

## Skepticism in the literature between “Taha Hussein and Ibn Sallam AL-Jumahi”

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### ملخص باللغة العربية

هذه دراسة في منهج الشك في الأدب عند كل من طه حسين وابن سلام الجُمَحِي، فعلى الرغم من أنّ الأوّل من النقاد العرب المحدثين، والثاني من النقاد العرب القدماء، فقد اشتركا في الشك في ما وصل إلينا من الشعر الجاهلي، غَيَّرَ أَمَّهما لم يَبَيَّنَا شكوكهما على أسس علمية واضحة، واعتمدا في دعم آرائهما على أدلة منطقية، ووجهات نظر شخصية، واستنتاجات عقلية؛ وذلك بسبب غياب الدليل العلمي على أنّ الشعر الجاهلي تعرّض للتحريف بالزيادة أو النقص في القصيدة الأصلية.

كلمات مفتاحية: طه حسين، ابن سلام الجمحي، ديكرات، منهج الشك.

### Abstract

This study in Skepticism between Taha Hussein and Ibn Sallam AL-Jumahi; it will take Taha Hussein's book “The poetry pre-Islamic era” and Ibn Salaam's books “The ranks of genius poets” as a technique to measure to prove the supposed title because both of them had skeptical the pre-Islamic poetry in a wide range of skepticism ideas.

They present a lot of ideas and analysis based on personal justifications rather than based on facts, historical or scientific documents. This study spot the light on the beginning of skepticism negotiations about the truth of this poetry and the reliability of poets existence having the opinion of increasing and omitting which take over documentation era. Moreover, this study clarifies that a number of prior Arabic critics like Ibn Sallam AL-Jumahi, Abu Hamed Al-Gazali, Ibn Qotiabah and Abu Al-Faraj Al-Asfahani.

This Study presents some western critics which have an interest in this issue and then I have presented Taha Hessian and Ibn Sallam AL-Jumahi opinions giving my point of view for these opinions and concluded some specific results in its range.

**Keywords:** Taha Hussies, Ibn Sallam AL-Jumahi, Descartes, Skepticism.

### Introduction

This research in skepticism in the literature between Taha Hussies and Ibn Sallam AL-Jumahi. We have said “in literature” and not just between “Taha Hussies and Ibn Sallam AL-Jumahi” because Taha Hussein declared through his book he had based on Descartes' approach in a skepticism which stands on rejecting all that we have learned in the past except logic, geometry, and Algebra; this means that his approach is limited to “literature, philosophy, and history”.

Despite that fact of skepticism between Taha Hussein and AL-Jumahi was on the pre-Islam poetry, we use “in literature” and not “in poetry” because a lot of speech about this poetry didn’t give a clue that prose was secure of skepticism. We haven’t concentrated on prose for its insufficiency and the shortage of its Art topics. We just find prose of clergy rhymes, some orator’s speech forms, and proverbs. Whereas, a growing number of poems put poetry on literary and social precedence; the poet's status was great, His poems are effective, to a great extent through some poems created houses by marriage or broke them by divorce; some made a truce and others caused a war.

We started with the last “Taha Hussein” and not with the first “Ibn Sallam” to see what the last and to see if he was affected by the first or had denied this influence or not.

By clarifying things in a slow organized, logical way to reveal the truth or at least to have a clear picture to put the first in the best stage because he was the first to talk under Ibn Qotaibah literary method when he said “I had seen teachers who found silly poetry” is good because the poet is one of the first poets putting it in his favorites ignoring effective poetry.

Just because it’s said recently, or he’s seen the poet. Realizing the fact that poetry and figurative language aren’t just for a specific period, or isn’t for a chosen people; it’s a common division between the worshippers in every period in history, making the old as new in every period.<sup>(1)</sup>

This study argues Taha Hussein and Ibn Sallam AL-Jumahi concerning skepticism in pre-Islamic poetry; how each one discusses its topic, defining his opinions as the research on an unfamiliar trend in poetry pre-Islamic era had noticed.

Then, we talk on details about the skeptical opinions of Taha Hussies and Ibn Sallam looking their reasons by discussing the issue in certain perspectives hoping to shed new light on both of them.

