

EDITORIAL

Many are those who have been ecstatically overwhelmed by the tidings that Shawgi Dhaif has received President Hosni Mubark's Award, the highest honor Egypt bestows on its scholars and persons of thought. Professor Dhaif, the grand mentor of generations, surely deserves it; he has been the teacher of many and the erudite scholar of Arabic Literature. My generation and the generation before mine, and those who have followed, all have been immediate students of this honorable scholar. Having attentively listened to his teachings, his students have nursed on his ideas and lived his thought and original Arab culture which stretches from the pre-Islamic era through the early Islamic age, to the Ummiads period. With him, students therefore toured first the plains of the wonderfully graphic poetry of the Arab poet Dhu al-Rimmah, moved to the poetry of the early Islamic poets like Hassan and Labeid, and then arrived at the Ummiad age with its Hejazi refined poetry, its Najdi powerful verses, and its lampooners of whom the Najdi were the leaders. As the readings of students moved from age to age and from one pictorial atmosphere to another, they cultivated style, taste, and thought.

My generation has indeed been fortunate enough to study with a generation of great scholars. Those included Suhair al-Qalamawi who had her strong presence in literary criticism, its new schools and methodologies, along with her contribution to the "hero" in the classics; Abdul Halim el-Najjar, the great scholar we have lost so early, who was commissioned by the Arab League to translate the works of Brockelmann; Yousif Kholaif, the academic and poet of refined poetry and whose interests covered the poetry of Sa'liek; the young Shukri Ayyad who prided himself with his Ph.D. and taught us Rhetoric, relentlessly trying to simplify for us many complicated logical issues; Abdul Aziz el-Ahowani, that great scholar who was interested in the literary and cultural civilization of Andalusia; Muhammad Kamel Hussain, the scholar of Fatimid Literature who smoothly presented his immense knowledge to his students along with witty humor, and made available to them his books and library; and Abdul Hamid Yunis, the great teacher whose knowledge seeps easily through his lips, attracting us to listen eagerly as he talked about popular literature in Egypt and the Arab world.

In fact, the Department of Arabic (College of Arts, Cairo University) used to be the real Department of Arabic culture and civilization. In that Department, over the period of the four years, we used to cover, in addition to our major in Literature and Language, material in eastern languages, geography, history, and interpretation. With these topics, the true picture of Arab civilization fully materializes.

Unfortunately, in some Arab universities over the past years, we have come to notice a severe discontinuity between the Department of Arabic and Departments of Archaeology, Museums, History, and Geography. Departments of Arabic, for instance, no longer show interest in Archaeological studies, even those that have addressed the study of ancient dialects and calligraphy. The same case applies to the relation between the Arabic Language Leagues and the archaeological studies focusing on ancient Arab dialects. This discontinuity has actually impeded any serious study of the relations standard Arabic owes to ancient Arabic dialects.

Etymologically and semantically, many words in standard Arabic and in ancient Arab dialects do meet. While studying Ancient Southern Arab texts, I have noticed an added "M" to the root of proper nouns. Turning to previous studies, I found nothing satisfactory on this phenomenon (called tam-

yeem), nor had it been thoroughly studied. When the Department of Archaeology, King Saud University, launched its M A program, we embedded in its plan an area of concentration on Ancient Arab writing. I consequently directed a student to study this phenomenon of tamiyeem in Southern Arab proper nouns (the writings of Musnad). Having searched the phenomenon, collected all he could of proper nouns ending in "M," feeding them into a special computer program to classify and identify the nouns, the student followed the grammatical rules of the "M" addition in the Writings of the Musnad and collated them with the rules of adding an "N" sound in standard Arabic. He concluded that the additional "M" is at first nothing but the foundation of the added "N" sound in Standard Arabic. That is, the familiar Arabic "N" sound at the end of nouns was originally the added "M"; over time, pronunciation changed first into an "N" sound, then the inscription of the sound changed to what is now known as the stressed "N"(nunnization) in the nominative, objective and genitive cases in Arabic.

