

The South American Arab Mahjar Literature

Vilayat A. Jafarov¹, Saadat A. Ibrahimova²

The Institute of Oriental Studies Named After Academician Z. M. Bunyatov of National Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan Republic, Baku, AZERBAIJAN.

²isaadat@rambler.ru

ABSTRACT

The Arab Mahjar literature was created at the end of XIX and the beginning of XX century by the Arab writers who moved from Middle East to North and South America as a result of a number of socio-political events. Mahjar writers with excellent knowledge of the classic Arab literature and adoption of western civilization and literature in the alien land brought new ideas and new spirit by the poems that they created. Fevzi al-Maluf, George Saydah, Shafiq al-Maluf, Michel al-Maluf, Shukrullah al-Jurr, Rashid Salim al-Khuri were well-known poets of South American Arab mahjar literature. The literary societies "Rivaq-ul Maarri" (Brazil), "Al-Ushbat-ul Andalusiya" (Brazil), "Ar-Rabitat-ul-Adabiya" (Argentina) had an objective to develop the Arabic literature in "New World". Together with male masters of writing in Mahjar literature also worked their female colleagues including such talented authors as Afifa Kerem, Salva Salama Atlas, Maria Yuni Atallah, Nejla Abi al-Lamae Maluf. The Mahjar literature has played an immense role in the development, enrichment of modern Arab literature and its obtaining of the prestigious position in the modern world literature.

Keywords: Lebanon and Syria at the end of XIX and the beginning of XX century, arab mahjar writers, the literary societies, female writers of arab mahjar literature

INTRODUCTION

At the end of XIX century the internal stability in Lebanon and Syria which were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, was frequently violated. The reason for this was the intervention of the western states to the areas subordinated by the Ottoman Empire and the activities aimed to direct the local population against the government in order to break the rule of Empire up. In addition, some of the mis-steps of the local government and the spread of ideas of nationalism among the population were the reasons contributing the unrest against the Ottoman state. Also, the Maroni-Druze massacre in Lebanon, the remaining of people unemployed naturally accelerated the migration process. Famine, diseases and the rapid increase of prices during the World War I were among the other reasons of migration. According to many historians of Arabic literature, one of the reasons of migration was lack of freedom of speech. Thus, the writers disturbing the government by their works were persecuted and as a result of it many of them were forced to leave their country. As a result of a number of socio-political events at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century a certain part of the Arabs living in the Middle East immigrated to many countries of the world,

as well as the American continent. The immigration of Syrians and Lebanese people began at the mid-nineteenth century and this flow continued over the years with certain intervals.

The first migration from the Arab countries to the American continent was to the North America. The migration to the South America occurred 20 years later than to the North America. In this period of time about five hundred thousand Arabs migrated to the American continent from Syria and Lebanon [1,92]. The Arabs who migrated to the South America gathered mostly in San Paulo in Brazil and in Latin America countries as Argentine, Chili, Venezuela, Uruguay, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad, Mexico, Columbia [2, 339].

The settlers lived in very hard conditions for the early period. Facing the difficult conditions in the places where they moved to with great enthusiasm, the migrants were deeply disappointed and were forced to work hard in order to survive. The easiest work that the Arabs could do for the first time was walking through streets with basket filled with soap, toys, perfume, etc. on their shoulders and sell their goods by explaining with different signs as they didn't know the language well. [3, 107-109].

Despite all the difficulties that the Arab expatriates faced on the American continent, they managed to cope with them and gained the success in social, economic and many other spheres. After a while the majority of Arab migrants who accustomed to live here and learned the language, managed to get the higher education and publish their own newspapers and magazines in the Arab language.

Thus, as a result of the efforts of the Arab expatriates in the "New World", an integral part of the modern Arab literature – "Arab Mahjar literature" was established on the American continent. The Mahjar literature has played an immense role in the development, enrichment of modern Arab literature and its obtaining of the prestigious position in the modern world literature. These writers with excellent knowledge of the classic Arab literature and adoption of western civilization and literature in the alien land brought new ideas and new spirit by the poems that they created. The homesickness, freedom of human, his inner world, pure love, humanism, freedom of confession was highly glorified in these works. The theme of homesickness was reflected more widely in the works of the Arab Mahjar writers who migrated to South America. Thus, migrant Arab writers who lived in alien country, in hard circumstances wrote about the homesickness, the problems they faced in a country where they arrived with big expectations and their disappointment. In this term, the following lines by Nemat Qazan present interest:

I was in a unity with Allah in my home land, I fell apart from Allah in the strange land
[4,83]

Riyad al-Maluf, George Saydah, Shafiq al-Maaluf, Michel al-Maluf, Yusif Ghanim, Shukrullah al-Jurr, Ilyas Farkhad, Rashid Salim al-Khuri, Nemat Qazan, Toufig Zaun, Geysar al-Maluf, Toufig Gurban were well-known poets of South American Arab mahjar literature.