### **Taha Hussein and Prior Critics on Skepticism Idea and Methodology**

We notify that a lot of ancient Arabic critics had a doubt here and there on purpose on footnotes of their books; some of them pay a lot of attention, others just gave hints without explanations in detail. Whereas the contemporary critics were ignored to discuss skepticism schools, methodology and its justifications; for example, Taha Hussein was one of the first that studied this matter deeply through his book “on the pre-Islamic poetry” in 1926. This book had made a significant clamor leading him to withdraw the book from the market and issuing a new edition with a different title “on the pre-Islamic literature”. This means that he couldn’t resist the voices that rejected his book.

From his preface, Taha Hussein said he was influenced by Descartes saying “I want to examine the reality of things in the ancient period by using Descartes’ skepticism philosophy.

This means “to put former knowledge aside and receive knowledge as new information”<sup>(2)</sup>.

Rene Descartes was distinguished because of his scientific methods in his deep research about skepticism besides his famous idiom “I think so, I exist”. He added that “if doubt doesn’t lead us to believe, it will prevent us from being mistaken” he established a lot of rules beginning with: “Don’t accept anything before being sure that it's right completely”.<sup>(3)</sup>

On the other hand, Taha Hussein wasn’t the first who has doubts about this poetic era because he was preceded by Ibn Salaam AL-Jumahi (died 232 h), AL-Jazazy (died 255 h), Abu Hamed Algazali (died 505 h). Because of being the first of the firsts, AL-Jumahi’s work will be compared with Taha Hussein’s work on the basis of skepticism methodology.

On the second hand, “Al-Wardi” in 1872 wrote a study in Germany on Monograph preceding Taha Hussein on the same topic. However, Sir Charles Lyell in his introduction for the second volume of his book “The best of [AL-Mofdliat]” in 1918.<sup>(4)</sup>

In 1925, Marloth wrote his famous essay about the same topic titled “Origins of Arabic Poetry” at the same time as Taha Hussein’s book besides Ninelo, Taha Hussein’s teacher who wrote an essay with the same topic distinguishing original poetry from fabricated in 1917<sup>(5)</sup>.

### **Skepticisms Justifications According to Taha Hussein**

It’s clear that Taha Hussein believes that pre-Islamic poetry is fabricated clue to personal opinions and not to scientific, reasonable ground.

This matter is also found with Ibn Sallam AL-Jumahi, too. Starting with Taha Hussein justification, we raise three arguments:

1. He said that “this poetry isn’t in the pre-Islamic period; it had been fabricated after Islam because the themes and settings represent Muslims more than their ancestors”<sup>(6)</sup>.
2. He didn’t refuse the social life of the pre-Muslims world but he refused its representative poetry by saying “I don’t have doubts about life in an ignorant period before Islam, but I have doubts in poetry which represent it. “If I want to study those ancestors life, I can’t move to Omro Al-Qais, Al-Nabeghah, Al-Asha and Zuhair because I don’t trust what was thought they wrote but I move to roads studying text that no doubt that completely right like Holy Quran because Holy Quran is the mirror to this era due to solidarity and reliability of Quran Verses”<sup>(7)</sup>.
3. Moreover, Taha Hussein was certain that the uncertainty of poems that are attributed to Omro Al-Qais, Obaid Ebn Al-Abras, Al-Mohalhel and others. “But the hanged poems of Amr Ebn Kalthoom and Al-Hareth Ebn Helzza Al-Yashkory are faked because the rivalry effects between those tribes was on Islamic Period and not the era before. Whereas Torfa’s hanged poem was not his poetry because this poetry is done b linguistics specialists”<sup>(8)</sup>.

### **Dr. Mahmud Al- Samra remarks on Taha Hussein Skeptical Opinions**

Al-Samra noticed that Hussein’s book raised more questions than answers<sup>(9)</sup> because ancient Arabic critics, like Ibn Sallam AL-Jumahi, Ibn Qotaibah, Abu Al-Faraj Al-Asfahanee, and others, were alert that some lines on those famous poems are fabricated but they didn’t say that those poems couldn’t be attributed to their poets<sup>(10)</sup>.

He clarifies that those opinions of Taha Hussein weren’t accepted in Egypt but it was celebrated by Mirgoliath on the west, refused by professor Nicholson (Look at his book Literary History of Arabic). Whereas, professor Gibb had some reservations on his book Arabic Literature: an introduction of Della Vida or “Della Vida review of History of the Arabs” J.A.O.S, LIX P.124<sup>(11)</sup>.