In this juncture, I should commend the efforts of Professor Khalil Yahya Nami and Professor Sayed Yacoub Bakr who had been pioneers in championing the studies of the relation between standard Arabic and the ancient Arab dialects. Unfortunately, however, they left no students to follow on their steps and pursue their work. With their death, these studies have come to a halt. I do therefore invite all Arabic Language Leagues and Departments of Arabic to attend to this strong semantic and grammatical relation between standard Arabic and ancient Arab dialects. There has to be joint research among archaeologists specializing in Ancient Arabic and linguists of standard Arabic. Such research should cover all forms of this relation along with a thorough study of Arabic Calligraphy throughout the ages.

In Arab universities, colleges and institutes, the programs in Departments of Archaeology and Museums fluctuate theoretically and practically. Both levels vary in terms of putting to service some new archaeological theories and practical lab and field training (excavation, renovation, photographing, survey drawing, and mapping, etc); the aim is always to produce a highly qualified generation to serve this field efficiently. However, it is noteworthy that these academic institutions suffer, to a great extent, a failure in coordination and communication, drifting therefore into narrow parochialism and ethnocentrism. The unfortunate result is that each institution has confined itself to an interest in its regional archaeological sites.

In Egypt, work focuses on the Egyptian (Pharaoh), Coptic and Islamic civilizations; it only deals with each as it relates to Egypt. In Iraq, the case is the same; work deals only with the civilization of Mesopotamia. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Yemen are no exception; work there attends to the civilizations of the pre-Islamic Arabian Kingdoms. As for the overarching Islamic civilization which is a non-divided entity, each regional archaeological work addresses the part that relates to that particular region. And thus we are set fields apart, wondering when we would meet!

In this hurried outline, I am by no means asking Departments of Archaeology and Museums in Arab universities to lessen their concentration on civilizations of their regions; I am, instead, calling for finding the least acceptable level of coordination so as to help tie together all civilizations the Arab world has enjoyed; these include the civilizations of the Nile Valley in Egypt and the Sudan, Mesopotamia in Iraq and Syria, the Arab Kingdoms in Arabia and Syria. The Islamic civilization covered the various parts of the Arab world, and the plans of teaching it should stem from the fact that Arabs are a unified nation which contributed, centuries prior to Islam, to the making of human heritage and civilization.

The material civilization of the Arabs did not start with the advent of Islam, even though some universities adopted this misconception as if the Arabian Peninsula was a total void except for worthless Bedouin existence. These civilizations did communicate and interact with each other; why do not we wield what has been severed? We should take the Islamic civilization as our point of departure, since in its spiritual faith it believed in the one God, and depended in its material side on the very civilizations on which the Greek, Roman and Byzantium civilizations depended. In this way we surely can show that ours is a nation of an illustrious civilization. If we fail in this, we will only deepen jingoism and tribalism.

Ever since its creation in 1383 H (1963) the Administration of Archaeology in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia remained affiliated with the Ministry of Education. This affiliation continued even after it became the Authority of Archaeology and Museums. In the month of Rabie Awal 1424 H (May 2003) a decision was issued to merge the Authority with the Higher Commission of Tourism. Since archaeological sites and remains represent the historical and civilization depth of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which itself is founded on principles relating to its individuality, we therefore hope that this merging of the two agencies will serve both well. The financial aspects of tourism should not overpower the historical, cultural, and epistemological roles of archaeology. This merging should be an opportunity to pay more attention to the archaeological sites by means of creating the necessary tourist facilities and opening such sites for visitors.

The merging of the Authority of Archaeology and Museums with the Higher Commission of Tourism, and the consequent restructuring of both sectors, should provide archaeology with a clear entity of its own, capable of promoting its various roles such excavating sites, studying the finds, and publicizing them. In this way we may be able to rewrite our history through what these discoveries show whether these be of the ancient ages or of the Islamic era.

The affiliation between tourism and archaeology has in some Arab countries yielded positive results; we should study their experience and follow their leads when they accord with conditions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. When all is said and done, the question remains: why do administrations of Archaeology in the Arab World have to remain dependent on some other authorities? When would they have their own fully independent status and character?

Editor-in-Chief