

EDITORIAL

Under the auspices of the National Institute of Archaeology and Heritage of the Moroccan Ministry of Culture, a joint Moroccan-American archaeological expedition undertook excavations at the Smuggler's Cave in Témara. The work led to the discovery of a child's skull and parts of a skeleton. Those discovered were then subjected to the necessary tests and analyses and were dated, most probably, to circa 18000 B.C. .

The National Institute of Archaeology and Heritage is a Moroccan national organization, established in 1985 (1405H). As the official body of Archaeology throughout the Kingdom of Morocco, its functions cover archaeological and heritage studies, archaeological excavations, licensing local, foreign, or joint expeditions. It further provides such expeditions with all requirements, be those material, human or logistics. The joint Moroccan-American expedition that discovered the skull did enjoy the material, scholarly and logistic support of the Moroccan National Institute of Archaeology and Heritage.

Once the scholarly work was wrapped up, a 45-minute documentary film of the discovery was put together. The film, in image and sound, traced all the stages of the archaeological event: the initial studies, researches, all the way through the analyses conducted on the skull, along with all efforts leading up to the final success. Nothing could be more thorough and well presented, except perhaps one minor issue. Other than the ancient (perhaps exotic) site and skull, the film was cleansed of anything Moroccan: No mention of the Moroccan National Institute of Archaeology and Heritage, nor spot-lighting any of the contributing Moroccan archaeologists. Instead, the film focused on the expedition's foreign (both American and European) members, denying the existence of those native scholars and cadre with whom they worked, shoulder to shoulder from beginning to end!

On this calculated deletion, Professor of Archaeology and History of Ancient Morocco Mostafa Ouachi comments:

“Although the Institute and its researchers played essential roles in this discovery, the documentary makes no mention whatsoever of either the Institute or of its archaeology professors. It is as if the Moroccans were nothing but hidden spirits or indistinct man-power. Nor is the case an inadvertent lapse of filming. We know that a number of interviews with Moroccan researchers did at the time take place at the National Institute of Archaeology and Heritage. Yet, while the documentary promoted and spotlighted non-Moroccan researchers, it relegated to oblivion all the natives. Two in particular, an American and a French, were extensively featured. Recognized by foreign researchers as “Sir North Africa,” the latter has always enjoyed the trust of Moroccans who've given him an open access to making use of their sites as he pleases.

“Morocco, it is true, has constantly opened its doors to all foreign researchers with the assumption that they value such a privilege and deal with matters as scholars not conquerors. Regrettably, however, these foreign scholars heeded no ethics of archaeological research, and repeatedly treated the output of our archaeological finds as if they were their own rather than Moroccans'!”

Professor Mostafa Ouachi adds:

“What is most offending in the documentary is the wholesome marginalization accorded Moroccan researchers. They received nothing of the positive coverage enjoyed by their American and French counterparts. In fact, when shot, Moroccans became ghostly images shooting across the screen at

the speed of light: nameless, featureless, and voiceless. In their case, the meaning of a ‘close-up shot’ seems to have been taken literally. The whole archaeological event would only appear to have taken place in America or France! ... The film seems to forget that the event took place in Morocco and that the great archaeological discovery was indebted, at the international scholarly arena, to the very efforts of Moroccan scholarship!

“For how long should we put up with this form of arrogance and abuse! It is, surely, time to put an end to such unbecoming manners and demeanors, and time for the National Heritage officials to subject foreign organizations and researchers to clear and appropriate dissuasive measures.”

In our turn, here we emphasize that cooperation with foreign expeditions should not mean taking lightly our rights, nor not following to the letter all articles of contracts signed with expeditions, including the publication of the excavation results. Nor should we limit our role to field work; rather, we ought to play a role in all stages of the process, be those report writing, book publication or documentary filming. Rather than allowing others alone impose their views on the matter, we too have to have our say.

Again, why should not we, throughout the Arab World, exchange expertise in the domain of cooperation with foreign archaeological expeditions? And when would we see, in Arab countries, Arab archaeological missions working with foreign expeditions? Would we be able to implement, through the Arab League of Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), a unified Arab Pact on cooperation and joint work with foreign expeditions?

Would official bodies of archaeology and heritage in the Arab World remain incapable of communicating, even minimally, on how to deal with foreign expeditions?

Translation has never been only the transplanted of one word in one language into its equivalent in another; rather, to nations translation carries over knowledge, information, and culture. Arabs have always known its importance and experienced for ages cultural exchanges with neighboring peoples. In their trading, Arabs travelled to Greece, the Roman Empire, Egypt, East Africa (Abyssinia), India, Persia. At that time, they had to recognize the importance of translation to be able to meet those nations and those civilizations. And translation played its essential role in cultural exchange with those peoples. Arab kingdoms, particularly those of northern and eastern Arabia, knew the Greek and Latin writing characters. Hieroglyphic inscriptions were also found in the Arabian Peninsula; such indications testify to the important role translation played, and is still playing, in cultural and civilization exchange.

Once the Muslim State was inaugurated under Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), and later spread during the reigns of his Caliphs, State Diwans (records) adopted Greek till Umayyad Caliph Abdulmalik bin Marwan Arabized all official registers. Translation further flourished during the Abbasid times; Muslims occupied themselves in translating all knowledge of Greece, Persia, and others. For this particular purpose, the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun established “Dar-ul-Hikmat” (House of Wisdom). And since the times of the Abbasids, Arab learning was translated into other languages, a movement that peaked in Andalusia. Translated into European language, Arab learning and knowledge became one important factor in modern European renaissance.

Civilizations and cultures have always enjoyed forms of exchange. The field of archaeology is

a good case in point. As the principles of the archaeological sciences were first laid in the West, pioneer Arab archaeologists had to study those principles at western universities and institutes, make use of those western studies and researches, translate them into Arabic, etc. In time, those pioneers and their students acquired the knowledge to become not only receivers of but contributors to the production of the knowledge in the field. Here, translations from other languages into Arabic and from Arabic into other languages gained momentum. Books, journals, papers, researches in the field of Archaeology, all in Arabic, proliferated. Owing to their high scholarship, such publications are now sought by western scholars, universities, learning institutions and libraries.

Translations between Arabic and other languages certainly benefited from the fact that the first Arab archaeologists learned the science in the west. And modern media contributed immensely. Our journal Adumatu has recognized such facts, and since its establishment allocated a generous space to English for both Arab and foreign writers, in addition to publishing in Arabic translation foreign works and reports on scholarly publications and events relating to the field.

To say the least, Arabs have always recognized the importance of translation; our culture has documented its status up to the highest qualities of translators. More than a millennium ago al-Jahiz had this to say: “The translator has to know perfectly well both the language of the source text and the language of the target text; his command of both languages must be perfectly equal.”

Adumatu is pleased to welcome Dr. Mohammed S. Alotaibi, the new member of its Editorial Board. The field of Dr. Alotaibi is the archaeology and history of the Arabian Peninsula. Owing to his interest in Sabaic inscriptions and architectures of pre-Islamic Arabia, he has published works and books on Arab religions, Arab wars (i.e., Days), Arab military formations and battles, along with other research on history.

Dr. Alotaibi is also a founding member in several academic societies: Saudi Society for Archaeological Studies, Saudi Dialectics and Folklore Association, GCC Society for History and Archaeology, Union of Arab Archaeologists, and the recently launched “Saudi Society for Camel Studies.”

Now head of the Department of Archaeology, King Saud University, and the 2014 winner of King Saud University Award of high academic distinction for publications in the domain of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Alotaibi will certainly be a valuable addition to the editorial board of Adumatu..

Editor -in-Chief