 1700 years, since the word was previously used to describe *a caravan*, and the word سيارة [sayyaarat], in modern usage *a machine*, is found in one of the Quranic verses (ص، 1996، درویش، 4). There was no replacement of the original lexical unit with others in Arabic, nor a complete rethinking of its meaning. This means that to read the poetry of Imru al-Qais, for example, written one and a half thousand years ago, a modern Arab does not need to be a specialist in historical linguistics and generally refer to the explanatory dictionary of his native language.

Moreover, this turns out to be extremely important for the direction of the entire national literary process: the high linguistic unity of the past and the present texts make that works of a thousand years ago actively read, comprehended and rethought. So they are still participating in forming a modern Arab personality, and their artistic characteristics and techniques are copied in modern literature, often getting a second birth. For example, the subgenre “An-nuniyya” — versification, in which each line is based on a rhyme on the consonant nun-sound [n] (Filshtinskiy, 1985, p. 53) — is found as in the greatest poet of Andalusia of the 11th century Ibn Zeidun, a Damascus theologian of the early 14th century Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, the Omani educator of the early 20th century Abu Muslim al-Bahlani. And the poet Mohammed Abdullah bin Asimin from Qatar (d. 1944), following him, presented his poetic glorification of the monarch of Saudi Arabia, King Abdel Aziz Al Saud, in the same rhythm and with the same rhyme as “al-Nuniyya” of al-Bahlani after the latter was fully published in the well-known journal of the Gulf countries “Al-Kuwait” despite its volume. Arab researchers note that the language of outstanding poets of the 20th century, such as Nizar Qabbani from Syria, Ahmed Shawki, Taha Mahmoud, Mahmoud Hasan Ismail from Egypt, etc., is an organic continuation of pre-Islamic poetry (درويش، 1996، ص. 5) and read in the same way as Arabic poetry of any other era or geography. For example, Andalusian poetry, which reached its zenith on the territory of modern Spain in the VIII–XIV centuries in the works of Abd ar-Rahman, Ibn Abd Rabbih, Ibn Kuzman and others.

Thus, the language factor in the periodization of Arabic literature cannot serve as a marker of a particular period. Since the Arabic literary language is unified, at least since literary monuments are recorded in writing, we cannot divide Arabic literature into one written in one Arabic language and in some other Arabic — ancient, medieval, etc.

2. Factor of Religion. As can be seen in the above schemes, practically all specialists, when trying to divide into periods Arabic literature, place a dividing line between pre-Islamic literature and the literature of the Islamic period. Here we would like to note the absolute validity of the allocation of the era of Al-Jahiliyyah as a separate stage in the development of Arab culture in general based on the existence in that period of special poetics, expressed in the system of images, rhythm, themes of works, the form of the text, etc. Its features were due to the tribal life of the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula (for example, the genre of the song of revenge reflects an important part of their social relationship), their lack of a centralized state and government structures, pagan mythology and thinking, a semi-nomadic lifestyle, relative isolation and closed society, excluding the noticeable influence of other cultures, despite some trade ties. According to A.V. Korotaev and co-authors, pre-Islamic poetry flourished “with the absence of political centralization characteristic of pre-Islamic Mecca and a relatively high well-being of the population, when a significant part of the population of Mecca could afford the luxury of systematically thinking about something other than

their daily bread, and on the other hand, not to be afraid of persecution of the struggling with the dissent of the state apparatus” (Korotaev, Klimenko & Prussakov, 2007, p. 59).

On the one hand, all these characteristics begin to fade with the start of Islam, which fundamentally changes the life of the Bedouin tribes, destroys tribal relations, unites them under the banner of Islam, implies a centralized system of government and taxes, makes them move from the Arabian Peninsula and settle in much wider territories, which lead to irreversible processes of close interaction with other peoples, mutual enrichment of their cultures and the transition to a sedentary urban lifestyle. However, Islam itself as a religion is not the reason for the turn that Arab literature made in the centuries that followed the life of the Prophet, but it was a catalyst that entailed such global social changes in the life of Arabs that they affected, including the literary forms of creativity. The factor of Islam, which will be discussed below, is invariably accompanied by other factors of social life, which does not speak in favor of its independence in this context. In addition, following the logic of the pre-Islamic (not Islamic) / Islamic period opposition, we would only have to establish two periods in the development of Arabic literature — pagan, which ended in the 7th century, and Islamic, which continues to our days. Obviously, this would be an extremely inaccurate approach, which would not show the difference between the methods of the medieval novel and the artistic techniques of the holder of the 1988 Nobel Prize in Literature, Egyptian Naguib Mahfouz, who was known to be an observant Muslim.