Moreover, Al-Samra clarified that Taha Hussein compliments about this poetry because it didn’t portray linguistic variations that were famous before Islam and social life weren’t portrayed too as Quran<sup>(12)</sup> told us about it which inspired me to have an opinion about this case.

### **Opinions about Taha Hussein’s Skepticism**

I can present my point of view about Taha Hussein’s opinions of skepticism toward pre-Islamic period poetry in details:

Firstly: Taha Hussein was young in 1926, he was looking for being a distinctive, reliable, intellectual, and full of enthusiasm and the willingness to involve others in controversial issues which leads to fame and so, he was able to attract attention involving another scholar to deal with his opinions.

Secondly: Those opinions stayed on the mental level, personal, and had no reliable documentaries or scientific facts.

Thirdly: In his speech about the authentic poetry and fabricated one as evidence of plagiarism in the pre-Islamic poetry in the world is rather authentic or fabricated and it's natural to have strong voices and a weak one.

Now, we will turn the page into skepticism ideas of Ibn Sallam AL-Jumahi fowling it with the same techniques.

### **Ibn Sallam AL-Jumahi and Extravagant Skepticism**

From the beginning of his book "Stratum of Genius Poets" Ibn Sallam recorded the importance of poetry as: "we had mentioned Arabs, their poems, famous poets, knights, and battles, thus oral poetry for each tribe of Arabic tribes, knights, leaders, and battles couldn't be accomplished, we put all the possible material that any scholar would care so we started with poetry"<sup>(13)</sup>.

Poetry is important for any nation for two reasons; firstly, it's a kind of prestigious knowledge as Ibn Sallam said: "We focused out a speech for any scholar care". Secondly, poetry is artful creation of any civilization in which its spirit is portrayed by showing its identity culture, social habits which I clear in his words "no scholar could ignore on the basis of Arab people".

Instead of science, poetry stands on the peak of Arab social life affairs<sup>(14)</sup>, therefore it's natural to have doubts especially in writing methods and documentations, fearing of primitive ways for keeping documentations safe.

Naturally, this distributes a mood of skepticism if Arabs look at this matter from a different angle, the will be like "checking a tree from its roots without paying attention to the soil and water surrounding it"<sup>(15)</sup>.

Therefore, we find Ibn Sallam declaration that "some poetry is unwisely fabricated without a theme"<sup>(16)</sup>. Here we find in "unwisely" and "fabricated" a topic to discuss because the interpreter of this book Mahmud Mohammed Shaker had a critique on one of the footnotes about being fabricated "I don't know what Ibn Sallam want, does he mean what tribes make, or some liars, or he accused the poets of plagiarism even though the poet himself made this poetry as the famous critic Sabawiah said on a book after mentioning a line of poetry, saying: It is made as anecdote, or to some worshippers (look at the footnote which is mentioned in the documentation).

In the last word, Ibn Sallam mostly meant by unwisely fabricated due to using some psychological words on the context that don't fit or spiritless, or that thing that we enforce ourselves to say and act unhappily inside while saying it.

In reality, poetry making on the terms of old critics needed exaggeration and some of them divided poets to naturally flow or exaggerated weaved as Al-Khalil Ibn Ahmad said "this weaved poetry is badly made"<sup>(17)</sup> because weaving or fabricating is the same and this is a controversial issue in general, could poetry be considered as industry, a gift or an inspiration or the word weaved is the same as fabricated or intentionally done has a clear signal, we mean plagiarism using someone else poetry and giving him credit to another one.

On his book, Ibn Sallam presented a lot of opinions, ideas, and visions, all of them came as a basic idea of skepticism which he put as the main idea to study pre-Islamic poetry and played a great role in dealing with this matter, so we will present the reason for skepticism of Ibn Sallam about pre-Islamic poetry as it was mentioned in his book:

1. Some of this poetry is orally inherited without interference of scholar<sup>(18)</sup>.
2. He put the poetry on the same level of other works by saying: "Poetry has a trend by poets as other subjects or industries, as it is understood by eyes, ears, hands or tongue"<sup>(19)</sup>.
3. He didn't respect the common people and their attitude of singing that poetry through saying "if you took accent the combust liked by saying to you its evict, could you benefit of it"<sup>(20)</sup>.
4. He accused a number of people of corruption of poetry like Mohammad Ibn Isaac the slave of the family of Mokhzamah Ibn Abd Al-Motaleb Ibn Abd Manaf who was one of the biographies scholars which let Al-Zohari to say that "people will not know about their history without Mokhzamah". He was specialist of battles so people