One of the poets having migrated to South America was famous poet, christian by birth Fevzi al-Maluf. He was born on May 21, 1899 in Zahle district of Lebanon [5,756; 6]. His brothers named Shafiq al-Maluf and Riyad al-Maluf being brought up in a family of intelligentsia were also the members of migration literature. His uncle Michel al-Maluf had been the founder of literary amalgamation called "Al-Ushbatu-l Andalusiyya" ("Society of Andalusia")

[7]. His another uncle Geysar al-Maluf was a migration writer who had migrated to South America and in 1898 he published a newspaper called "Brazil" in São Paulo [8]. At the end of XIX and at the beginning of XX centuries as a result of economic and social crisis existing in Lebanon Fevzi al-Maluf, together with his family moved to São Paulo city of Brazil in 1921 [9,413]. The talented writer possessing rich life experience and literary knowledge in spite of the fact that he lived quite a short life, he managed to leave a valuable literary heritage behind himself. The poet's poetries were published in Beirut in 1957 under the name of "Divan-u Fevzi al-Maluf". Always the feelings of pessimism, sadness are felt in the poems of the poet of melancholic spirits. In his poetry the themes of nature, religion, love, mystic thoughts have found their reflections. The poet's world was the world of loneliness. He is sorry for living in this world. Analyzing his poem "Beyna-l Mahd va-l Lahd" ("Between the Cradle and Grave") it becomes clear that for the poet this world consists of torture and poignancy. In this poem he states that not only he himself but also all the other people have come to this world only for the purpose of exercising sufferings, troubles [10].

يولد الطفل للعذاب وهي
سنة الدهر ووقى الطفل شره
بين أوجاع أمه دخل المهدي
وبين الأوجاع يدخل قبره!

A baby is born with sadness

Not to understand it is madness

With his mother's sufferings

He lies in cradle which his mother gave,

And with these sufferings he goes to grave.

The book of poems which brought fame to Fevzi al-Maluf was the book called "Ala Bisati-r Rih" ("On the Flying Carpet") dealing with his imaginary tour to the heavens, written in 1926, consisting of 14 chapters [11].

Another prominent poet of migration literature Shafiq al-Maluf the brother of Fevzi al-Maluf was born on March 31, 1905 in the Zahle district of Lebanon. The poet has a small booklet consisting of 18 poetries called "Li Kulli Zahratin Abirun" ("Each flower has its scent") [12].

Shafiq al-Maluf in 1926 migrated to São Paulo city of Brazil where his brother Fevzi al-Maluf and his uncles Michel, Geysar and George al-Maluf [12] and as his brother Fevzi al-Maluf began to work in the silk workshop established by his family. Shafiq al-Maluf who had rich literary heritage mainly wrote poems expressing longing for the native land. In his poems the poet had also given beautiful description of landscape. The writer left behind him specimens of prosaic writings and a booklet of poems called "Al-Ahlam" ("Dreams"). Though the writer wrote poems on longing for the native land, on the philosophical themes, his epic poetry called "Abgar" is the one which made him famous in the world of literature. The poem "Abgar" for the first time was published in 1936 with the volume of 6 chapters, but in 1946 it was published in still wider volume consisting of 12 chapters [13,430-431]. In the poem it is dealt with the romantic-spirited poet's tour to the world of dreams and with the feelings which he exercised there.

The other literary figure of South American Arab mahjar literature was the famous poet Rashid Selim al-Khuri who moved from Lebanon to South America (Brazil) in 1913. Both in “New World” and in the Middle East he was known as patriotic and nationalistic poet. He was born in a poor family living in the Lebanese village Barbara in 1887 [14,93; 15,472]. He knew Arabic, English and Portuguese languages. The poet’s poetries were published under the name of “Ar-Rashidiyyat” in 1916. In 1953 was published his collection of poems titled “Diwan Al-Garavi” in Brazil.

The Mahjar writers understood the importance of joint activities in order to develop this literature, to cover a wider geographic area and to gather more readers very soon. Thus, they united around the various literary societies that Mahjar writers established. Both in North and South America the main objective of these new societies was to preserve the Arabic language and literature in the “New World”, to bring it to the level which meets the requirements of the modern world literature, as well as to bring innovations and create the literature with release ideas.

The literary society “Rivaq-ul Maarri” (“Maarri society”) was established by Naum Labkin in 1900 in the Brazilian city of San Paulo [16,134]. Fariz Najm, Vadi Farah Maluf, Stefan Galburni and Gaysar Maluf were among the members of this society. The functioning of “Rivaq-ul-Maarri” continued till the returning of Naum Labki to Lebanon in 1908.

“Ar-Rabitat-ul-Adabiya” (“The literature society”) literary society which was founded by George Saydah in the capital of Argentina Buenos Aires in 1949, also had an objective to develop the Arabic literature in “New World” [17,169]. The functioning of this society which lasted for two years was stopped by the returning of George Saydah to Lebanon.

Arab mahjar writers who lived in South America succeeded to establish many societies, but “Al-Usbat-ul Andalusiya” (“The Andalusian society”) one that was created in the Brazilian city of San Paulo in January 1933 was the biggest one. The idea of founding this society was proposed by the famous writer Shukrullah al-Jurr and Michel Naama Maluf (1889-1942) was elected as the first chairman [16,208].