On the other hand, attention is drawn to the fact that, in contrast to pre-Islamic poetry, “in Quran, the embryo of the emerging monotheistic religion, we see an attempt to explain eternal questions, ... an attempt to create a certain philosophical system ... but within this difference, features that unite the figurative system of Quran from the ancient Arabic poetry, for the aesthetic perception of the world has not yet changed” (Shidfar, 2016, p. 101).

If we delve deeper into the conversation about pure religion, then there is historical evidence that the Prophet condemned versification, as well as there were witnesses that he recognized the right of poetry to exist. Therefore, we will adhere to the view that the Prophet condemned idle and senseless versification. In the Quran and hadiths, we can find words in which, at first glance, poetry is condemned: “As for the poets, the erring follows them” (surah “The Poets”, ayyat 224). Let us also assume that the Prophet opposed some poets, since during the formation of Islam, who were opponents of monotheism, and Islam in its early years spread across the Arabian Peninsula in a difficult way. And vice versa, for example, in one of the hadiths, the most famous companion of the Prophet Muhammad, a native of Yemen, Abu Hurayrah (603–678) reports that the Prophet praised the verses of the poet Labid (1768/4 الحجا بن المسلم). One of Russian Quran translators, outstanding Soviet scientist I. Yu. Krachkovsky (1883–1951) noted that Muhammad was a poet himself who achieved a poetic effect. However,

philological discussions are still going on about the artistic features and merits of the Quran (Alharbi, 2021; Bettayeb, 2021; Shair Ali Khan, Abdul Mujeeb Bassam, & Zainab Amin, 2021, etc.). There are also historical facts that the closest circle of the Prophet, for example, his younger wife Aisha, who played a certain political role after his death, not once expressed herself in poetic form. And various other figures of the troubled times of the Caliphate left rhymed lines for one reason or another (Bolshakov, 1998, p. 41). In the early Caliphate, poetry — the literary weapon continued to play the same role as in pre-Islamic times. In other words, the inertial wave of pre-Islamic poetry was descending but was not stopped by religion.

If we delve deeper into the conversation about religion, then there is historical evidence that the Prophet condemned versification, but at the same time, there were people who witnessed him recognize the right of poetry to exist. Therefore, we will adhere to the view that the Prophet condemned idle versification. In the Qur'an and hadiths, we can find words in which, at first glance, poetry is condemned: And the lost follow the poets (surah “ash-Shuaraa”, ayyat 224). Let us also assume that the Prophet opposed some poets since during the formation of Islam, there were opponents of monotheism among the owners of eloquence, and Islam in the early years spread across the Arabian Peninsula in a difficult way. And vice versa, for example, in one of the hadiths, the most famous companion of the Prophet Muhammad, a native of Yemen, Abu Hurayrah (603–678) reports that the Messenger of Allah praised the verses of the poet Labid (1768/4 *أبو الحسين مسلم بن الحجاج*). Koran translator, outstanding Soviet scientist I.Yu. Krachkovsky (1883-1951) noted that Muhammad was a poet himself who achieved a poetic effect, and philological discussions are still going on about the artistic features and merits of the Koran (Alharbi, 2021; Bettayeb, 2021; Shair Ali Khan, Abdul Mujeeb Bassam, Zainab Amin, 2021, etc.). There are also historical facts that the closest circle of the Prophet, for example, his younger wife Aisha, who played a certain political role after his death, expressed herself in poetic form. And various other figures of the troubled times of the Caliphate left behind rhymed lines for one reason or another (Bolshakov, 1998, p. 41). In the early Caliphate, poetry — the weapon of the word — continued to play the same role as in pre-Islamic times. In other words, the inertial wave of Jahili poetry descended but was not stopped by religion.

By and large, events from the life of Muhammad, including those that shed light on the relationship of the Prophet with poets, do not lend themselves to rigorous scientific verification. The historical personality of Muhammad after his death was overgrown with countless legends. Thus, only one of his most authoritative biographers, Muhammad al-Bukhari (who died in 870), collected and wrote down more than 7 thousand legends, of which he himself considered only a thousand plausible. However, even if we accept the version of the negative attitude of the Prophet to poetry, during his lifetime, his influence extended only to a small part of the Arabian Peninsula in the regions of Mecca and Medina

(Yathrib) and the neighboring oases. After his death, the traditions of pre-Islamic poets were continued, but already at Umayyads' court. Let us recall that from the beginning of the sending of the ayyats to the Prophet until the establishment of the power of the Umayyad caliphs, only 51 years passed, from 610 to 661.