- believed the poetry he talked about, he was always saying I don't know how the poets made it; I just carry it in my books and this wasn't an excuse because he has wrote a poetry in a number of biographic for people who didn't say poetry at all, he also mentioned women poetry, moreover, he mentioned the tribes of Ad and Thamood in poetry which is considered prose in organized rhythm<sup>(21)</sup>.
5. He based his argument on two notions for Omer Ibn Ala'a seeing that those two ideas are evidence for his skepticism. The first notion was: The dialect of Hemiar and Yeman is different from out dialect, nevertheless, Ad and Thamood had further distinctions? Therefore, if poetry the same as Ibn Isahak presented and as storyteller narrated, it wouldn't be useful or evidence of literature<sup>(22)</sup>.  
The Second notion, "you have just received a little from Arabs because you haven't abundance"<sup>(23)</sup>.
  6. Ibn Sallam concluded that Jihad and resistance of enemies was a reason for losing a lot of poetry, he presented Omer Ibn Al-Khattab speech as a testimony "as if poetry is the only work for Arabs" then he added after Islam coming, Arab were occupied by the new religion, working on Jihad with Persians and Romans leaving poetry reciting, but after a lot of conquests, Arabs felt secured to return to poetry reciting without documentation in books, thus, a lot of poetry was gone by the death of those poets"<sup>(24)</sup>.
  7. The social importance for poetry on Ibn Sallam points of view was the main reason for plagiarism because -poetry- is the record for the tribe's glory and the power of the tribe by the number of poets. Therefore, "when Arabs had revised their poetry celebrating good old days, they found it less than they deserved or not equal to other tribes, so they completed or added lines on the poems from their own leaving people to repeat which increase the poems which were mentioned before"<sup>(25)</sup>.
  8. Ibn Sallam's point of view is that "poetry had fallen on the hands-on orators like Torfa and Obaid"<sup>(26)</sup>.
  9. From the evidences that poetry is fabricated in some poems –as Ibn Salaam think- that "the first generation of Arabic tribes made poetry for their identity but some long poems meant on the age of Abd Al-Motaleb Ibn Abd Monaf to speak about the poetry of the tribes of Ad, Thamood, Hamiar and Tabaa"<sup>(27)</sup>.
  10. Son increased lines for his father's poem which increased the skepticism of Ibn Sallam about plagiarism as he had been told by Abu Obaidah that " Ibn Dawood Ibn Mutamim Ibn Nowaira had reached Basra and while the tradition of Hospitality when Naheit came"<sup>(28)</sup> and Abu Obaidah and Ibn Noah Al-Atardi came and asked about his father Mutamim, he started to increase lines of poetry and made it for them and that was an easily discovered<sup>(29)</sup>.
  11. "Hammad" was one of the reasons that increased Ibn Sallam's doubts because Hammad was one of the first who collected poetry and at the same time, he was unreliable because he was accused of stealing lines from other poets and fixed it to his own poetry<sup>(30)</sup>.

#### **Dr. Nasser Al- Deen Remarks about the Skepticism of Ibn Sallam**

Dr. Al-Assad went on a critical opinion about the talk of Ibn Sallam through his book "The Source of Pre-Islamic Poetry and their Historical Value" by stating the idea of theft in two parts: the first one was, the main rules and the figurative language which Ibn Sallam hadn't hone deep on discussing it. Moreover, he focused on certain poets saying that they had it plagiarized<sup>(31)</sup>, Al-Assad had driven a lot of examples for each part, hr also added a remark about "Ibn Sallam Skepticism of Arab Journey toward Jihad in Three Parts Compound Words, the last of it reality, the middle of it null and void and the first needs figurative speech to be revealed. For reality, they memorize a little, and much had been lost. For null and void, they tend to overestimate because they didn't have documented Diwan or a written book"<sup>(32)</sup>.