As for the representatives of the community, such great writers and poets as Shukrullah al-Jurr (1898-1975), Michel Maluf (1889-1942), Yusuf Ganim (1875-1919), Rashid Selim al-Khuri (1887-1984), Qeysar Selim al-Khuri (1891-1977), Ilyas Farhad (1893-1986), Shafik al-Maluf (1905-1986), Nemat Qazan, Tofiq Kurban, Tofiq Zaun (1883-1966) were the members of this society. Michel Maluf has been the head of the community for ten years. After the death of Michel Maaluf the poet Rashid Salim al-Khuri became the chairman. After the returning of Rashid Selim al-Khuri to Lebanon in 1950, Shafiq Maluf led the community [16,138]. There was a great role of “al-Usba al-Andalusiya” (“The Andalusian society”) and “al-Andalus al-Jadida” (“New Andalusia”) journals in the sharing of the ideas of the community in the Middle East.

The main objective of the “al-Usba al-Andalusia” society which was established in the “New World” by Arab migrant poets was to spread the Mahjar literature in the Middle East, and the literature of Middle East in the “New World”, to guarantee the freedom of migrant poets while not being involved into politics, to improve the Brazilian literature, to raise the level of the Arabic literature in Brazil, to bring together all the arab writers and to establish the relations between the arabic literary communities. Even though the “Andalusian society” operated for a long period of time, in the 1960-s many of the members died, and many others

returned to the homeland. Orientalist, professor A.Imangulieva noted that the Andalusian Society had been operating by 1965 [16.139].

Together with male masters of writing in Mahjar literature also worked their female colleagues including such talented authors as Afifa Kerem, Salva Salama Atlas, Maria Yuni Atallah, Nejla Abi al-Lamae Maluf and others. Female writers worked in diverse literary genres –prose, publicism and journalism-of Arabic literature created in emigration. The main subjects in the creative work of these literary figures were the issues of rights and freedom of woman residing both in their native countries and in emigration.

Along with numerous articles and stories which Afifa Kerem who has emigrated from Lebanon to USA, had published in newspapers and magazines. She also is the author of three remarkable novels: “Badiya and Fuad”, “Fatima, a Bedouin Woman”, “Gada Amshit”.

Being a celebrated publicist of periodical press, Salva Salama Atlas who has emigrated from Syria to Brazil. Also is the author of three sensational books in Arabic: “Al-Kalimat al-Khalida”, “Tarikh al-Brazil” and “Almen and Salva”.

Maria Yuni Atallah who has emigrated from Lebanon to Chile, is the author of a great number of articles permeated with progressive ideas and published in many newspapers and magazines.

Nejla Abi al-Lamae Maluf who has emigrated from Lebanon to USA, also is a renowned representative of Arab Mahjar literature.

CONCLUSION

The Arab writers who moved to the “New World” don’t forget their homeland and nation in alien places and reflected such issues as homesickness, freedom of human and freedom of confession in their works. The expatriate poets had a deep influence on all migrant Arab writers who lived far away from homeland with their poems and oeuvre and awaked the spirit of struggle for national liberty. Owing to these outstanding representatives and the literary societies, South American Arab mahjar literature has become famous as a peculiar word treasury which had enriched the world literature.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Krachkovsky I. U. (1956). *Selected compositions*. III volume. Moscow.
- [2]. Albert Hourani-Nedim Shehadi, (1992). *The Lebanese in the world*. London: I. B. Tauris
- [3]. Hasan, H. (1966). *Min Tarix-il Muğtaribin al-Arab fi-l Alam*. Damascus.
- [4]. Nemat, Q. (1938). *Muallakat-ul-Arz*. San Paulo.
- [5]. Zaki, M. M. (1994). *Al-Alamu-sh Shargiyya*. Volume II. Beirut.
- [6]. Web:<http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki>
- [7]. Web:<http://www.marefa.org/index.php>
- [8]. <http://www.syrianstory.com/fawzialmaaloof.htm>
- [9]. George Saydah(1964). *Adabuna va Udabauna fi-l Mahajir Al-Amrikiyya*. Beirut.
- [10]. Web: <http://www.raya.com/news/pages/34356c74-231c-48a5-baed-b48424f87eb4>
- [11]. Web: <http://www.bstfrnds.com/vb/showthread.php?t=30876>
- [12]. Web: http://www.almoajam.org/poet_details.php?id=3071
- [13]. Amr ad-Duqaq. (1978). *Shuara-ul Usbat-il Andalusiyya fi-l Mahjar*. Beirut.
- [14]. Hasan, J. H. (1965). *Al-Adab-ul Arabi fi-l Mahjar*. Cairo.
- [15]. Isa an-Nauri. (1977). *Adab-ul Mahjar*. Cairo.
- [16]. Aida, İ.(2010). *Maqalalar va Tarjumalar*. Baku.
- [17]. George, S.(1964). *Adabuna va Udabauna fi-l Mahajir al-Amrikiyya*. Beirut.