3. Factor of National And Cultural Domination. We find national domination the most significant factor. Based on it, the purely Arab period and the period of the multinational state — the Caliphate, in fact, the empire — are distinguished in the Arabic-language literature. In the first period, the Arabs existed without experiencing a noticeable influence of neighboring peoples and continued their traditions inherited from pagan times. These traditions were so strong that the main one was tribal cohesion and nepotism even under the righteous caliphs, i.e. in a centralized Islamic state, more than once proved to be stronger than the equality and interests of the state transmitted by Islam. In times of troubles, one or another political bloc, for example, in the case of a historical protest against Ali as the righteous caliph and during the subsequent struggle for Basra, whole tribes and clans adhered or split off to one side or another (Bolshakov, 1998, p. 29–42).

During the conquests, the Arabs “planted” their culture on the conquered peoples and inevitably with the Quran’s spreading the Arabic language throughout the Middle East and North Africa, expanding its area and the area of Arabic literature. As noted by A.V. Korotaev and others, the apparent cultural domination of the Arabs persisted during the first dynasty of the caliphs — the Umayyads, i.e. conditionally until 750 (132 AH). He writes: “In the Umayyad Caliphate there was, although not formal, but extreme social pressure on the Islamized groups of non-Arabs, which forced them to adopt Arab norms and practices, even if they were not directly related to Islam” (Korotaev, Klimenko & Prussakov, 2007, p. 63). It is no coincidence that the Arab historical tradition uses the term not conquest but discoveries — *al-futuuh* or *al-futuuh al-islamiyyah*. Thus, the educational role of the Arabs in the life of the conquered (discovered by them) peoples and their merit in the transmission of religious knowledge, true in their deep conviction, is emphasized.

Soon, in a rapidly swollen empire over a century and a half, where Arabs were no longer the majority of the population, inevitable changes took place: representatives of other peoples who mastered the Arabic language, primarily the Persians, transferred the fruits of their centuries of development and literary creativity to the Arabic soil. Among them, Ibn al-Muqaffa (724–756), who belonged to a noble Persian family and entered the civil service with the Abbasids, translated into Arabic the “Categories” of Aristotle, “The Books of Sovereigns” and the fables “Kalila and Dimna”. As a result, several new genres of poetry and prose, love and philosophical lyrics, short stories, folk novels, hyperbolic odes of praise, graceful gazelles have developed. New meters, “unexpected” themes, including those prohibited in Islam, have appeared. Thus, the “drunken” hedonism and epicureanism of the poet of the Abbasid Caliphate

Abu Nuwas (died in 810) gave rise to drinking songs and hunting poems, and also contributed to the final design of a short lyric and philosophical work into a separate genre of *khamriyyat* or “the wine poetry”:

*Sing me a song, sweet Sulayman,
and quench me with sweet wine.
When the bottle comes around, pass it
with your hands into mine.
Look! Morning's in the sky, already
its flaxen loincloth shines.
With cups of comfort wash the call
to prayer from my mind.*

(Abu Nuwas: Wine, Boys and Song.
Transl. by A.Z. Foreman)

4. Dynastic Factor. In Arabic literary criticism, the terms “Umayyad literature” and “Abbasid literature” are accepted, implying the different nature of Arabic literature under the Umayyad rulers with the capital in Damascus (661–750) and the Abbasid rulers with the capital in Baghdad (from 750 until the capture Baghdad by the Tatar-Mongols in 1258). These terms are based on a deep understanding of own history and awareness of the historical and cultural differences between the two eras. At the same time, for Western and Russian researchers, if they are not oriental historians, it is not clear what kind of contribution the representatives of the dynasties made to literature and what difference between them, except chronological — the Abbasid Caliphate followed the Umayyad. Meanwhile, their main difference is precisely the national domination of the Arabs, which we spoke about above and which ended with the expansion of the Caliphate eastward towards Iran and with the admission of representatives of other cultures to the court and government, with the growth of their weight under the Abbasids, including in the literary sphere.

If we adhere to the principle of historical accuracy, then the process of cultural balancing of Arabs with other nationalities was due not to the rule of the Abbasids as leaders, but the so-called Abbasid revolution (multilateral civil war) of 747–750, which ended with the elimination of the unequal status of non-Muslim Arabs, erasing the acuteness of opposing the Arab-Bedouin to the alien and the gradual Arabization of the peoples who entered the Caliphate.