He denied that Arabs had revised the authentic sources of poetry because a lot of those poets died early or slaughtered! Starting with the Umayyad period, we noticed that the majority of poetry scholars of pre-Islamic poetry had died and the majority of the source are orally and not even a single written form. So, this can't be taken as evidence due to crying good days, glorifying ancestors, declaring the weakness of the present and the paralyzed movement of the present in comparison with the past<sup>(33)</sup>. Then Dr. Al-Assad mentioned a lot of examples like when Al-Hajjaj Ibn Yousef Al-Thaqafi said platform of the mosque: "The people who knew Omia's poetry had gone out and their speech was buried!" notifying that there were 80 years between Hajjaj and Omia Bin Aby Al-Salt<sup>(34)</sup>.

Discussing Ibn Salaam's talk about Younes Ibn Habeeb that Hammad had written the rhymed "M" poem for praising Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari which Al-Hatiah has stolen, Al-Assad said this talk is a nonsense in two sides: First, "Almadanee:, who was from Basra lived on the time of Ibn Sallam, rejected this by saying Al-Hatiah had composed the poem when the army was ready for war. The second side, a scholar who gathered Al-Hatiah poem proved the authenticity rhymed "M" poem and hadn't taken Ibn Sallam point of view which was mentioned before<sup>(35)</sup>.

Al-Assad vision of these two sides support the idea of Ibn Salaam story that Hammad had written the poem and Hatiah stole it because Younes and Ibn Sallam are from Basra; both of them accused the Kofian's of deception, plagiarism, and exaggeration<sup>(36)</sup>.

### **Ideas about Ibn Salaam's Skepticism**

From the previous ideas which doctor Alasad had argued for Ibn Sallam, we conclude that a lot of his thoughts about skepticism on pre-Islamic poetry had been mistaken and a lot of these ideas were due fanaticism or his prejudice for Ibn Younes because Ibn Younes was from Basra the same as Ibn Sallam, so their doubts didn't stand on clear scientific measures but just ideas Ibn Sallam wanted to prove.

Therefore, Ibn Sallam had a responsibility for corruption in Arabic poetry and related this corruption to Muhammad Bin Isahak Ibn Yasar who was working with biography writing to Hammad who was working with stories but it's not okay to put all the accusations on the shoulders of two persons for a poetry of such a big nation especially poetry was the main branch in Arabic literature that set for the syntax and figurative techniques in Arabic language, in addition to that, if any scholar paid attention –to Ibn Isahak or others- he concluded that a lot of fabricated poetry to rewrite the poem in a new figurative way to attract attention or to let language describe better in more details.

These two issues were taken in general for Ibn Isahak who was not an expert in poetry. We couldn't put the responsibility of plagiarism over his shoulder as Ibn Salaam accused. Moreover, we wondered how Ibn Sallam knew that first Arabic poets sat poetry on these occasions with historical measures clear to be followed by a scholar. Thus, the strangest wonder in Ibn Sallam skepticism was his dealing with a little number of resources for Torfa and Obaid poetry. On the other hand, he kept on mentioning that there was a lot of faked poetry and this is a contradiction. Generally speaking, a lot of noise had been raised about skepticism in pre-Islamic poetry with a reason or without but that personal analysis with following scientific methods of research isn't enough to judge the authenticity of this kind of poetry. On the other hand, oral transition of thoughts with reliable documentation which happened by coincidence or rarely by a scientific approach. Therefore, we have to acknowledge we have doubts in a lot of poetry as Abd Al-Qaher Al-Jorjani said "if you have doubts, just contemplate"<sup>(37)</sup>. Finally, I want to finish by saying a word for Al-Zajaji in his book "how to clarify plagiarism" when he said that "skepticism didn't hide facts"<sup>(38)</sup>.

### **Epilogue**

We can conclude the following about the study:

- Taha Hussein wasn't alone who had thoughts about skepticism and wasn't the first because he was preceded by Ibn Sallam, Al-jahez, Abu Hamed Algazali, Ibn Qotaibah, Abu Al-Faraj, Al-Asfahani.

- Both Taha Hussein and Ibn Sallam based their approach of skepticism on personal ideas and not to scientific methods.
- Both of them negotiated “authenticity” and “plagiarism” depending on their doubts without referring to art techniques in analyzing the poetry forgetting that some fixed into lines are better than the original which proves the fact that many famous poets retreated of being gifted.
- Taha Hussein's following for Descartes' method wasn't on clear steps.
- The evidence of Ibn Sallam was more clear than Taha Hussein but we can't rely on it in scientific clear cut evidence.

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