5. Dynamic Factor. No less important is the dynamic factor showing development, upward movement or stagnation and a decline in the creative potential of literature. On its basis, we separate all the periods listed above together, the dynamics of which is obvious — towards the individualization of heroes, a variety of genres, themes, the accumulation of various artistic techniques and openness to other national pieces of literature — from a long period of decline

that spanned several centuries and ended with the formation of many national Arab pieces of literature as Egyptian, Saudi, Lebanese, etc., which in turn went to the next round of development and changes, absorbing the modern tendencies of European literature of modernism and postmodernism (Suvorov, 2010).

Indeed, a series of conquests of part of the Abbasid Caliphate by the Tatar-Mongols and the Seljuks turned into feudalization and weakened the central ruling, usually accompanied by a certain economic and later cultural stagnation. However, it is natural that during this period of invasions, a kind of Arab medieval decadence was born, which is characterized by a pessimistic indifference to reality. The brightest phenomenon of the Arab culture of this period was the mystics of the Sufis and their representative from the literature of Ibn Arabi (1165–1249):

Dearly beloved!
I have called you so often and you have not heard me
I have shown myself to you so often and you have not seen me.
I have made myself fragrance so often, and you have not smelled me.
Savourous food, and you have not tasted me.
Why can you not reach me through the object you touch
Or breathe me through sweet perfumes?
Why do you not see me? Why do you not hear me?
Why? Why? Why?

(The poetry of Ibn Arabi)

The further incorporation of Arab territories into the Ottoman Empire did not bring such famous names as Ibn Arabi. As we indicated above, the Arabic language ceased to be the state language during this period. They wrote a lot in Arabic but pretentious, and the main genres were entertainment collections, folk stories and anecdotes, recognized as low genres of literature. Based on a dynamic factor, we have the right to designate the next period of Arab literature only after the Ottoman period of Arab history ends, when new Arab literature appears, and the very round of cultural growth in Arab countries receives the name an-Nahda – The Renaissance. In Arab countries, enlighteners are inspired by the French bourgeois revolution and the world literary heritage, among which the Russian classic Leo Tolstoy (Al-Manfaluti, 1981, pp. 80–87). After World War I, journalism, sentimental genres, and social and everyday novels (the works of Adib Ishak, Mustafa Kamil, Gibran Khalil Gibran, etc.) became popular.

Perhaps the pinnacle of the modern period should be called the work of the first and today the only Arab Nobel laureate in literature (for 1988) Naguib Mahfouz (1911–2006), who attracted the interest of the world community to Arabic literature. Unfortunately, after Naguib Mahfouz, only one author from the Arab world received the international literary prize — the Omani writer Jokha al-Harhi for the novel “Celestial Bodies” (2011), which won the literature competition translated into English (The Man Booker Prize-2019). However, on a

global scale, Arabic literature is being translated in the modern period incomparably more than before. And this speaks of its growing potential and interest of readers around the world, despite the preservation of its identity and a different path of development.

6. Factor of State Change. On closer examination, the factor of state change divides the Arab literature into the same chronological segments as the dynamic factor. The flowering/decline of literature depends on the level of education in the language, which in the Ottoman period, i.e. a period of colonization of Arab countries, less attention was paid. The factor of state change also echoes the dynastic factor when we talk about the change of the Umayyad dynasty to the Abbasid one. Therefore, we will favor removing this factor when compiling the periodization of Arabic literature as a duplicate, provided that the dynastic and dynamic factors are considered.

Conclusion

So, we attempted to consider the various existing in the Arab and foreign (concerning the Arab countries) criticism of the periodization of Arab national literature. We did not set ourselves the goal of assessing the works of the researchers we mentioned, believing that each of the classifications that do not contradict factual data not only has a right to exist but, moreover, enriches our perception of Arabic literature and understanding of its history.

We found in scientific use different naming conventions for the periods of development of Arabic literature, which designate practically the same period, the same artistic system, but at the same time are named differently, based on what factor the author of periodization takes as key. Thus, the period of small states fully corresponds to the Abbasid period, ancient Arabic oral literature — to the Jahili (pre-Islamic) period, as well as the Arabic period itself. And the period of decline corresponds in other classifications to the Ottoman period, depending on the researcher's focus — on dynamics or the state's name. Also, the term modern Arabic literature, chosen based on the temporal factor, should, in our opinion, be recognized as a synonym for the period of a renaissance under the influence of Europeanism, since a noticeable influence of European literature on Arabic took place precisely in modern times.

Particular research interest for us was the comparison of the periodization of European specialists with the other, generally accepted in the Arab world, which showed that for the representatives of the Arab world, the literary process is closely connected with the events of national history and its direct dependence on the course of historical events unfolding in the Middle East is evident to them.

After assessing the influence of various factors on the development of Arab national literature, we identified two of them that participated in forming the distinctive character of Arab literature in general. The main factor is the language factor, which determined the preservation of some literary traditions for a

millennium, and also, as a turning point, the factor of national domination, which brought the literary traditions of the Arabs, Persians and other peoples included in the Caliphate closer together, enriching their verbal cultures and giving them an impetus for further development.

Our study also showed the inequality of factors in determining the periods of development of literature in general and their partial overlap. Sometimes it seemed challenging to determine which factors were the catalyst for socio-cultural transformations and which of them was the consequence. Obviously, such overlapping concepts as dynasty and state denote overlapping factors and leave several questions: How to apply the dynastic principle to the period of nation states? Is this or that dynasty directly related to the literary process, so periods were called after them? All this leads us to the conclusion about the complexity and multidimensionality of the factors influencing identifying a particular period in Arabic literature.

References

- Abu Nuwas*. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 22, 2021, from <http://litena.ru/books/item/f00/s00/z0000059/st030.shtml>
- Al-Hajjaj, Abu al-Husein Muslim. (1991). *The Right Path of a Muslim*. Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-ilmiyya Publ. (In Arabic).
- Alharbi, M. (2021). Linguistic Appropriateness in the Quranic Text. *College of Arts and Humanities Journal*, 417–461.
- Al-Manfaluti, M. (1981). To Tolstoy. *Arabic Romantic Prose of the 19th–20th Centuries* (pp. 80–87). Leningrad: Hudozhstvennaya literature Publ. (In Russ.)
- Arabic Literature*. (In Russ.) Retrieved October 24, 2021, from <http://granat.wiki/enc/a/arabskaya-literatura>
- Bettayeb, N. (2021). Speech Synthesis System for the Holy Quran Recitation. *International Arab Journal of information Technology*, 18 (1), 8–15.
- Bolshakov, O.G. (1998). *Caliphate History. Between two Civil Wars 656–696*. Moscow: Vostochnaya literature publ. (In Russ.)
- Derwish, A. (2008). *An Introduction to Modern Arabic Literature*. Cairo: Maarif publ. (In Arabic).
- Diwan of Imru' al-Qays. Poem 2, quoted in Dictionary of Literary Biography* (p. 213). Retrieved November 02, 2021, from <https://quotepark.com/quotes/2062107-imru-al-qais-weep-for-me-my-eyes-spill-your-tears-and-mourn/>
- Filshtinskij, I.M. (1985). *History of Arabic Literature. V — Early IX Century*. Moscow: Nauka publ. (In Russ.)
- Ibn Al-Arabi*. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 02, 2021, from <http://litena.ru/books/item/f00/s00/z0000059/st060.shtml>
- Imruulqais. (2013). Muallaqa. Literary Translation from Arabic by A.A. Dolinina. *Written Monuments of the East*, (1), 32–38. (In Russ.)
- Korotaev, A.V., Klimenko, V.V., & Prussakov, D.B. (2007). *Emergence of Islam*. Moscow: Center for Civilizational and Regional Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences publ. (In Russ.)
- Krachkovskiy, I.Y. (1956). *Arabic Poetry. Selected Works*. (V. II). Moscow–Leningrad: USSR Academy of Sciences publ. (In Russ.)

Muallaqat. Retrieved November 05, 2021, from <http://alcala.ru/literaturnaia-enciklopedia/slovar-M/4676.shtml> (In Russ.)

Said Edward W. (2006) *Orientalism. Western Concepts of the East*. Saint Petersburg: Russkij mir publ. (In Russ.)

Shidfar, B.Y. (2016). *The Figurative System of Arabic Classical Literature (VI–XII Centuries)*. Moscow: Mardjani publ. (In Russ.)

Shair, Ali K., Abdul Mujeeb, B., & Zainab, A. (2021). Quran and Metonymy: Literal, Semantic and Metonymic Translation (Analysis of English Translation of Quranic Verse). *Fahm-i-Islam. Biannual Research Journal*, January-June, 1–15.

Stoyanova, N.I. (2012). *Literary History of the Countries of the Second Foreign Language*. Makhachkala: DGU publ. (In Russ.)

Suvorov, M.N. (2010). Postmodernism in Arabic Literature. *Postmodernism in the Literatures of Asia and Africa* (pp. 72–122). Saint Petersburg: SPGU Publ. (In Russ.)

Trubeckoy, N.S. (1987). On the Sound Changes of the Russian Language and the Collapse of the General Russian Linguistic Unity. *Selected Works on Philology* (pp. 143–167). Moscow: Progress Publ. (In Russ.)

Bio note:

Victoria N. Zarytovskaya, Associate Professor of Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9910-7913; e-mail: widaad@yandex.ru